

Two  
Hundred  
Years  
Together

by  
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# Two Hundred Years Together



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## **Volume 1 - The Jews Before The Revolution**

- Ch. 1. Before the 19th Century
- Ch. 2. During the Reign of Alexander, I
- Ch. 3. During the Reign of Nicholas, I
- Ch. 4. During the Period of Reform
- Ch. 5. After the Murder of Alexander II
- Ch. 6. In the Russian revolutionary movement
- Ch. 7. The Birth of Zionism
- Ch. 8. At the Turn of 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Ch. 9. During the Revolution of 1905
- Ch. 10. During the Period of the Duma
- Ch. 11. The Jewish And Russian National Consciousness Prior to World War I
- Ch. 12. During World War I

## **Volume 2 - The Jews in the Soviet Union**

- Ch. 13. The February Revolution
- Ch. 14. During 1917
- Ch. 15. Among Bolsheviks
- Ch. 16. During the Civil War
- Ch. 17. Emigration Between the Two World Wars
- Ch. 18. In the 1920s
- Ch. 19. In the 1930s
- Ch. 20. In the Camps of GULAG
- Ch. 21. During the Soviet-German War
- Ch. 22. From the End of the War to Stalin's Death
- Ch. 23. Before the Six-Day War
- Ch. 24. Breaking Away from Bolshevism
- Ch. 25. Accusing Russia
- Ch. 26. The Beginning of Exodus
- Ch. 27. About the Assimilation

“If you want to know who rules you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize” - Voltaire

## **Foreword**

In 1990, while finishing April 1917 and sorting out the enormous amount of material not included in The Red Wheel, I decided to present some of that material in the form of a historical essay about Jews in the Russian revolution.

Yet it became clear almost immediately that in order to understand those events the essay must step back in time. Thus, it stepped back to the very first incorporation of the Jews into the Russian Empire in 1772. On the other hand, the revolution of 1917 provided a powerful impetus to Russian Jewry, so the essay naturally stretched into the post-revolutionary period. Thus, the title Two Hundred Years Together was born.

However, it took time for me to realize the importance of that distinct historical boundary drawn by mass emigration of the Jews from the Soviet Union that had begun in the 1970s (exactly 200 years after the Jews appeared in Russia) and which had become unrestricted by 1987. This boundary had been abolished, so that for the first time, the non-voluntary status of the Russian Jews no longer a fact: they ought not to live here anymore; Israel waits for them; all countries of the world are open to them. This clear boundary changed my intention to keep the narrative up to the mid-1990s, because the message of the book was already played out: the uniqueness of Russian-Jewish entwinement disappeared at the moment of the new Exodus.

Now, a totally new period in the history of the by-now-free Russian Jewry and its relations with the new Russia began. This period started with swift and essential changes, but it is still too early to predict its long-term outcomes and judge

whether its peculiar Russian-Jewish character will persevere or it will be supplanted with the universal laws of the Jewish Diaspora.

To follow the evolution of this new development is beyond the lifespan of this author.

## **Volume One: The Jews Before the Revolution**

### **Chapter I: Before the 19th Century**

#### **From the Beginnings in Khazaria**

In this book, the presence of the Jews in Russia prior to 1772 will not be discussed in detail. However, for a few pages, we will remember the older epochs.

One could begin by saying that the paths of Russians and Jews first crossed in the wars between the Kiev Rus and the Khazars, but that isn't completely right, since only the upper class of the Khazars were of Hebraic descent. The tribe itself was a branch of the Turks that had accepted the Jewish faith. If one follows the presentation of J. D. Bruzkus, respected Jewish author of the mid-20th century, a certain part of the Jews from Persia moved across the Derbent Pass to the lower Volga where Atil on the west coast of Caspian on the Volga delta, the capital city of the Khazarian Khanate, rose up starting 724 AD. The tribal princes of the Turkish Khazars, at the time still idol-worshippers, did not want to accept either the Muslim faith, lest they should be subordinated to the caliph of Baghdad, nor Christianity lest they come under vassalage to the Byzantine emperor; and so the clan went over to the Jewish faith in 732. But there was also a Jewish colony in the Bosporan Kingdom on the

Taman Peninsula at east end of the Crimea, separating the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov, to which Hadrian had Jewish captives brought in 137, after the victory over Bar-Kokhba. Later a Jewish settlement sustained itself without break under the Goths and Huns in the Crimea. Kaffa (Feodosia) especially remained Jewish. In 933 Prince Igor (Grand Prince of Kiev 912-945) temporarily possessed Kerch, and his son Sviatoslav (Grand Prince 960-972) wrested the Don region from the Khazars.

The Kiev Rus already ruled the entire Volga region including Atil in 909, and Russian ships appeared at Samander, south of Atil on the west coast of the Caspian. The Kumyks in the Caucasus were descendants of the Khazars. In the Crimea, on the other hand, they combined with the Polovtsy, a nomadic Turkish people from central Asia who had lived in the northern Black Sea area and the Caucasus since the 10th century, called Cuman by western historians. This admixture formed the Crimean Tatars. But unlike the Tatars the Karaim, a Jewish sect that does not follow the Talmud, and Jewish residents of the Crimea did not go over to the Muslim faith. The Khazars were finally overrun much later by Tamerlane or Timur, the 14th century conqueror.

A few researchers, however hypothesize (exact proof is absent) that the Hebrews had wandered to some extent through the south Russian region in a westward and northwesterly direction. Thus, the Orientalist and Semitist Abraham Harkavy, for example writes that the Jewish congregation in the future Russia “emerged from Jews that came from the Black Sea coast and from the Caucasus, where their ancestors had lived since the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity.” J. D. Bruzkus also leans to this perspective. Another opinion suggests these were the remnant of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

This migration presumably ended after the conquest in 1097 of Timutarakans on the eastern shore of the Kerch straits, overlooking the eastern end of the Crimean Peninsula; the eastern flank of the old Bosporan Kingdom, by the Polovtsy. According to Harkavy's opinion the vernacular of these Jews at least since the ninth century was Slavic, and only in the 17th century, when the Ukrainian Jews fled from the pogroms of the Ukrainian Cossack warlord Bogdan Chmelnitzki, who led a successful Cossack rebellion against Poland with help from the Crimean Tatars, did Yiddish become the language of Jews in Poland.

In various manners, the Jews also came to Kiev and settled there. Already under Igor, the lower part of the city was called Kosary; in 933 Igor brought in Jews that had been taken captive in Kerch. Then in 965 Jews taken captive in the Crimea were brought there; in 969 *Kosaren* from Atil and Samander, in 989 from Cherson and in 1017 from Timutarkan. In Kiev, western or Ashkenazi Jews also emerged in connection with the caravan traffic from west to east, and starting at the end of the eleventh century, perhaps on account of the persecution in Europe during the first Crusade.

Later researchers confirm likewise that in the 11th century, the Jewish element in Kiev was derived from the Khazars. Still earlier, at the turn of the 10th century the presence of a Khazar force and a Khazar garrison was chronicled in Kiev. And already in the first half of the 11th century the Jewish-Khazar element in Kiev played a significant role. In the 9th and 10th century, Kiev was multinational and tolerant.

At the end of the 10th century, in the time when Prince Vladimir I. Svyatoslavich was choosing a new faith for the Russians, there were not a few Jews in Kiev, and

among them were found educated men who suggested taking on the Jewish faith. The choice fell out otherwise than it had 250 years earlier in the Khazar Kingdom. The Russian historian Karamsin relates it like this:

“After he (Vladimir) had listened to the Jews, he asked where their homeland was. ‘In Jerusalem,’ answered the delegates, ‘but God has chastised us in his anger and sent us into a foreign land.’ ‘And you, whom God has punished, dare to teach others?’ said Vladimir. ‘We do not want to lose our fatherland like you have.’”

After the Christianization of the Rus, according to Bruzkus, a portion of the Khazar Jews in Kiev also went over to Christianity and afterwards in Novgorod perhaps one of them, Luka Zhidyata, was even one of the first bishops and spiritual writers. Christianity and Judaism being side-by-side in Kiev inevitably led to the learned zealously contrasting them. From that emerged the work significant to Russian literature, *Sermon on Law and Grace* by Hilarion, first Russian Metropolitan in the middle 11th century, which contributed to the settling of a Christian consciousness for the Russians that lasted for centuries. The polemic here is as fresh and lively as in the letters of the apostles. In any case, it was the first century of Christianity in Russia. For the Russian neophytes of that time, the Jews were interesting, especially in connection to their religious presentation, and even in Kiev there were opportunities for contact with them. The interest was greater than later in the 18th century, when they again were physically close.

Then, for more than a century, the Jews took part in the expanded commerce of Kiev. In the new city wall completed in 1037 there was the Jews’ Gate, which closed in the Jewish quarter. The Kiev Jews were not subjected to any limitations, and the princes did not handle themselves with

hostility, but rather indeed vouchsafed to them protection, especially Sviatopluk Iziaslavich, Prince of Novgorod (r. 1078-1087) and Grand Prince of Kiev from 1093 until 1113, since the trade and enterprising spirit of the Jews brought the princes financial advantage.

In 1113 A.D., Vladimir Monomakh, out of qualms of conscience, even after the death of Sviatopluk, hesitated to ascend the Kiev throne prior to one of the Svyatoslaviches, and exploiting the anarchy, rioters plundered the house of the regimental commander Putiata and all Jews that had stood under the special protection of the greedy Sviatopluk in the capital city. One reason for the Kiev revolt was apparently the usury of the Jews. Exploiting the shortage of money of the time, they enslaved the debtors with exorbitant interest. (For example, there are indications in the statute of Vladimir Monomakh that Kiev money-lenders received interest up to 50 percent per annum.) Karamsin therein appeals to the Chronicles and an extrapolation by Basil Tatistcheff (1686-1750), student of Peter the Great, and the first Russian historian. In Tatistcheff we find moreover:

“Afterwards they clubbed down many Jews and plundered their houses, because they had brought about many sicknesses to Christians and commerce with them had brought about great damage. Many of them, who had gathered in their synagogue seeking protection, defended themselves as well as they could, and gained time until Vladimir could arrive.” But when he came, “the Kievites pleaded with him for retribution toward the Jews, because they had taken all the trades from Christians and under Sviatopluk had had much freedom and power.... They had also brought many over to their faith.”

According to M. N. Pokrovski, the Kiev Pogrom of 1113 was of a social and not national character. However, the

leaning of this class-conscious historian toward social interpretations is well-known. After he ascended to the Kiev throne, Vladimir answered the complainants, “Since many Jews everywhere have received access to the various princely courts and have migrated there, it is not appropriate for me, without the advice of the princes, and moreover contrary to right, to permit killing and plundering them. Hence, I will without delay call the princes to assemble, to give counsel.” In the Council, a law limiting interest was established, which Vladimir attached to Yaroslav’s statute. Karamsin reports, appealing to Tatistcheff, that Vladimir “banned all Jews” upon the conclusion of the Council, “and from that time forth there were none left in our fatherland.” But at the same time, he qualifies: “In the chronicles in contrast it says that in 1124 the Jews in Kiev died in a great fire; consequently, they had not been banned.” Bruzkus explains, that it “was a whole quarter in the best part of the city... at the Jew’s Gate next to the Golden Gate.”

At least one Jew enjoyed the trust of Andrei Bogoliubsky in Vladimir. Among the confidants of Andrei was a certain Ephraim Moisich, whose patronymic Moisich or Moisievich indicates his Jewish derivation, and who according to the words of the Chronicle was among the instigators of the treason by which Andrei was murdered. However, there is also a notation that says that under Andrei Bogoliubsky “many Bulgarians and Jews from the Volga territory came and had themselves baptized” and that after the murder of Andrei his son Georgi fled to a Jewish prince in Dagestan.

In any case the information on the Jews in the time of the Suzdal Rus is scanty, as their numbers were obviously small.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* notes that in the Russian heroic songs (Bylinen) the “Jewish Czar” – e.g. the warrior Shidowin in the old Bylina about Ilya and Dobrin’*a* – is “a favorite general moniker for an enemy of the Christian faith.” At the same time, it could also be a trace of memories of the struggle against the Khazars. Here, the *religious* basis of this hostility and exclusion is made clear. On this basis, the Jews were not permitted to settle in the Muscovy Rus.

The invasion of the Tatars portended the end of the lively commerce of the Kiev Rus, and many Jews apparently went to Poland. (Also, the Jewish colonization into Volhynia and Galicia continued, where they had scarcely suffered from the Tatar invasion.) The *Encyclopedia* explains: “During the invasion of the Tatars (1239) which destroyed Kiev, the Jews also suffered, but in the second half of the 13th century they were invited by the Grand Princes to resettle in Kiev, which found itself under the domination of the Tatars. On account of the special rights, which were also granted the Jews in other possessions of the Tatars, envy was stirred up in the town residents against the Kiev Jews.”

Something similar happened not only in Kiev, but also in the cities of North Russia, which “under the Tatar rule, were accessible for many merchants from Khoresm or Khiva, who were long since experienced in trade and the tricks of profit-seeking. These people bought from the Tatars the principality’s right to levy tribute, they demanded excessive interest from poor people and, in case of their failure to pay, declared the debtors to be their slaves, and took away their freedom. The residents of Vladimir, Suzdal, and Rostov finally lost their patience and rose up together at the pealing of the bells against these usurers; a few were killed and the rest chased off.” A punitive expedition of the Khan against the mutineers was threatened, which however was hindered

via the mediation of Alexander Nevsky. In the documents of the 15th century, Kievite Jewish tax-leasers are mentioned, who possessed a significant fortune.

### **The Judaizing Heresy**

A migration of Jews from Poland to the East, including White Russia [Belarus], should also be noted in the 15th century: there were leasers of tolls and other assessments in Minsk, Polotsk, and in Smolensk, although no settled congregations were formed there. After the shortlived banishment of Jews from Lithuania (1496) the eastward movement went forth with particular energy at the beginning of the 16th century.

The number of Jews that migrated into the Muscovy Rus was insignificant although influential Jews at that time had no difficulties going to Moscow. Toward the end of the 15th century in the very center of the spiritual and administrative power of the Rus, a change took place that, though barely noticed, could have drawn an ominous unrest in its wake, and had farreaching consequences in the spiritual domain. It had to do with the “Judaizing Heresy.” Saint Joseph of Volokolamsk (1439-1515) who resisted it, observed: “Since the time of Olga and Vladimir, the God-fearing Russian world has never experienced such a seduction.”

According to Kramsin it began thus: the Jew Zechariah, who in 1470 had arrived in Novgorod from Kiev, figured out how to lead astray two spirituals, Dionis and Aleksei; he assured them that only the Law of Moses was divine; the history of the Redeemer was invented; the Messiah was not yet born; one should not pray to icons, etc. Thus, began the Judaizing heresy. The renowned Russian

historian Sergey Solovyov (1820–79) expands on this, that Zechariah accomplished it “with the aid of five accomplices, who also were Jewish,” and that this heresy “obviously was a mixture of Judaism and Christian rationalism that denied the mystery of the holy Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Orthodox Priest Aleksei called himself Abraham, his wife he called Sarah and along with Dionis corrupted many spirituals and laymen. But it is hard to understand how Zechariah was able so easily to increase the number of his Novgorod pupils, since his wisdom consisted entirely and only in the rejection of Christianity and the glorification of Judaism. Probably, Zechariah seduced the Russians with the Jewish cabbala, a teaching that captured curious ignoramuses and in the 15th century was well-known, when many educated men sought in it the solution to all important riddles of the human spirit. The cabbalists extolled themselves ..., they were able... to discern all secrets of nature, explain dreams, prophecy the future, and conjure spirits.”

J. Gessen, a Jewish historian of the 20th century, presents in contrast the opinion: “It is certain that Jews participated neither in the introduction of the heresy... nor its spread.” (But with no indication of his sources). The encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron [1890-1906, Czarist Russian equivalent to the Encyclopedia Britannica] explains: “Apparently the genuinely Jewish element played no outstanding role, limiting its contribution to a few rituals.” The *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which appeared about the same time, writes on the other hand: “today, since the publication of the ‘Psalter of the Judaizers’ and other memorials, the contested question of the Jewish influence on the sects must... be seen as settled in a positive sense.”

The Novgorod heretics presented an orderly exterior, appeared to fast humbly and zealously fulfilled all the duties of piety. They made themselves noticed by the people and contributed to the rapid spreading of the heresy. When after the fall of Novgorod Ivan Vasilievich III (1440-1505) Grand Prince of Moscovy, united the greater Russian territory under Moscow's rule visited the city, he was impressed by their piety and took both of the first heretics, Aleksei and Dionis, to Moscow in 1480 and promoted them as high priests of the Assumption of Mary and the Archangel cathedrals of the Kremlin. With them also the schism was brought over, the roots of which remained in Novgorod. Aleksei found special favor with the ruler and had free access to him, and with his secret teaching enticed not only several high spirituals and officials, but moved the Grand Prince to appoint the archimandrite (head abbot in Eastern Orthodoxy) Zossima as Metropolitan, that is, the head of the entire Russian church — a man from the very circle of the those he had enticed with the heresy. In addition, he enticed Helena to the heresy — daughter-in-law of the Grand Prince, widow of Ivan the Younger and mother of the heir to the throne, the “blessed nephew Dimitri.”

The rapid success of this movement and the ease with which it spread is astonishing. This is obviously to be explained through mutual interests. When the ‘Psalter of the Judaizing’ and other works — which could mislead the inexperienced Russian reader, and were sometimes unambiguously anti-Christian — were translated from Hebrew into Russian, one could have assumed that only Jews and Judaism would have been interested in them. But also the Russian reader was interested in the translations of Jewish religious texts. This explains the success which the

propaganda of the ‘Judaizing’ had in various classes of society. The sharpness and liveliness of this contact is reminiscent of that which had emerged in Kiev in the 11th century.

The Novgorod Archbishop Gennadi uncovered the heresy in 1487, sent irrefutable proofs of it to Moscow, hunted the heresy out and unmasked it, until in 1490 a church Council assembled to discuss the matter under leadership of the just-promoted Metropolitan Sossima. “With horror, they heard the complaint of Gennadi, … that these apostates insult Christ and the mother of God, spit on the cross, call the icons idolatrous images, bite on them with their teeth and throw them into impure places, believe in neither the kingdom of Heaven nor the resurrection of the dead, and entice the weak, while remaining quiet in the presence of zealous Christians.” From the judgment of the Council it is apparent, that the Judaizers did not recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God, that they taught the Messiah had not yet appeared, that they observed the Old Testament Sabbath day rather than the Christian Sunday. It was suggested to the Council to execute the heretics but, in accordance with the will of Ivan III, they were sentenced instead to imprisonment and the heresy was anathematized. In view of the coarseness of the century and the seriousness of the moral corruption, such a punishment was extraordinarily mild.

The historians unanimously explain this hesitation of Ivan in that the heresy had already spread widely under his own roof and was practiced by well-known, influential people, among whom was Feodor Kuritsyn, Ivan’s plenipotentiary Secretary, famous on account of his education and his capabilities. The noteworthy liberalism of Moscow flowed from the temporary ‘Dictator of the Heart’ F. Kuritsyn. The magic of his secret salon was enjoyed even

by the Grand Prince and his daughter-in-law. The heresy was by no means in abatement, but rather prospered magnificently and spread itself out. At the Moscow court astrology and magic along with the attractions of a pseudo-scientific revision of the entire medieval worldview were solidly propagated, which was free-thinking and carried the appeal of enlightenment, and the power of fashion.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* sets forth moreover that Ivan III “out of political motivations did not stand against the heresy. With Zechariah’s help, he hoped to strengthen his influence in Lithuania,” and besides that he wanted to secure the favor of influential Jews from the Crimea: “of the princes and rulers of Taman Peninsula, Zacharias de Ghisolfi,” and of the Jew Chozi Kokos, a confidant of the Khan Mengli Giray or Girai.

After the Council of 1490 Sossima continued to sponsor a secret society for several years, but then was himself discovered, and in 1494 the Grand Prince commanded him to depose himself without process and to withdraw into a cloister, without throwing up dust and to all appearances willingly. The heresy however did not abate. For a time (1498) its votaries in Moscow seized almost all the power, and their charge Dmitri, the son of the Princess Helena, was coronated as Czar. Soon Ivan III reconciled himself with his wife Sophia Paleologos, and in 1502 his son Vassili inherited the throne. (Kurizyn by this time was dead.) Of the heretics, after the Council of 1504, one part was burned, a second part thrown in prison, and a third fled to Lithuania, where they formally adopted the Mosaic faith.

It must be added that the overcoming of the Judaizing heresy gave the spiritual life of the Muscovy Rus at turn of the 16th century a new impetus, and contributed to recognizing the need for spiritual education, for schools for

the spiritual; and the name of Archbishop Gennadi is associated with the collecting and publication of the first church-Slavic Bible, of which there had not to that point been a consolidated text corpus in the Christian East. The printing press was invented, and after 80 years this Gennadi Bible was printed in Ostrog (1580-82); with its appearance, it took over the entire orthodox East. Even academy member S. F. Platonov gives a generalizing judgment about the phenomenon: “The movement of Judaizing no doubt contained elements of the West European rationalism... The heresy was condemned; its advocates had to suffer, but the attitude of critique and skepticism produced by them over against dogma and church order remained.”

Today’s *Jewish Encyclopedia* remembers “the thesis that an extremely negative posture toward Judaism and the Jews was unknown in the Muscovy Rus up to the beginning of the 16th century,” and derives it from this struggle against the Judaizers. Judging by the spiritual and civil measures of the circumstances, that is thoroughly probable. J. Gessen however contends: “it is significant, that such a specific coloring of the heresy as *Judaizing* did not lessen the success of the sects and in no way led to the development of a hostile stance toward the Jews.”

Judging by its stable manner of life, it was in neighboring Poland that the biggest Jewish community emerged, expanded and became strong from the 13th to the 18th century. It formed the basis of the future Russian Jewry, which became the most important part of world Jewry until the 20th century. Starting in the 16th century a significant number of Polish and Czech Jews emigrated into the Ukraine, White Russia and Lithuania. In the 15th century Jewish merchants traveled still unhindered from the Polish-

Lithuanian Kingdom to Moscow. But that changed under Ivan IV the Terrible: Jewish merchants were forbidden entry.

When in 1550 the Polish King Sigismund August desired to permit them free entry into Russia, this was denied by Ivan with these words: “We absolutely do not permit the entry of the Jew into my lands, because we do not wish to see evil in our lands, but rather may God grant that the people in my land may have rest from that irritation. And you, our brother, should not write us on account of the Jews again,” for they had “alienated the Russians from Christianity, brought poisonous plants into our lands and done much evil to our lands.”

According to a legend Ivan the Terrible, upon the annexation of Polotsk in 1563, ordered all Jews to be baptized in response to complaints of Russian residents “against evil things and bullying” by Jews, leasers and others empowered by Polish magnates. Those that refused, apparently about 300 persons, are supposed to have been drowned in his presence in the Dvina. But careful historians, as e.g. J. I. Gessen, do not confirm this version even in moderated form and do not mention it once.

Instead of that, Gessen writes that under the False Dimitri I (1605-06) both Jews and other foreigners “in relatively large number” were baptized in Moscow. The story goes according to *In the Time of Troubles* by Sergey Ivanov, regarding the 15-year period of confusion following the failed Rurik Dynasty in 1598-1613 that the False Dimitri II, aka the “Thief of Tushino” was “born a Jew.” The sources give contradictory information regarding the ancestry of the Thief of Tushino. After the Time of Troubles Jews like Polish-Lithuanian folk in general had restricted rights in Russia. There was a prohibition against peddling in Moscow, and against traveling beyond Moscow at all. But the

ordinances were contradictory. Mikhail Feodorovich (Michael son of Theodore; 1613 became first Romanov chosen as czar) did not pursue a comprehensive policy against Jews. In the reign of his son Alexis Michaelovitch there was no sign of discrimination against Jews in the law books; free access was granted to all cities, including Moscow. During the seizure of Lithuania, as well as during later wars, the treatment of Jews in captivity was not worse than other foreigners.

After the Treaty of Andrusovo (1667) in which Smolensk, Kiev and the whole eastern bank of the Dnieper River remained Russian, Jews were invited to stay, and many did. Some converted to Christianity and some of these became heads of noble families. A small number of baptized Jews migrated to a Cossack village on the Don, and a dozen Cossack families are descended from them. Samuel Collins, an Englishman residing in Moscow at the time, related that “in a short time, the Jews have in a remarkable way spread through the city and court, helped by the mediation of a Jewish surgeon.” Under Czar Feodor III Jews were not to be assessed toll on entry to Moscow because they were not allowed in, whether with or without wares. But the practice did not correspond to the theory. In the first year of Peter the Great, doors were opened to talented foreigners, but not Jews on account of their being “rogues and deceivers.” Yet there is no evidence of limitations imposed on them, nor special laws. Indeed, Jews were found close to the Emperor:

\*Vice-chancellor Baron Peter Shafirov

\* close confidant Abram Veselovsky, later accused of thieving

\* his brother, Isaac Veselovsky

\* Anton de Vieira, general police master of Petersburg

\* Vivière, head of secret police

and others. To A. Veselovsky, Peter wrote that what matters is competence and decency, not baptism or circumcision. Jewish mercantile houses in Germany inquired whether Russia would guarantee their commerce with Persia, but never received an answer.

At start of the 18th century there was increased Jewish trade activity in Little Russia and Ukraine, a year before Russian merchants got the right to engage in such commerce. The Ukrainian Hetman Skoropadski gave order several times for their expulsion, but this was not obeyed and Jewish presence actually increased. Catherine, I decreed removal of Jews from Ukraine and Russian cities, but this only lasted one year. Peter II permitted Jews into Little Russia, first as “temporary visitors” on the ground of their usefulness for trade, then more and more reasons were found to make it permanent. Under Anna this right was extended to Smolensk and Slobodsky. In 1734 permission was given to Jews to distil brandy, and in 1736 it had permitted them to import vodka from Poland into Russia.

Baltic financier Levy Lipman probably bailed out the future czarina Anna financially while she was living in Courland. Later, he achieved a high rank in her court in financial administration, and received various monopoly rights. Elisabeth, however, issued a *ukase* (imperial Russian decree) one year after taking the throne in December 1742: “Jews are forbidden to live anywhere in our realm; now it has been made known to us, that these Jews still find themselves in our realm and, under various pretexts, especially in Little Russia. They prolong their stay, which is in no way

beneficial; but as we must expect only great injuries to our loyal subjects from such haters of the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, we order all Jews, male and female, along with their entire possession, to be sent without delay from our realm, over the border, and in the future not allowed back in, unless it should be that one of them should confess our Christian religion.”

This was the same religious intolerance that shook Europe for centuries. The way of thinking of that time was not unique in any special Russian way, nor was it an exclusively Jewhostile attitude. Among Christians the religious intolerance was not practiced with any less cruelty. Thus, the Old Believers, i.e. men of the same orthodox faith, were persecuted with fire and sword.

This *ukase* of Elisabeth was made known throughout the realm, but immediately attempts were made to move the ruler to relent. The military chancellor reported to the Senate from the

Ukraine that already 140 people were evicted, but that “the prohibition against Jews to bring goods in would lead to a reduction in state income.” The Senate reported to the Czarina that “trade had suffered great damage in Little Russia as well as the Baltic provinces by the *ukase* of the previous year to not allow Jews into the realm, and also the state purse would suffer by the reduction of income from tolls.” The Czarina answered with the resolution: “I desire no profit from the enemies of Christ.”

Sources are contradictory as to the number of Jews that were actually evicted, ranging from almost none to 35,000, the latter figure having questionable origins; strong resistance to the edict by Jews, land proprietors and the state apparati meant it was enforced almost as little as previous attempts had been. Catherine II, who became Czarina 1762

in consequence of a coup, also being a neophyte to Eastern Orthodoxy herself, was unwilling to start her reign opening things up for Jews, though the Senate advised it. Jews pressed for it and had spokesmen in Petersburg, Riga, and Ukraine. She found a way around her own law in permitting their entry for colonization into “New Russia,” the area between Crimea and Moldavia, which was still a wasteland. This was organized secretly from Riga, and the nationality of the Jews was kept more or less secret. Jews went there from Poland and Lithuania. In the first Partition of Poland, 1772, Russia reacquired White Russia (Belarus) along with her 100,000 Jews.

After the 11th century more and more Jews came into Poland because princes and later kings encouraged “all active, industrious people” from western Europe to settle there. Jews actually received special rights, e.g. in the 13th century from Boleslav the Pious; in the 14th century, from Kasimir the Great; in the 16th century from Sigismund I and Stephan Bathory; though this sometimes alternated with repression, e.g. in the 15th century by Vladislav Yagiello and Alexander, son of Kasimir. There were two pogroms in Krakow. In the 16th century several ghettos were constructed partly to protect the Jews. The Roman Catholic spirituals were the most continuous source of hostility to the Jewish presence. Nevertheless, on balance it must have been a favorable environment, since in first half of the 16th century the Jewish population increased substantially. There was a big role for Jews in the business activity of landlords, in that they became leasers of brandy-distilling operations.

After the Tatar devastation, Kiev in the 14th century came under Lithuania and/or Poland, and with this arrangement more and more Jews wandered from Podolia and Volhynia into the Ukraine, in the regions of Kiev,

Poltava, and Chernigov. This process accelerated when a large part of Ukraine came directly under Poland in the Union of Lublin, 1569. The main population consisted of Orthodox peasants, who for a long time had had special rights and were free of tolls. Now began an intensive colonization of the Ukraine by the Szlachta (Polish nobility) with conjoint action by the Jews. The Cossacks were forced into immobility, and obligated to perform drudgery and pay taxes. The Catholic lords burdened the Orthodox peasants with various taxes and service duties, and in this exploitation the Jews also partly played a sad role. They leased from the lords the “propination,” i.e. the right to distil vodka and sell it, as well as other trades. The Jewish leaser, who represented the Polish lord, received – of course only to a certain degree – the power that the landholder had over the peasants; and since the Jewish leasers strove to wring from the peasants a maximum profit, the rage of the peasants rose not only against the Catholic landlords but also against the Jewish leasers. When from this situation a bloody uprising of the Cossacks arose in 1648 under leadership of Chmelnitsky, Jews as well as Poles were the victims. An estimated 10,000 Jews died.

The Jews were lured in by the natural riches of the Ukraine and by Polish magnates that were colonizing the land, and thus assumed an important economic role. Since they served the interests of the landlords and the régime the Jews brought on themselves the hatred of the residents. N. I. Kostomarov adds that the Jews leased not only various branches of the privileged industries but even the Orthodox churches, gaining the right to levy a fee for baptisms.

After the uprising, the Jews, on the basis of the Treaty of Belaia Tserkov (1651) were again given the right to resettle in the Ukraine. As before, the Jews were residents

and leasers of the royal industries and the industries of the Szlachta, and so it was to remain. Going into the 18th century, brandy distilling was practically the main profession of Jews. This trade often led to conflicts with the peasants, who sometimes were drawn into the taverns not so much because they were well-to-do, but on account of their poverty and misery.

Included among the restrictions placed on the Polish Jews in response to demands of the Catholic Church was the prohibition against Jews having Christian house-servants. Because of the recruitment coupled with the state tax increases in neighboring Russia, not a few refugees came to Poland, where they had no rights. In the debates of Catherine's commission for reworking a new Law code (1767/68), one could hear that in Poland "already a number of Russian refugees are servants to Jews."

### **The Kahal And Civil Rights**

The Jews of Poland maintained a vigorous economic relation to the surrounding population, yet in the five centuries that they lived there, did not permit any influence from outside themselves. One century after another rolled by in post-medieval European development, while the Polish Jews remained confined to themselves and became increasingly anachronistic in appearance. They had a fixed order within themselves. Here it is granted, that these conditions, which later remained intact also in Russia until the middle of the 19th century, were favorable for the religious and national preservation of the Jews from the very beginning of their Diaspora. The whole of Jewish life was guided by the Kahal, which had developed from the communal life of the Jews. The Kahal, pl. *Kehilot* was the

autonomous organization of the leadership of the Jewish congregations in Poland.

The Kahal was a buffer between Polish authorities and the Jewish people; it collected taxes, for example. It took care of the needy and also regulated Jewish commerce, approved resales, purchases, and leases. It adjudicated disputes between Jews, which could not be appealed to the secular legal system without incurring the ban (*herem*). What may have started as a democratic institution took on the qualities of an oligarchy bent on maintaining its own power. In turn, the rabbis and Kahal had a mutually exploitative relationship, in that the rabbis were the executive enforcement arm of the Kahal, and owed their position to appointment by the Kahal. Likewise, the Kahal owed the maintenance of its power more to the secular régime than to its own people.

Toward end of 17th century and through 18th century, the country was torn by strife; the magnates' arbitrariness increased further. Jews became poor and demoralized, and hardened in early medieval forms of life. They became child-like, or better childish oldsters. 16th century Jewish spiritual rulers were concentrated in German and Polish Jewry. They put barriers up against contact with outsiders. The rabbinate held the Jews in firm bondage to the past.

The fact that the Jewish people have held themselves together in their diaspora for 2,000 years inspires wonder and admiration. But when one examines certain periods more closely, as e.g. the Polish/Russian one in the 16th and into the middle of the 17th century, and how this unity was only won by means of methods of suppression exercised by the Kehilot, then one no longer knows if it can be evaluated merely as an aspect of religious tradition. If the slightest trace

of such isolationism were detected amongst us Russians, we would be severely faulted.

When Jewry came under the rule of the Russian state, this indigenous system remained, in which the hierarchy of the Kahal had a self-interest. According to J. I. Gessen, all the anger that enlightened Jews felt against the ossifying Talmudic tradition became stronger in the middle of the 19th century: “The representatives of the ruling class of Jewry staked everything on persuading the [Russian] administration of the necessity to maintain this centuries-old institution, which reflected the interests both of the Russian power and of the ruling Jewish class; the Kahal in connection with the rabbis held all the power and not seldom abused it: it misappropriated public funds, trampled the rights of the poor, arbitrarily increased taxes and wreaked vengeance on personal enemies.” At the end of the 18th century the governor of one of the administrative regions attached to Russia wrote in his report: “The rabbis, the spiritual Council and the Kahal, which are knitted closely together, hold all things in their hand and lord it over the conscience of the Jews, and in complete isolation rule over them, without any relation to the civil order.”

In 18th century Eastern European Jewry two movements developed: the religious one of the Hassidim [or Hasidim, or Chasidim] and the enlightening one favoring secular culture, spearheaded by Moses Mendelsohn; but the Kehilot suppressed both with all its might. In 1781 the Rabbinate of [Lithuanian] Vilna placed the ban over the Hasidim and in 1784 the Assembly of Rabbis in [White Russian] Mogilev declared them as “*outlaws and their property as without owner.*” hereafter mobs laid waste to the houses of Hasidim in several cities, .e. it was an intraJewish pogrom. The Hasidim were persecuted in the most cruel and

unfair manner; their rivals did not even feel embarrassed to denounce them before the Russian authorities with false political charges. In turn, in 1799 the officials arrested members of the Kehilot of Vilna for embezzlement of tax money, based on the complaints of Hasidics. The Hasidim movement expanded, being especially successful in certain provinces. The rabbis had Hasidic books publicly burned and the Hasidim emerged as defenders of the people against abuses of the Kehilot. It is apparent that in those times the religious war between Jews overshadowed other questions of religious life.

The part of White Russia that fell to Russia in 1772 consisted of the Provinces of Polotsk (later Vitebsk) and Mogilev. In a communiqué to those governments in the name of Catherine it was explained that their residents “of whichever sex and standing they might be” would from now on have the right to public exercise of faith and to own property in addition to “all rights, freedoms and privileges which their subjects previously enjoyed.” The Jews were thus legally set as equals to Christians, which had not been the case in Poland. As to the Jews, it was added that their businesses “stay and remain intact with all those rights that they today...enjoy” – i.e. nothing would be taken away from Polish rights either. Through this, the previous power of the Kehilot survived: the Jews with their Kahal system remained isolated from the rest of the population and were not immediately taken into the class of traders and businessmen that corresponded to their predominant occupations.

In the beginning, Catherine was on her guard not only against any hostile reaction of the Polish nobility, from whom power threatened to slip away, but also against giving an unfavorable impression to her Orthodox subjects. But she did extend wider rights to the

Jews, whom she wished well and promised herself of their economic utility to the nation. Already in 1778, the most recent general Russian regulation was extended to White Russia: those holding up to 500 rubles belonged to the class of trade-plying townsmen; those with more capital, to the class of merchant, endowed into one of three guilds according to possession: both classes were free of the poll tax and paid 1% of their capital which was “declared according to conscience.”

This regulation was of particularly great significance: it set aside the national isolation of Jews up to that time – Catherine wanted to end that. Further, she subverted the traditional Polish perspective on Jews as an element standing outside the state. Moreover, she weakened the Kahal system, the capability of the Kahal to compel. The process began of pressing Jews into the civil organism. The Jews availed themselves to a great extent of the right to be registered as merchants – so that e.g. 10% of the Jewish population in the Mogilev Province declared themselves as merchants (but only 5.5% of the Christians.) The Jewish merchants were now freed from the tax obligation to the Kahal and did not have to apply to the Kahal any more for permission to be temporarily absent – they had only to deal with the cognizant magistrate. In 1780 the Jews in Mogilev and Shklov greeted Catherine upon her arrival with odes.

With this advance of Jewish merchants the civil category “Jew” ceased to exist. All other Jews had now likewise to be assigned to a status, and obviously the only one left for them was

“townsmen.” But at first, few wanted to be reclassified as such, since the annual poll tax for townsmen at that time was 60 kopecks but only 50 kopecks for “Jews.” However, there was no other option. From 1783, neither the Jewish

townsmen nor merchants needed to pay their taxes to the Kahal, but instead, to the magistrate, each according to his class, and from him they also received their travel passes.

The new order had consequences for the cities, which only took status into consideration, not nationality. According to this arrangement, all townsmen and thus also all Jews had the right to participate in the local class governance and occupy official posts. Corresponding to the conditions of that time this meant that the Jews became citizens with equal rights.

The entry of Jews as citizens with equal right into the merchant guilds and townsmen class was an event of great social significance. It was supposed to transform the Jews into an economic power that would have to be reckoned with, and raise their morale. It also made the practical protection of their life-interests easier. At that time the classes of traders and tradesmen just like the municipal commonwealth had a broad self-determination. Thus, a certain administrative and judicial power was placed into the hands of Jews just like Christians, through which the Jewish population held a commercial and civil influence and significance. Jews could now not only become mayors but also advisory delegates and judges.

At first limitations were enacted in the larger cities to ensure that no more Jews occupied electable positions than Christians. In 1786 however Catherine sent to the Governor General of White Russia a command written by her own hand: to actualize the equality of Jews “in the municipal-class self-governance unconditionally and without any hesitation” and to “impose an appropriate penalty upon anyone that should hinder this equality.” It should be pointed out that the Jews thus were given equal rights not only in contrast to Poland, but also earlier than in France or the

German states. (Under Frederick the Great the Jews suffered great limitations.) Indeed: the Jews in Russia had from the beginning the *personal* freedom that the Russian peasants were only granted 80 years later. Paradoxically, the Jews gained greater freedom than even the Russian merchants and tradesmen. The latter had to live exclusively in the cities, while in contrast the Jewish population could live in colonies in the country and distill liquor.

Although the Jews dwelled in clusters not only in the city but also in the villages, they were accounted as part of the city contingent inclusive of merchant and townsmen classes. According to the manner of their activity and surrounded by unfree peasantry they played an important economic roll. Rural trade was concentrated in their hands, and they leased various posts belonging to the landowners' privilege – specifically, the sale of vodka in taverns – and therewith fostered the expansion of drunkenness. The White-Russian powers reported: "The presence of Jews in the villages acts with harm upon the economic and moral condition of the rural population, because the Jews encourage drunkenness among the local population." In the stance taken by the powers that be, it was indicated among other things that the Jews led the peasants astray with drunkenness, idleness and poverty, that they had given them vodka on credit, received pledges in pawn for vodka, etc. But the brandy operations were an attractive source of income for both the Polish landowners and the Jewish commissioners.

Granted, the gift of citizenship that the Jews received brought a danger with it: obviously the Jews were also supposed to acquiesce to the general rule to cease the brandy business in the villages and move out. In 1783 the following decree was published: "The general rule requires every citizen to apply himself in a respectable trade and business,

but not the distilling of schnapps as that is not a fitting business," and whenever the proprietor "permits the merchant, townsman or Jew to distill vodka, he will be held as a law-breaker." And thus, it happened: they began to transfer the Jews from the villages to the cities to deflect them from their centuries-old occupation, the leasing of distilleries and taverns."

To the Jews the threat of a complete removal from the villages naturally appeared not as a uniform civil measure, but rather as one that was set up specially to oppose their national religion. The Jewish townsmen that were supposed to be resettled into the city and unambiguously were to be robbed of a very lucrative business in the country, fell into an innercity and inner-Jewish competition. Indignation grew among the Jews, and in 1784 a commission of the Kehilot traveled to St Petersburg to seek the cancellation of these measures. (At the same time, the Kehilot reasoned that they should, with the help of the administration, regain their lost power in its full extent over the Jewish population.) But the answer of the Czarina read: "As soon as the people yoked to the Jewish law have arrived at the condition of equality, the Order must be upheld in every case, so that each according to his rank and status enjoys the benefits and rights, without distinction of belief or national origin."

But the clenched power of the Polish proprietors also had to be reckoned with. Although the administration of White Russia forbade them in 1783 to lease the schnapps distilling to unauthorized person, especially Jews, the landlords continued to lease this industry to Jews. That was their right, an inheritance of centuries-old Polish custom. The Senate did not venture to apply force against the landholders and in 1786 removed their jurisdiction to relocate Jews into cities. For this a compromise was found: The Jews would be

regarded as people that had relocated to the cities, but would retain the right to *temporary* visits to the villages. That meant that those that were living in the villages continued to live there. The Senate permission of 1786 permitted the Jews to live in villages and Jews were allowed to lease from the landholders the right to produce and sell alcoholic beverages, while Christian merchants and townsmen did not obtain these rights.

Even the efforts of the delegation of Kehilot in St Petersburg was not wholly without success. They did not get what they came for – the establishment of a separate Jewish court for all contentions between Jews – but in 1786 a significant part of their supervisory right was given back: the supervision of Jewish townsmen i.e. the majority of the Jewish population. This included not only the division of public benefits but also the levying of poll tax and adjudicating the right to separate from the congregation. Thus, the administration recognized its interest in not weakening the power of the Kahal.

In all Russia, the status of traders and businessmen (merchants and townsmen) did not have the right to choose their residences. Their members were bound to that locality in which they were registered, in order that the financial position of their localities would not be weakened. However, the Senate made an exception in 1782 for White Russia: the merchants could move “as the case might be, as it was propitious for commerce” from one city to another. The ruling favored especially the Jewish merchants.

However, they began to exploit this right in a greater extent than had been foreseen: Jewish merchants began to be registered in Moscow and Smolensk. Jews began soon after the annexation of White Russia in 1782 to settle in Moscow. By the end of the 18th century the number of Jews in

Moscow was considerable. Some Jews that had entered the ranks of the Moscow merchant class began to practice wholesaling. Other Jews in contrast sold foreign goods from their apartments or in the courts, or began peddling, though this was at the time forbidden. In 1790 the Moscow merchants submitted a complaint to the government: “In Moscow has emerged a not insignificant number of Jews from foreign countries and from White Russia who as opportunity afforded joined the Moscow merchant guilds and then utilized forbidden methods of business, which brought about very hurtful damage, and the cheapness of their goods indicates that it involves smuggling, but moreover as is well-known they cut coins: it is possible, that they will also do this in Moscow.” As a response to their thoroughly cagey findings, the Moscow merchants demanded their removal from Moscow. The Jewish merchants appealed with a counter-complaint that they were not accepted into the Smolensk and Moscow merchant guilds.

The Council of Her Majesty heard the complaints. In accordance with the Unified Russian Order, she firmly established that the Jews did not have the right to be registered in the Russian trading towns and harbors, but only in White Russia. “By no means is usefulness to be expected” from the migration of Jews into Moscow. In December 1791, she promulgated a highest-order *ukase*, which prohibited Jews from joining the merchant guilds of the inner provinces, but permitted them for a limited time for trade reasons to enter Moscow. Jews were allowed to utilize the rights of the merchant guild and townsman class only in White Russia. The right to permanent residency and membership in the townsman class, Catherine continued, was granted in New Russia, now accessible in the viceregencies of Yekaterinoslav (“Glory of Catherine the Great”, later

changed to Dnepropetrovsk) and Taurida; that is, Catherine allowed Jews to migrate into the new, expansive territories, into which Christian merchants and townsmen from the provinces of interior Russia generally were not permitted to emigrate.

When in 1796 it was made known that groups of Jews had already immigrated into the Kiev, Chernigov and Novgorod-Syeversk Provinces, it was likewise granted there to utilize the right of the merchant guild and the townsman class. The pre-Revolution *Jewish Encyclopedia* writes: "The *ukase* of 1791 laid the groundwork for setting up the Pale of Settlement," even if it wasn't so intended. Under the conditions of the then-obtaining social and civic order in general, and of Jewish life in particular, the administration could not consider bringing about a particularly onerous situation and conclude for them exceptional laws, which among other things would restrict the right of residency. In the context of its time, this *ukase* did not contain that which in this respect would have brought the Jews into a less favorable condition than the Christians. The *ukase* of 1791 in no way limited the rights of Jews in the choice of residency, created no special borders, and for Jews the way was opened into new regions, into which in general people could not emigrate. The main point of the decree was not concerned with their Jewishness, but that they were traders; the question was not considered from the national or religious point of view, but only from the viewpoint of usefulness.

This *ukase* of 1791, which actually granted privileges to Jewish merchants in comparison to Christian ones, was in the course of time the basis for the future Pale of Settlement, which almost until the Revolution cast as it were a dark shadow over Russia. By itself, however, the *ukase* of 1791 was not so oppressive as to prevent a small Jewish colony

from emerging in St Petersburg by the end of the reign of Catherine II. Here lived the famous tax-leaser Abram Peretz and some of the merchants close to him, and also, while the religious struggle was in full swing, the rabbi Avigdor Chaimovitch and his opponent, the famous hassidic Tzadik Zalman Boruchovitch.

In 1793 and 1795 the second and third Partition of Poland took place, and the Jewish population from Lithuania, Poldolia, and Volhynia, numbering almost a million, came under Russia's jurisdiction. This increase in population was a very significant event, though for a long time not recognized as such. It later influenced the fate of both Russia and the Jewry of East Europe. After centuries-long wandering Jewry came under one roof, in a single great congregation.

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In the now vastly-expanded region of Jewish settlement, the same questions came up as before. The Jews obtained rights of merchant guilds and townsmen, which they had not possessed in Poland, and they got the right to equal participation in the class-municipal selfgovernment, then had to accept the restrictions of this status: they could not migrate into the cities of the innerRussian provinces, and were liable to be moved out of the villages.

With the now huge extent of the Jewish population, the Russian regime no longer had a way to veil the fact that the Jews continued to live in the villages simply by modeling it as a "temporary visit." A burning question was whether the economic condition could tolerate so many tradesmen and traders living amongst the peasants. In order to defuse the problem, many *shtetl* were made equal to cities. Thus, the

legal possibility came about for Jews to continue living there. But with the large number of Jews in the country and the high population density in the cities, that was no solution.

It seemed to be a natural way out that the Jews would take advantage of the possibility offered by Catherine to settle in the huge, scarcely-occupied New Russia. The new settlers were offered inducements, but this did not succeed in setting a colonization movement into motion. Even the freedom of the new settlers from taxes appeared not to be attractive enough to induce such a migration. Thus, Catherine decided in 1794 to induce the Jews to emigrate with contrary measures: the Jews were relocated out of the villages. At the same time, she decided to assess the entire Jewish population with a tax that was double that paid by the Christians. Such a tax had already been paid for a long time by the Old Believers, but applied to the Jews, this law proved to be neither effective nor of long duration.

Those were the last regulations of Catherine. From the end of 1796 Paul I reigned. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* evaluates him in this way: "The time of the angry rule of Paul I passed well for the Jews... All edicts of Paul I concerning the Jews indicate that the monarch was tolerant and benevolent toward the Jewish population." When the interest of Jews conflicted with Christians, Paul I by no means automatically sided with the Christian. Even when in 1797 he ordered measures to reduce the power of the Jews and the spirituals over the peasants, that was actually directed against the Jews: the point was the protection of the peasants. Paul recognized also the right of the Hasidim not to have to live in secrecy. He extended the right of Jews to belong to the merchant and townsmen-class even to the Courland Province which was no Polish inheritance, and later, it also did not belong to the Pale of Settlement. Consistent with that policy,

he denied the respective petitions of the parishes of Kovno, Kamenez-Podolsk, Kiev and Vilna, to be permitted to move the Jews out of their cities.

Paul had inherited the stubborn resistance of the Polish landholders against any changing of their rights; among these was the right over the Jews and the right to hold court over them. They misused these rights often. Thus, the Complaint of the Jews of Berdychiv [Ukraine] against the princes of Radziwill stated: “in order to hold our religious services, we must first pay gold to those to whom the prince has leased our faith,” and against Catherine’s former favorite Simon Zorich: “one ought not to have to pay him for the air one breathes.” In Poland, many *shtetl* and cities were the possession of nobles, and the landowners assessed arbitrary and opportunistic levies that the residents had to pay.

### **Derzhavin And the Belarus Famine**

Since the start of the reign of Paul I there was a great famine in White Russia, especially in the province of Minsk. The poet Gavrila Romanovich Derzhavin, then serving as Senator, was commissioned to go there and determine its cause and seek a solution — for which task he received no money to buy grain, but instead had the right to confiscate possessions of negligent landowners, sell their stockpile and distribute them.

Derzhavin was not just a great poet, but also an outstanding statesman who left behind unique proofs of his effectiveness which merits examination. The famine, as Derzhavin confirmed, was unimaginable. He writes “when I arrived in White Russia, I personally convinced myself of the great scarcity of grain among the villagers. Due to the very serious hunger — virtually all nourished themselves from

fermented grass, mixed with a tiny portion of meal or pearl barley. The peasants were malnourished and sallow like dead people. In order to remedy this, I found out which of the rich landowners had grain in their storehouses, took it to the town center and distributed it to the poor; and I commanded the goods of a Polish Count in view of such pitiless greed to be yielded to a trustee. After the nobleman was made aware of the dire situation he awoke from his slumber or better, from his shocking indifference toward humanity: he used every means to feed the peasants by acquiring grain from neighboring provinces and when after two months the harvest time arrived and the famine ended.” When Derzhavin visited the provincial government, he so pursued the noble rulers and district police captains that the nobility banded together and sent the Czar a scurrilous complaint against him.

Derzhavin discovered that the Jewish schnapps distillers exploited the alcoholism of the peasants: “After I had discovered that the Jews from profit-seeking use the lure of drink to beguile grain from the peasants, convert it into brandy and therewith cause a famine. I commanded that they should close their distilleries in the village Liosno. I informed myself from sensible inhabitants as well as nobles, merchants, and villagers about the manner of life of the Jews, their occupations, their deceptions and all their pettifogging with which they afflict the poor dumb villages with hunger; and on the other hand, by what means one could protect them from the common pack and how to facilitate for them an honorable and respectable way out to enable them to become useful citizens.”

Afterwards, in the autumn months, Derzhavin described many evil practices of the Polish landlords and Jewish leasers in his “Memorandum on the mitigation of famine in White Russia and on the lifestyles of the Jews,

which he also made known to the czar and the highest officials of state. This *Memorandum* is a very comprehensive document that evaluates the conditions inherited from the Poles as well as the possibilities for overcoming the poverty of the peasants, describing the peculiarities of the Jewish way of life of that time and includes a proposal for reform in comparison to Prussia and Austria.

The very explicit practical presentation of the recommended measures makes this the first work of an enlightened Russian citizen concerning Jewish life in Russia, in those first years in which Russia acquired Jews in a large mass. That makes it a work of special interest. The *Memorandum* consists of two parts: (1) on the residence of White Russian in general (in reviews of the *Memorandum* we usually find no mention of this important part) and (2) on the Jews.

In part one, Derzhavin begins by establishing that the agricultural economy was in shambles. The peasants there were “lazy on the job, not clever, they procrastinate every small task and are sluggish in field work.” Year in, year out “they eat unwinnowed corn: in the spring, Kolotucha or Bolotucha from eggs and rye meal. In summer, they content themselves with a mixture of a small amount of some grain or other with chopped and cooked grass. They are so weakened, that they stagger around.”

The local Polish landlords “are not good proprietors. They do not manage the property themselves, but lease it out, a Polish custom. But for the lease there are no universal rules protecting the peasants from overbearing or to keep the business aspect from falling apart. Many greedy leasers, by imposing hard work and oppressive taxes bring the people into a bad way and transform the into poor, homeless peasants.’ This lease is all the worst for being short-term,

made for 1-3 years at a time so that the leaser hastens to get his advantage from it without regard to the exhausting of the estate.”

The emaciation of the peasants was sometimes even worse: “several landlords that lease the traffic in spirits in their villages to the Jews, sign stipulations that the peasants may only buy their necessities from these leasers [at triple price]; likewise, the peasants may not sell their product to anyone except the Jewish lease holder, cheaper than the market price.” Thus “they plunge the villagers into misery, and especially when they distribute again their hoarded grain they must finally give a double portion; whoever does not do it is punished. The villagers are robbed of every possibility to prosper and be full.”

Then he develops in more detail the problem of the liquor distilling. Schnapps was distilled by the landlords, the landed nobility [Szlachta] of the region, the priests, monks, and Jews. Of the almost million Jews, two to three thousand lived in the villages and lived mainly from the liquor traffic. The peasants, “after bringing in the harvest, are sweaty and careless in what they spend; they drink, eat, enjoy themselves, pay the Jews for their old debts and then, whatever they ask for drinks. For this reason, the shortage is already manifest by winter... In every settlement there is at least one, and in several settlements quite a few taverns built by the landlords, where for their advantage and that of the Jewish lease-holders, liquor is sold day and night... There the Jews trick them out of not only the life-sustaining grain, but that which is sown in the field, field implements, household items, health and even their life.” And all that is sharpened by the mores of the koleda “... Jews travel especially during the harvest in autumn through the villages, and after they have made the farmer along with his whole

family drunk, drive them into debt and take from them every last thing needed to survive.... In that they box the drunkard's ears and plunder him, the villager is plunged into the deepest misery." He lists also other reasons for the impoverishing of the peasants.

Doubtless behind these fateful distilleries stand the Polish landlords. Proprietor and leaser acted in behalf of the owner and attend to making a profit: "To this class" Gessen asserts "belonged not just Jews but also Christians" especially priests. But the Jews were an irreplaceable, active and very inventive link in the chain of exploitation of these illiterate emaciated peasants that had no rights of their own. If the White Russian settlement had not been injected with Jewish tavern managers and leasers, then the wide-spread system of exploitation would not have functioned, and removing the Jewish links in the chain would have ended it.

After this Derzhavin recommended energetic measures, as for example for the expurgation of these burdens of peasant life. The landlords would need to attend to this problem. Only they alone who are responsible for the peasants should be allowed to distill liquor "under their own... supervision and not from far-removed places," and to see to it, that "every year a supply of grain for themselves and the peasants" would be on hand, and indeed as much as would be needed for good nutrition. "If the danger arises that this is not done, then the property is to be confiscated for the state coffers. The schnapps distilling is to begin no sooner than the middle of September and end middle of April, i.e. the whole time of land cultivation is to be free of liquor consumption. In addition, liquor is not to be sold during worship services or at night. Liquor stores should only be permitted in the main streets, near the markets, mills and establishments where foreigners gather."

But all the superfluous and newly-built liquor stores, “whose number has greatly increased since the annexation of White Russia are immediately to cease use for that purpose: the sale of liquor in them to be forbidden. In villages and out-of-the-way places there should not be any, that the peasant not sink into drunkenness.” Jews however should “not be permitted to sell liquor either by the glass or the keg... nor should they be the brew masters in the distilleries,” and “they should not be allowed to lease the liquor stores.” Koledas are also to be forbidden; as well as the shortterm leasing of operations. By means of exacting stipulations “the leaser is to be prevented from working an operation into the ground.” Market abuse to be forbidden under threat of punishment, by which the landlords do not permit their peasants to buy what they need somewhere else, or to sell their surplus somewhere other than to their proprietor. There were still other economic proposals: “in this manner the scarcity of food can in the future be prevented in the White Russian Province.”

In the second part of the *Memorandum*, Derzhavin, going out from the task given by the Senate, submitted a suggestion for the transformation of the life of the Jews in the Russian

Kingdom— not in isolation, but rather in the context of the misery of White Russia and with the goal to improve the situation. But here he set himself the assignment to give a brief overview of Jewish history, especially the Polish period in order to explain the current customs of the Jews. Among others, he used his conversations with the Berlin-educated enlightened Jew, physician Ilya Frank, who put his thoughts down in writing.

“The Jewish popular teachers mingle mystic-Talmudic pseudo-exegesis of the Bible with the true spirit of

the teachings... They expound strict laws with the goal of isolating the Jews from other peoples and to instill a deep hatred against every other religion... Instead of cultivating a universal virtue, they contrive... an empty ceremony of honoring God... The moral character of the Jews has changed in the last century to their disadvantage, and in consequence they have become pernicious subjects... In order to renew the Jews morally and politically, they have to be brought to the point of returning to the original purity of their religion... The Jewish reform in Russia must begin with the foundation of public schools, in which the Russian, German and Jewish languages would be taught."

What kind of prejudice is it to believe that the assimilation of secular knowledge is tantamount to a betrayal of religion and folk and that working the land is not suitable for a Jew? Derzhavin declined in his *Memorandum* a suggestion by Nota Chaimovitsh Notkin, a major merchant from Shklov, whom he had also met. Although Notkin demurred from the most important conclusions and suggestions of Derzhavin that had to do with Jews, he was at the same time in favor, if possible, of excluding the Jews from the production of liquor; and saw it as needful for them to get an education and pursue a productive career, preferably working with their hands, whereby he also held out the possibility of emigration "into the fruitful steppe for the purpose of raising sheep and crops."

Following the explanation of Frank who rejected the power of the Kehilot, Derzhavin proceeded from the same general consequences: "The original principles of pure worship and ethics" of the Jews had been transformed into "false concepts," by which the simple Jewish people "is misled, and constantly *is* so led, so much so that between them and those of other faiths a wall has been built that

cannot be broken through, which has been made firm, a wall that firmly binds the Jews together and, surrounded by darkness, separates them from their fellow citizens.” Thus in raising their children “they pay plenty for Talmud instruction – and that without time limit … As long as the students continue in their current conditions, there is no prospect for a change in their ways.... They believe themselves to be the true worshippers of God, and despise everyone of a different faith… There the people are brought to a constant expectation of the Messiah… They believe their Messiah, by overthrowing all earthly things will rule over them in flesh and blood and restore to them their former kingdom, fame and glory.”

Of the youths he wrote: “they marry all too young, sometimes before they reach ten years old, and though nubile, they are not strong enough.” Regarding the Kahal system: the innerJewish collection of levies provides “to the Kehilot every year an enviable sum of income that is incomparably higher than the state taxes that are raised from individuals in the census lists. The Kahal elders do not excuse anyone from the accounting. As a result, their poor masses find themselves in the condition of severe emaciation and great poverty, and there are many of them… In contrast, the members of the kahal are rich, and live in superfluity; by ruling over both levers of power, the spiritual and secular,… they have a great power over the people. In this way they hold them … in great poverty and fear.” The Kehilot “issues to the people every possible command… which must be performed with such exactitude and speed, that one can only wonder.” Derzhavin identified the nub of the problem thusly: “the Jews’ great number in White Russia … is itself a heavy burden for the land on account of the disproportion to that of the crop farmers… This disproportion is the

outstanding one of several important reasons that produces here a shortage of grain and other edible stores... Not one of them was a crop farmer at that time, yet each possessed and gobbled up more grain than the peasant with his large family, who had harvested it by the sweat of his brow... Above all, in the villages they ... are occupied in giving the peasant all their necessities on credit, at an extraordinary rate of interest; and thus the peasant, who at some time or other became a debtor to them, can no longer get free of it." Arching over this are the "frivolous landlords that put their villages into Jewish hands, not just temporarily but permanently." The landowners however are happy to be able to shift everything on to the Jews:

"according to their own words, they regard the Jews as the sole reason for the wasting of the peasants" and the landlord only rarely acknowledges "that he, if they were removed from his holdings, would suffer no small loss, since he receives from them no small income from the lease." Thus Derzhavin did not neglect to examine the matter from a variety of angles: "In fairness to the Jews we must point out also that during this grain shortage they have taken care to feed not a few hungry villagers—though everyone also knows that that came with a bill: upon the harvest being brought in, they will get it back 100-fold." In a private report to the Attorney General, Derzhavin wrote, "It is hard not to err by putting all the blame on one side. The peasants booze away their grain with the Jews and suffer under its shortage. The landholders cannot forbid drunkenness, for they owe almost all their income to the distilling of liquor. And all the blame cannot be placed even on the Jews, that they take the last morsel of bread away from the peasant to earn their own life sustenance."

To Ilya Frank, Derzhavin once said, “since the providence of this tiny scattered people has preserved them until the present, we too must take care for their protection.” And in his report he wrote with the uprightness of that time, “if the Most High Providence, to the end of some unknown purpose, leaves on account of His purposes this dangerous people to live on the earth, then governments under whose scepter they have sought protection must bear it... They are thus obligated extend their protection to the Jews, so that they may be useful both to themselves and to the society in which they dwell.”

Because of all his observations in White Russia, and of his conclusion, and of all he wrote in the *Memorandum*, and especially because of all these lines, and probably also because he “praised the keen vision of the great Russian monarchs which forbade the immigration and travel of these clever robbers into their realm,” Derzhavin is spoken of as a fanatical enemy of Jews, a great Anti-Semite. He is accused – though unjustly, as we have seen – of imputing the drunkenness and poverty of the White Russian peasant exclusively to the Jews, and his positive measures were characterized as given without evidence, to serve his personal ambition. But that he was in no wise prejudiced against the Jews, is indicated in that (1) his whole *Memorandum* emerged in 1800 in response to the actual misery and hunger of the peasants, (2) the goal was to do well by both the White Russian peasant and the Jews, (3) he distinguished them *economically* and (4) his desire was to orient the Jews toward a real productive activity, of whom, as Catherine planned, a part first and foremost was supposed to have been relocated in territories that were not closed.

As a critical difficulty Derzhavin saw the instability and transientness of the Jewish population, of which scarcely

1/6 was included in the census. “Without a special, extraordinary effort it is difficult to count them accurately, because, being in cities, shtetl, manor courts, villages, and taverns, they constantly move back and forth, they do not identify themselves as local residents, but as guests that are here from another district or colony.” Moreover, “they all look alike... and have the same name,” and have no surname; and “not only that, all wear the same black garments: one cannot distinguish them and misidentifies them when they are registered or identified, especially in connection with judicial complaints and investigations.” Therein the Kehilot takes care not “to disclose the real number, in order not unduly to burden their wealthy with taxes for the number registered.”

Derzhavin sought however a comprehensive solution “to reduce the number of Jews in the White Russian villages... without causing damage to anyone and thus to ease the feeding of the original residents; yet at the same time, for those that should remain, to provide better and less degrading possibilities for earning their sustenance.” In addition, he probed how to “reduce their fanaticism and, without retreating in the slightest from the rule of toleration toward different religions, to lead them by a barely-noticed way to enlightenment; and after expunging their hatred of people of other faiths, above all to bring them to give up their besetting intention of stealing foreign goods.” The goal was to find a way to separate the *freedom of religious conscience* from *freedom from punishment of evil deeds*.

Thereafter he laid out by layers and explicitly the measures to be recommended, and in doing so gave proof of his economic and statesmanlike competence. First, “that the Jews should have no occasion for any kind of irritation, to send them into flight or even to murmur quietly,” they are to

be reassured of protection and favor by a manifest of the Czar, in which should be strengthened the principle of tolerance toward their faith and the maintenance of the privileges granted by Catherine, “only with one small change to the previous principles.” (But those “that will not submit to these principles shall be given the freedom to emigrate” – a demand that far exceeded in point of freedom the 20th century Soviet Union).

Immediately thereafter it states: after a specific time interval, after which all new credit is temporarily forbidden, all claims of debt between Jews and Christians to be ordered, documented, and cleared “in order to restore the earlier relation of trust so that in the future not the slightest obstruction should be found for the transformation of the Jews to a different way of life... for the relocation into other districts” or in the old places, “for the assignment of a new life conditions.” Free of debt, the Jews are thus to be made as soon as possible into freemen. All reforms “for the equalization of debt of poor people” is to be applied to poor Jews, to deflect the payment of Kahal debts or for the furnishings for migrants. From the one group, no tax is to be levied for three years — from the other, for six years. Instead, that money is to be dedicated to the setting up of factories and work places for these Jews. Landowners must abandon obligating Jews in their *shtetls* to set up various factories, and instead begin on their estates to cultivate grain, “in order that they may earn their bread with their own hands,” but “under no circumstance is liquor to be sold anywhere, secretly or openly,” or these landholders would themselves lose their rights to the production of liquor.

It was also non-negotiable to carry out a universal, exact census of the population under responsibility of the Kahal elders. For those that had no property to declare as

merchant or townsman, two new classes were to be created with smaller income Jews: village burgher and “colonist” (where the denotation “krestyanin” or farmer would not be used because of its similarity to the word ‘Christian’.) The Jewish settlers would have to be regarded as free and not as serfs, but

“under no condition or pretext may they dare to take Christian man-or maidservants, they may not own a single Christian peasant, nor to expand themselves into the domain of magistrates and town fathers, so that they not gain any special rights over Christians. After they have declared their wish to be enrolled in a particular status, then must “the necessary number of young men” be sent to Petersburg, Moscow, or Riga – one group “to learn the keeping of merchant books,” second to learn a trade, the third to attend schools for agriculture and land management.

Meanwhile “some energetic and precise Jews should be selected as deputies... for all these areas where land is designated for colonization.” (There follows minutiae on the arrangements of plans, surveying the land, housing construction, the order to release different groups of settlers, their rights in transit, the grace-period in which they would remain tax-free – all these details that Derzhavin laid out so carefully we pass by.) On the inner ordering of the Jewish congregation: “in order to place the Jews ...under the secular authorities ... just the same as everyone else, the Kehilot may not continue in any form.” Together with the abolishment of the Kehilot is “likewise abolished all previous profiteering assessments, which the Kehilot raised from the Jewish people... and at the same time, the secular taxes are to be assessed... as with the other subjects” (i.e. not doubled), and the schools and synagogues must be protected by law.

“The males may not marry younger than 17 nor the females than 15 years.”

Then there is a section on education and enlightenment of the Jews. The Jewish schools to the 12th year, and thereafter the general schools, are to become more like those of other religions; “those however that have achieved distinction in the high sciences are to be received in the academies and universities as honorary associates, doctors, professors” – but “they are not... to be taken into the rank of officers and staff officers,” because “although they may also be taken into the military service, they will not take up arms against the enemy on Saturday, which in fact often does happen.” Presses for Jewish books are to be constructed. Along with synagogues are to be constructed Jewish hospitals, poor houses, and orphanages.

Thus Derzhavin concluded quite self-consciously: “thus, this cross-grained [scattered] people known as Jews... in this its sad condition will observe an example of order.” Especially regarding enlightenment: “This first point will bear fruit — if not today and immediately, definitely in the coming times, or at worst after several generations, in unnoticed way,” and then the Jews would become “genuine subjects of the Russian throne.” While Derzhavin was composing his *Memorandum*, he also made it known what the Kehilot thought about it, and made it clear that he was by no means making himself their friend.

In the official answers their rejection was formulated cautiously. It stated, “the Jews are not competent for cultivating grain nor accustomed to it, and their faith is an obstacle... They see no other possibilities than their current occupations, which serve their sustenance, and they do not need such, but would like to remain in their current condition.” The Kehilot saw moreover, that the report

entailed their own obsolescence, the end of their source of income, and so began, quietly, but stubbornly and tenaciously, to work against Derzhavin's whole proposal.

This opposition expressed itself, according to Derzhavin, by means of a complaint filed by a Jewess from Liosno to the Czar, in which she alleged that, in a liquor distillery, Derzhavin "horrifically beat her with a club, until she, being pregnant, gave birth to a dead infant." The Senate launched an investigation. Derzhavin answered: "As I was a quarter hour long in this factory, I not only did not strike any Jewess, but indeed did not even see one." He sought a personal reception by the Czar. "Let me be imprisoned, but I will reveal the idiocy of the man that has made such claims... How can your Highness... believe such a foolish and untrue complaint?" (The Jew that had taken the lying complaint was condemned to one year in the penitentiary, but after 2 or 3 months Derzhavin "accomplished" his being set free, this being now under the reign of Alexander I.)

The Czar Paul I was murdered in May 1801 and was unable to come to any resolution in connection with Derzhavin's *Memorandum*. It led at the time to small practical results, as one could have expected, since Derzhavin lost his position in the change of court.

Not until the end of 1802 was the "Committee for the Assimilation of the Jews" established to examine Derzhavin's detailed *Memorandum* and prepare corresponding recommendations. The committee consisted of two Polish magnates close to Alexander I: Prince Adam [Jerzy] Czartoryski and Count (Graf) Severin Potocki as well as Count Valerian Subov. Derzhavin observed regarding all three, that they too had great holdings in Poland, and would notice a significant loss of income if the Jews were to be

removed, and that “the private interests of the above-mentioned Worthies would outweigh those of the state.”)

Also on the committee were Interior Minister Count Kotshubey and the already-mentioned Justice Minister, the first in Russian history—Derzhavin himself. Michael Speransky also worked with the committee. The committee was charged to invite Jewish delegates from the Kehilot of every province and these – mostly merchants of the First Guild – did come. Besides that the committee members had the right to call enlightened and well-meaning Jews of their acquaintance. The already-known Nota Notkin, who had moved from White Russia to Moscow and then St Petersburg; the Petersburg tax-leaser Abram Perets, who was a close friend of Speransky; Yehuda Leib Nevachovich and Mendel Satanaver, — both friends of Perets – and others. Not all took part in the hearings, but they exercised a significant influence on the committee members. Worthy of mention: Abram Perets’ son Gregory was condemned in the Decembrist trial and exiled – probably only because he had discussed the Jewish Question with Pavel Pestel, but without suspecting anything of the Decembrist conspiracy – and because his grandson was the Russian Secretary of State, a very high position. Nevachovich, a humanist (but no cosmopolitan) who was deeply tied to Russian cultural life – then a rarity among Jews – published in Russian *The Crying Voice of the Daughter of Judah* (1803) in which he urged Russian society to reflect on the restrictions of Jewish rights, and admonished the Russians to regard Jews as their countrymen, and take the Jews among them into Russian society.

The committee came to an overwhelmingly-supported resolution: “The Jews are to be guided into the general civil life and education... To steer them toward

productive work" it should be made easier for them to become employed in trades and commerce, the constriction of the right of free mobility should be lessened; they must become accustomed to wearing ordinary apparel, for "the custom of wearing clothes that are despised strengthens the custom to be despised." But the most acute problem was the fact that Jews, on account of the liquor trade, dwelled in the villages at all. Notkin strove to win the committee to the view of letting the Jews continue to live there, and only to take measures against possible abuses on their part.

"The charter of the committee led to tumult in the Kehilot," Gessen wrote. A special convocation of their deputies in 1803 in Minsk resolved "to petition our Czar, may his fame become still greater, that they (the Worthies) assume no innovations for us." They decided to send certain delegates to Petersburg, explained, that an assembly had been held for that purpose, and even called for a three-day Jewish fast. Unrest gripped the whole Pale of Settlement. Quite apart from the threatened expulsion of Jews from the villages, the Kehilot took a negative stance toward the cultural question out of concern to preserve their own way of life. As answer to the main points of the Recommendation the Kehilot explained that the Reform must in any case be postponed 1520 years.

Derzhavin wrote "there were from their side various rebuttals aimed to leave everything as it was." In addition, Gurko, a White Russian landowner sent Derzhavin a letter he had received: a Jew in White Russia had written him regarding one of his plenipotentiaries in Petersburg. It said that they had, in the name of all Kehilot of the world, put the cherem or *herem*, (i.e. the ban) on Derzhavin as a Persecutor, and had gathered a million to be used as gifts (bribes) for this situation and had forwarded it to St Petersburg. They

appealed for all efforts to be applied to the removal of Derzhavin as Attorney General, and if that were not possible to seek his life. However the thing they wanted to achieve was not to be forbidden to sell liquor in the village tavern, and in order to make it easier to advance this business, they would put together opinions from foreign regions, from different places and peoples, on how the situation of the Jews could be improved. In fact such opinions, sometimes in French, sometimes, in German, began to be sent to the Committee.

Besides this, Nota Notkin became the central figure that organized the little Jewish congregation of Petersburg. In 1803 he submitted a brief to the Committee in which he sought to paralyze the effect of the proposal submitted by Derzhavin. Derzhavin writes that Notkin came to him one day and asked, with "feigned well-wishing," that he, Derzhavin, should not take a stand all alone against his colleagues on the Committee, who all are on the side of the Jews; whether he would not accept 100,000 or, if that was too little, 200,000 rubles, "only so that he could be of one mind with all his colleagues on the committee." Derzhavin decided to disclose this attempt at bribery to the Czar and prove it to him with Gurko's letter. He thought such strong proofs prove effective and the Czar would start to be wary of the people that surrounded him and protected the Jews. Speransky also informed the Czar of it, but Speransky was fully committed to the Jews, and from the first meeting of the Jewish Committee it became apparent that all members represented the view that the liquor distilling should continue in the hands of Jews as before.

Derzhavin opposed it. Alexander bore himself ever more coldly toward him and dismissed his Justice Minister shortly thereafter (1803). Beside this, Derzhavin's papers

indicate that whether in military or civil service he had come into disfavor. He retired from public life in 1805.

Derzhavin foresaw much that developed in the problematic Russo-Judaic relationship throughout the entire 19th century, even if not in the exact and unexpected form that it took in the event. He expressed himself coarsely, as was customary then, but he did not intend to oppress the Jews; on the contrary, he wanted to open to the Jews paths to a more free and productive life.

## **Chapter II. - Under the Reign of Alexander I**

By the end of 1804, the government committee on the Jews completed its work. The promulgation of the Regulations of 9 December 1804 were Russia's first comprehensive legal attempt to deal with the Jewish question. The Committee explained that the concept of population transfer was in the best interest of the Jews themselves and would allow them to prosper "opening the way to only their own benefit ... and removing anything from the road can still seduce them." The Regulations established the principle of civil equality of Jews in Article 42: "All Jews living in Russia are free and are made equal under the auspices of the precise laws along with other Russian subjects." According to the commentary of Prof. Gradowsky in this article, "one cannot ignore the desire to merge ... the people of the entire population of Russia." The Regulations opened more opportunities for the Jews than the original proposals of Derzhavin. There was the institution of textile and leather factories as well as the transition to agriculture in undeveloped land, and offers of direct state aid. The Jews were given the right to acquire land without serfs on it, but with the right to use hired workers including

Christians. Jewish factory owners, merchants and craftsmen were now entitled to travel outside the Pale of Settlement “for a while.” The Regulations confirmed all the rights of Jews to the inviolability of their property, personal liberty, to maintain their faith and freedom to form community groups, i.e. the Kahal, which was left in place without significant changes, even though this already undermined the idea of All-Russian Jewry citizenship, with the same right of collecting taxes, but without the right to increase its fees. A comprehensive plan for the establishment of Jewish schools was not adopted, but “all the children of the Jews may be admitted and trained, without any discrimination from other children, in all Russian schools, high schools and universities.” Jewish children attending those schools were not to be proselytized or discriminated against on religious grounds. The Regulations considered it necessary for Jews to master the local language, change their appearance and dress, and cooperate in the assignment of new family names for the purpose of a full and accurate census.

The Committee concluded that in other countries, “never had been used to this end means more moderate, more forgiving and more considerate of their [the Jews] concerns.” And Yu. Hesse agrees that Russian Regulations of 1804 impose fewer restrictions on Jews, for example, than the Prussian Regulations of 1797, more particularly in the fact that Jews acquire and maintain liberty, which at the time did not apply to many millions of serfs Russia. The 1804 law is imbued with tolerance.

The then widespread magazine *Herald of Europe* wrote: “Alexander knows what evils are attributed to the Jewish nation, and that the consequences of this deep-rooted oppression have crushed them in the course of many centuries.” The purpose of the new law was to give the State

of useful citizens, and Jews a proper the fatherland However, the most pressing question of all was on the *kagalom*, and Jewish employees of the Kahal. The Regulations asserted “No Jew ... in any village may maintain any tavern or inn, under his or someone else’s identity, nor may any Jew sell brandy or wine or live in any village.” The law set a date for the removal of Jews from villages outside the Pale of Settlement beginning in 1808. (We may remember that such a measure was planned under Paul I in 1797, and before Derzhavin, involving the removal of Jews from the villages and replacing them with a more productive class of people.) In theory the Jews were supposed to give up their taverns and distilleries and engage in agricultural work on vacant lands in the Pale and also in New Russia and Astrakhan provinces, (see below) and even the Caucasus, with a 10-year exemption from taxes and with the right to receive special treasury loans. During the ten favorable years, Jewish land ownership in the Pale expanded significantly.

On the prohibition of the Jewish trade in alcohol, the Committee argued that as long as the monopoly existed the Jews would continue to be held in hatred and contempt by their fellow citizens. Eviction from the villages outside the Pale and compulsion to engage in other more productive forms of labor were to the long-term of advantage of the Jewish people. Why would anyone seek to maintain only one single monopoly when now land ownership and many other ways of earning a living were open to them, albeit only in the legally designated areas?

The arguments seemed to be weighty. However, Hesse of the Committee stated that “It is naïve to believe that economic effects on the life of a people can be modified by purely mechanical means, by orders.” On the Jewish side there were protests against the planned expulsion from the

villages and the compulsory “secular occupation” of the Jews as horrible and cruel, and the 1804 law was still being condemned a century and a half later as such by Jewish historians.

Almost immediately after the Regulations of 1804 the European situation encroached on Russia and war began to loom with Napoleon. The Jews of Russia were fascinated with Bonaparte and the complete liberation of Jews which he had decreed in France, giving them full civil rights without compelling them to do any physical labor and allowing them to work at nonstrenuous, purely administrative and economic occupations. Napoleon established a Jewish Sanhedrin in Paris to act as a kind of early European-wide council for Jewish affairs, under French tutelage of course, and Russian Jewry participated in this.

In 1806, Alexander I created a new committee to consider the advisability or otherwise of delaying the relocation of Russian’s Jews within the Pale of Settlement. The expulsion of the Jews from the villages laid down by the 1804 law was originally to be completed by 1808, but there were practical difficulties, and in 1807 Alexander submitted a memorandum on the need to postpone the eviction. At the same time the Czar issued a royal decree that allowed all of Jewish society to elect a body of deputies to assist in the successful execution of the 1804 Regulations. These elections of deputies of the Jewish western provinces were held, and their responses were presented to St Petersburg in various attempts to delay the eviction indefinitely. One major consideration was that Jewish tavern keepers were currently receiving free living accommodation from the landlords from whom they leased their premises, while in towns and cities they would have had to pay rent. The Interior Minister reported that the resettlement of Jews from their present

villages of residence would need several decades due to their large numbers. By 1808 the political situation and military threat to Russia from events in Europe was such that Alexander temporarily suspended the key articles commanding the Jews to relocate and forbidding them to engage in the alcohol trade until further notice.

As a stopgap, in 1809 the Czar established yet another committee under Senator Popov for studying the whole range of Jewish issues in conjunction with the elected Jewish deputies. Unsurprisingly, after three years, in 1812 this body presented a report to the throne recommending that the expulsion of the Jews to the Pale of Settlement be suspended and that Jews be allowed to continue to lease taverns and trade in alcohol. Alexander I did not approve the report since he did not want arbitrarily to throw out the previous laws of 1804, and he remained steadfast in his desire to protect the Russian peasant from Jewish predation. He declared himself ready to soften the Regulations somewhat but not to abandon them entirely. But then events intervened in the form of Napoleon's invasion of Russia. The massive and total eviction of all Russian Jews and their resettlement in outlying areas as envisioned by the 1804 law never took place, although the process was briefly attempted and did proceed slowly and sporadically throughout the remainder of the 19th century. (see below)

### **The Jews and the Napoleonic Invasion**

During the 1812 invasion, in some locations the Jews were the only residents who did not flee the French army into the woods or elsewhere. These Jews refused to join Napoleon's army as soldiers but supplied the French

troops with forage and provisions unquestioningly. In other areas

Jewish merchants assisted the Russian military through allowing them to use “Jewish mail,” a private network of couriers and postal stations in taverns that transmitted information with unprecedented speed. Individual Jews were sometimes used as couriers for communication between the units of the Russian army since they could pass through French-held territory more easily than military riders. When the Russian army returned after beating back the French, most of the Jews made a great show of enthusiastically welcoming the Russian troops, giving them bread and wine. Even the future Nicholas I wrote in his diary: “It is surprising that in 1812 they [the Jews] were perfectly true, and even helped where they could, with danger to their own life.” With the cession to Russia after 1814 of central Poland, the empire acquired more than 400,000 more Jews, and the Jewish problem for the Russian government worsened accordingly. In 1816 the

Council of State of the Kingdom of Poland, which still existed, decided to begin the expulsion of Jews from the villages, allowing Jews to remain only for direct agricultural work without the help of Christians. But the Warsaw kahal appealed immediately the Russian Emperor, and Alexander released Jews who had been put to manual labor and confirmed the right of the Jews to engage in commerce and to trade in vodka.

However, in the Senate Rules of 1818 Jewish leasers and liquor sellers were again excoriated. The Jews were accused of forcing Russian peasants into lifelong debt, keeping the peasants drunk and poor, taking their cattle and tools in exchange for liquor, etc. During those years the future Decembrist Pestel served in the Russian army in the

western provinces, i.e. Poland. Certainly no defender of autocracy and an ardent Republican, Pestel wrote some of his observations about the Jews he studied:

“Waiting for the Messiah, the Jews consider themselves temporary townsfolk where they are, and therefore do not want to engage in agriculture or artisanship and are for the most part engaged in selling merchandise ... Jewish clerics called rabbis contain their people in isolation by forbidding in the name of faith ever reading any books but the Talmud ... People who will not seek enlightenment will always remain under the power of prejudice ... The dependence on Jewish rabbis is so ingrained that every order is executed faithfully and unquestioningly. The close relationship between Jews gives them the means to accumulate large sums of money ... for their common needs, particularly for the corruption of various rulers to covetousness and to all kinds of abuse. For them, the Jews are useful. They easily become sovereign in those provinces where they have their residence. All trade is in their hands and there is little that peasants who have no means of paying their debts can do. The former government [that of Catherine] gave them many different rights and benefits, reinforcing the evil that they do, such as the right not to give recruits [to the army], the right not to declare the dead, the right to sue each other in their own rabbinical courts, and moreover, they enjoy all of the same rights as Christian nations...they constitute a special and completely separate state and the fact is that in Russia today, they have more rights than Christians themselves. This state of affairs cannot continue, as it condones the hostile attitude of the Jews to the Christians and put them into a position contrary to public order in the country.”

## The Last Years of the Reign

In the last years of the reign of Alexander I, there were general economic and other prohibitions against Jewish activities. Golitsyn reported to the Committee of Ministers that

“Christians are living in the homes of the Jews, not just forgetting and living without fulfilling the duties of the Christian faith, but taking the customs and rituals of Jewish worship.”

The decision was taken to prohibit Jews to take in servants of the Christian faith. It was considered that “it would be good for the poor Jews who could replace Christian servants”. However, this did not happen. (And no wonder: in the Jewish city, there was mass poverty and misery, urban Jews being mostly poor, barely earning their livelihood, but never was the opposite was observed: the Jews did not go into home service for Christians.) From 1823 Christians were allowed to rent property to Jews in the case of tax-farmers only. There were as always endless loopholes around the law, in many cases the law was simply ignored, and strict observance of the ban was almost never carried out in practice. .

In those same years, in response to the rapid development of the sect of Subbotniks, in Voronezh, Samara, Tula and other provinces of the Pale steps were taken steps to taken to suppress the worst Jewish abuses. For example, in 1821 the Jews who were charged with “grievous bondage” of peasants and Cossacks, were expelled from the rural areas of Chernigov province, and in 1822 from the villages of Poltava.

In 1824, when riding in the Ural mountain range on a botanical expedition, Czar Alexander I noticed a significant

number of Jews who engaged in the secret purchase of precious metals, corrupting local inhabitants to the detriment of the treasury and private investors. They similarly undermined the treasury by engaging in widespread smuggling along the western border of Russia, transportation of goods and products in both capital and in trade. Governors denounced them, asserting that smuggling involved mostly Jews, especially in densely populated border strips. In 1816 there an order was issued in Volyn province completely to evict all Jews from a 50-vérst border strip. The eviction from this province lasted five years and was considered only partially successful; from 1821 on the new governor allowed the Jews to return. In 1825 a government resolution was held in common, but was much more cautious: only those Jews who had not been assigned to a local *kagalom* would be subject to expulsion, or who had property in the border that could be used as bases for smuggling. However, the measure was not carried out consistently.

### **The “New Russia” Experiment**

At the time of the Regulations of 1804, when the clear intention was to evict Jews from the villages of the sensitive and potentially dangerous western provinces, the governmental authorities asked the question: where to relocate them? Cities and towns were already densely populated, and this was exacerbated by the fierce competition in petty trade at a very weak point in the development of productive labor. Meanwhile, the vast south of Ukraine was sparsely populated, almost empty. It made obvious sense to evict from the villages the unproductive Jewish mass and turn them to agriculture in what was called New Russia. Ten years earlier,

Catherine tried to implement this idea, including a double tax to encourage Jewish emigration, but this measure failed because there was no accurate census or accounting of the numbers and whereabouts of the Jewish population. The Jews were known only by first names or nicknames and the Kahal hid almost half the Jewish population from the authorities.

Now 30,000 acres of land were specifically allocated solely for the use of Jews, as an initial land grant with the possibility of further grants based on need. The government offered generous benefits for immigrants: in New Russia Jews could receive hereditary possession (not ownership) for a family of 40 tithes (the Russian average peasant allotment was a few tithes, rarely as much as ten), cash loans for relocation and device management (the purchase of livestock, equipment and so on), loans repayable only after 10 years, and a preliminary construction of chopped-timber huts for immigrants (in this area not only all poor men but even some landowners lived adobe houses). In addition there was an exemption from taxes for 10 years, and this while preserving personal liberty in the time of serfdom and the legal protection of the authorities.

Enlightened Jewish figures, while still very few (Notkin, Levinsohn), also supported the government's initiative and were reasonably aware of the need for the Jewish people to move to productive work, although they emphasized that this should be achieved by measures of encouragement rather than coercion.

The epic of Jewish agriculture in Russia is presented in bulky and painstaking labor by the Jew V. N. Nikitin, who devoted many years to the study of the vast and unpublished archives of the official correspondence in Petersburg on the subject of Jewish settlement in New Russia. All this is

abundantly represented in his book, with layered sets of documents and statistics from multiple sources and sometimes contradictory reports from inspectors over a period of many years, overly rich for our very brief overview of the material here. Nikitin admits that the government's goal, besides the problem of development of vast uninhabited land, was to settle Jews and to bring them into productive physical labor and to remove them from the "bad trades" in which they had for so many years inflicted misery on the peasants and the serfs. "The government ... invites them to apply themselves to agriculture, with a view to improving their own life." The Jews were not lured by the promises of the government, and on the contrary evaded resettlement by a variety of means.

The resettlement idea was essentially benevolent in intention, but it was not in conformity with the desires of the Jews themselves and was frankly beyond the limited organizational capabilities of the Russian administration. It was reserved for the Jews in the New Russia Tithing, and then for decades kept inviolable just for them. Publicist I.G. Orsha later expressed the proposition that Jewish agriculture could only be successful through the transfer of stateowned land to the Jews right there nearby in Belarus, in the villages where they had lived before. However, there simply wasn't enough state land in Belarus for the purpose. For example, in Grodno Province there were only 200 tithes of state land, and this poor and infertile soil where the entire population suffered from crop failure.

However, the Jews were not in a hurry to become farmers. Only three dozen families applied to move to New Russia. The hope of the Jews was that their eviction from their villages in the western region, i.e. Poland, would be delayed or canceled or simply forgotten. They were given a

three-year term to relocate under the Regulations of 1804, but still delayed, and migration did not start. As the fateful deadline of January 1, 1808 approached, a kind of rush developed especially since rumors of profitability had grown. Now a few Jews began to apply, although nowhere near the entire Jewish population of Belarus. Some even secretly went in groups without permission and even without the passport.

The Kherson office of trustees for Jewish settlers had not had time to build houses, dig wells, and steppe distance created a lack of master craftsman, doctors and veterinarians. The government did not stint any money or reasonable accommodation nor sympathy for the settlers, but the governor of Richelieu in 1807 asked St. Petersburg to limit the pace of introduction to 200,300 families per year, and only to receive those who were able to move at their own expense. In the case of crop failure, the state fed these people for several years in a row. Poor settlers received daily food. However, the governors of the western region began randomly expelling Jews from their territories and losing track of how many had been expelled, and many Jews who were allegedly bound for settlements in New Russia simply disappeared along the way into the cities or shtetls of the countryside.

The immense distances on the Ukrainian steppe, where there could be up to three hundred miles from the office to the colony, made it almost impossible for the authorities to exercise any control or even to make any accurate assessment over how many and who was arriving. There was a lack of housing, wells, and facilities. Lack of accurate administration, correct accounting and distribution led to the fact that some settlers received more than others. They complained about the non-receipt of feed and loans. The small colony caretakers were unable to function.

Rangers were paid a miserable wage, they often did not have horses, and had to try to operate on foot. In many cases, after two years at the new location the settlers had no economy, no crops, no food.

There were problems with the settlers' land titles. Records-keeping on deductions and loans was a shamble; loan money disappeared and so did many of the Jewish settlers, who appeared in the colonies, got whatever they could get by way of loans or goods from the government, and then fled to nearby cities where they loitered and resumed their former habits of money-lending, liquorselling, merchandising and other wonted trades minimal on physical labor. Many offices and inspection reports reflect how the new settlers were farming. The settlers claimed to be completely ignorant of the most basic principles of agriculture and the state ended up hiring Russian peasants to teach them how to farm. Jews were given special allocations of seed grain that were either wasted or sold; they were given agricultural implements that they broke or sold. They slaughtered their cattle for food, and then complained about the lack of cattle. Many Jews got their start as auctioneers and livestock brokers through selling off their own livestock given to them by the government. The homes provided for them by the government were not maintained and were illegally sold to Russian peasants.

Many complained that they did not expect that they themselves would certainly be forced to engage in agricultural work, but obviously they understood corn-hired workers, cattle markets and and trade fairs.

Settlers continued to beg for help from the treasury. They complained that they had no clothing, but government inspectors stated that this was because they would not keep sheep or sew hemp, and Jewish women either could not or

would not spin or weave. In his report one of the inspectors stated that "the Jews cannot cope with the economy of the worry-free life, due to small diligence and inexperience in rural work." However, he considered it appropriate to add "one ought to prepare for agriculture from a young age and Jews 45 and 50 years old who have lived a pampered life cannot soon make farmers.") The fiscal expenditures required to maintain the settlers doubled and tripled, and the local officials were all the time requesting supplements.

St. Petersburg determined that many of the problems came down to the fact that the Jews intentionally evaded tillage. The influx of Jewish settlers on the public expense in the New Russia, out of control and failing miserably, was temporarily suspended in 1810. In 1811 the Senate restored the right of Jews to sell wine in the state-owned villages repurchased in the Pale, and when it was learned in New Russia, the news caused many who had migrated to New Russia to leave and return to whence they came, and many others to open illegal taverns and establish illegal alcohol trades in New Russia itself. By 1812 it was revealed that already out of a settlement of 848 families left, there were 538 absences in 88 families where Jews had gone to Kherson, Nikolaev, Odessa, even Poland.

The government understood that the program was a débâcle, and probably would have given up on the project sooner than it did, had there been some reliable way to recover the vast sums of money they had spent on trying to relocate the Jews and turn them into farmers. How to ensure the return of the treasury debt to those who would be allowed to switch occupations from being farmers; how to fix, without burdening the treasury, the shortcomings of those people who remain farmers, and how to achieve the central goal of changing the character of the Jewish people and

dealing with the problem they represented to Russian society? Neglect, absence, delay in delivery of grain or funds; Jews who sold property they had been given to start news lives with; as well as abuse such as bribery for permission for a long absence even for the main workers in the family, which caused the destruction of the economy immediately.

In the state of the Jewish colonies and after the 1810-1812 is is hard to see improvement. Oxen, livestock and implements were sold or abused or broken. Fields were sown late and thin, and as close as possible to their homes. Other fields were sown five or more years in a row, and no potatoes were planted to replace bread. Year after year local authorities reported crop failures or "seed not collected." (Under the terms of the Regulations, a bad harvest meant settlers would be entitled to absence in order to work elsewhere.) Jews did not cherish their livestock. Oxen were used to pay rent, with the bulls were hired out for carting, cattle were starved and then slaughtered for food and claims for compensation put in to the government claiming the animals had died of disease. The Jewish settlers refused to take the most basic care of their property or animals. "They do not care to have a strong barn or pen to which to divert the cattle at night. It would be difficult; at night, they indulge in endless sleep; shepherds are children or lazy, and on holidays and Saturday they drive all without shepherds and will not even try to catch thieves. They murmur against their coreligionists who work hard and bring in excellent harvests, lest the authorities say this shows the ability of Jews to do agriculture, and compel them to engage in it." They "do not fit with the agriculture ... they set out secretly to practice as little arable farming as they can, so as to give the appearance of failure that they might be allowed to return to the sale of

wine, again allowed to their co-religionists [back in Old Russia]. Cattle, tools and seed they buy several times, again and again to lend to feed. Quite many of them, getting a loan, and regardless of the masters, are in the village just in time for cash distributions, and then go with money to county towns and villages for fisheries." Others endowed with land sold it and albeit in vagrancy, lived in Russian settlements for several months, sometimes with passports missing. That unsettled Izrailevka Kherson province, "its settlers considered themselves entitled to engage in fisheries and settled only to enjoy the benefits" of the 32 families who lived on the site of 13.

Numerous inspections noted the absence of female Jewish agricultural workers. When Jewish women married their parents entered into conditions with the prospective bridegroom that did not force them either to heavy field work, or even to carry water or daub huts; hired workers would do this. Jewish husbands were also contractually bound to procure them ornaments for the holidays fox and rabbit fur bracelets, hats, and even pearls, things of luxury and extravagance such as silk, silver and gold. These conditions forced the young people to meet the whims of their wives to the ruin of their farms, while other settlers did not have winter clothes. Marriage took place too early, significantly sooner among the Jews than among the other peasants. Large extended families created all living in the same house created untidiness of life and scurvy. But some women did marry commoners and leave the settlements.

In numerous denunciations from Jewish settlers from different colonies were heard repeated complaints that prairie land was so solid that it required four pairs of oxen to plow, the frequent crop failures, the lack of water, lack of fuel, poor pernicious climate leading to disease, to hail, locusts. There

was some truth to this but much exaggeration as well. Settlers with the smallest of grievances immediately complained and always increased their claims, but when they were right they were compensated.

However, says Nikitin, in the same wilderness, in the same years, the same virgin soil, and under the same locusts, German colonists and Mennonites and Bulgarians prospered, at least by comparison to the Jews. They suffered the same lean years, the same disease, but they always had bread and cattle, lived in in clean and attractive houses with many outbuildings, ample gardens and greenhouses. (The difference was so striking that individual German colonists were invited to live in the Jewish colonies that they might pass on the experience and set an example.) The Russian peasants, says Nikitin by way of explanation “gravitated over them the yoke of serfdom ... they took everything stoically and demolished any adversity. Jewish colonists bailed out everywhere ... they attracted runaway serfs who were paid by the settled colonists. FarmerJews took in vagabonds with affection and greetings for the tramp who willingly helped them to plow, sow and reap; and some, to better hide, even joined the Jewish religion. These cases were detected and in 1820 the government forbade Jews to take Christians into their service.

Meanwhile, in 1817 the 10-year tax exemption for Jewish settlers ended, and now the time had come to equalize them in taxes with the state peasants. Immediately a movement started of settlers' collective petitions, but also among officials, requesting an extension of benefits for another 15 years. Golitsyn, a personal friend of Alexander I, the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, who dealt with all matters relating to the Jews made a decision: to extend the Jews' tax exemption for 5 years, and the payment

of the debt for the loan to 30 years. Nikitin found these petitions by Jewish colonists “extremely characteristic in their content.”

In 1807 Ilie Menashe, a prominent Talmudic scholar, but also a champion of education, published and sent to rabbis his book (soon withdrawn from circulation by the rabbinate, and next subject to mass burning), in which he noted the dark side of Jewish life. There was poverty and unusually large families, but “could it be otherwise, when the mouths of the Jews were more than the hands? It is necessary to convince the mass [of Jews] that their own work should produce their own livelihood ... Young people do not have any earnings, yet they marry, hoping for the mercy of God and the purse-law, and when this support is crumbling, they are already burdened with families, they rush to the first available activity, even if not honest. Crowds take up trade, but it cannot feed all, and therefore it is necessary to resort to deception. That is why it is desirable that the Jews turn to farming. Bums under the mask of ‘scholars’ live at the expense of charity and at the expense of the community. There is nobody to take care of the people: the rich are busy thinking about profit, and the rabbis the strife between the Hasidim and *mitnagdim* (Orthodox Jews). And the only concern of the Jewish leaders is to prevent bad luck in the form of government regulations, even if they carry with them the benefit of the people.” And now, “the existence of a significant Jewish population serves as a small commercial and industrial and intermediary activity. Jews overly fill the cities with petty trade” And how could it be healthy, the economy of the Jewish people in such circumstances?

However, a later Jewish author, already in the middle of the 20th century wrote about that time: “It is true that Jewish masses lived in poverty and distress. But the Jewish

collective as a whole was not a beggar,” They saw the life of Jews of the western provinces, participants in Napoleon’s army in 1812, just pass through these places. Under Dokshyts (?) Jews were “rich and prosperous, they conduct major trade with the whole of Russian Poland and even visit the Leipzig Trade Fair.” The Jews had the right to produce alcohol and vodka and honey, they were tenants or owners with taverns located on the main roads. The Jews of Mogilev were prosperous and conducted extensive trade (although “along with them were the terrifying poor.”). Almost all the local Jews had patents on the trade in alcohol. More from a third-party witness: “in Kiev ... countless Jews.” The common feature of Jewish life was satisfaction, although not universally.

From psychological and domestic point of view, observers found Russian Jewry characterized by “constant vigilance to his fate and identity, to his struggle and self-defense.” The “domineering and authoritative social forms for the preservation of life” were prominent in them. Adaptation to the new conditions of life was largely a collective adaptation and not individual. And we need to appreciate the organic coalescence and unity, which in the first half of the 19th century gave Russian Jewry a definable character in the world. This world was too small, limited, and subject to harassment associated with suffering and hardship, and yet to them it was the whole world. Man there is not choked. It was possible in this world to feel the joy of life to be found in it, to find material and spiritual sustenance, and it was possible to build a life in it to taste and mood. The value here was the fact that the spiritual aspect of the team had been associated with traditional scholarship and the Jewish language.

Another author of the same collection of accounts of Russian Jewry noted that “injustice, material poverty and social humiliation hampers the growth of self-esteem among the people.” Like almost every question related to Judaism, it is difficult and the picture presented here is of those years. We should never lose sight of this complexity and always keep it in mind, undeterred by apparent contradictions between different authors.

Once, before the expulsion from Spain, Judaism marched in front of other people on the path of progress, Eastern European Judaism now came to the first half of the 18th century, to complete cultural impoverishment. Disenfranchised and isolated from the outside world, it withdrew into itself. The Renaissance passed without affecting it, as did the intellectual movements of the 18th century in Europe. But this Jew was strong within himself. Bound by countless religious prescriptions and prohibitions, a Jew was not only burdened by them but also saw them as a source of endless joy. His mind found satisfaction in the small dialectics of the Talmud, in the sense of mysticism of Kabbalah. Even Bible study receded into the background, and knowledge of grammar was considered almost a crime.

### **The Progress to Modern Education**

A strong movement of Jews toward modern education began in Prussia with the second half of the 18th century. This became known as the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment). It was a movement of intellectual awakening, the desire to ingest a European education and raise the prestige of the Jews, humiliated in the eyes of other nations. At the critical study of the historical past of the Jews, *Haskalah* figures. *Maskilim* (“enlightened ones”) wished to combine Jewish culture

harmoniously with the European knowledge. Initially, they intended to stay in traditional Judaism, but, fascinated, began to sacrifice the Jewish tradition and became inclined to assimilate, while showing contempt for the national language, i.e. Yiddish. In Prussia, the movement lasted only one generation, but quickly moved to the Slavic provinces of the Austrian Empire, Bohemia and Galicia. In Galicia the champions of the *Haskalah*, with even greater assimilation bias, were ready to enforce a lot of Jewish education, and even often resorted to the help of the authorities for this. The border of Galicia with the western provinces of Russia leaked people and influences. With a delay of almost a century this movement penetrated into Russia.

In Russia, since the beginning of the 19th century, the government strove for the Jews to overcome isolation outside of religion and worship. A Jewish author confirmed that the government in no way violated the religion of the Jews or their religious life. “We have already seen the position of 1804 swing open without restrictions and without reservation all the way for Jewish children in schools, high schools and universities. But the Jewish ruling class intended to destroy cultural and educational reform in the bud and bent to this effort. The Kahal exerted strenuous efforts to extinguish the slightest glimmer of enlightenment. In order to preserve the integrity of the established-from-time-immemorial religious and social life and rabbinism, Hasidism equally radically trampled the young shoots of secular education.

And now the Jewish masses looked with horror and suspicion on the Russian school, not wanting to hear about it. In 1817 and then in 1821 there were cases in different provinces when Kahals would not allow Jewish children to be taught the Russian language in any common schools. Jewish deputies in St. Petersburg insisted that they “do not

consider it necessary to the establishment of such Jewish schools,” where no languages would be taught except Hebrew. They recognized only cheder (elementary school in Hebrew) and yeshiva (to increase and deepen knowledge of the Talmud); there was a yeshiva in almost every major community. Jewish masses in Russia were in a state of suspended animation from which they could not escape, despite the effort of enlightened educators.

First there was Isaac Ber Levinsohn, a scientist who lived in Galicia, where he was in contact with the leaders of the *Haskalah*, and who worked with the rabbinate and also the perpetrators of many Hasidic troubles. Based on the Talmud and rabbinic literature, he argued in his book *Instructions to Israel* that the Jew must not be denied the knowledge of heretofore forbidden languages, especially the language of the state where they live, so necessary in his personal and public life; that familiarity with the secular sciences did not endanger religious and national sentiment. Levinsohn taught that the predominance of commercial activities is contrary to the Torah and mind, and it is necessary to develop productive work. But for the publication of the book, Levinson had to use a grant from the Ministry of Education. He was convinced that cultural reform in Judaism cannot be realized without the support of the highest authorities.

The Warsaw teacher Gezeanovsky on the contrary did not rely on the Talmud, and strongly opposed it, attributing to the kagalom rabbinate the “spiritual congestion in which people lived petrified,” and that only “the after depreciation of their [the rabbis’] power may be the secular school be introduced.” *Melamedov* (Orthodox teachers) check and prevent the teaching of pedagogically useful and moral knowledge; the Kahal had to be eliminated from financial

management of the community and the allowable age for marriage had to be raised.

Even earlier, both of them already mentioned Giller Markevitch in a memorandum to the Minister of Finance, who wrote that “for the salvation of the Jewish people from spiritual and economic decline, Kahals must be destroyed. Non-Jewish languages should be taught to organize their factory labor, and allow trade freely across the country and use the services of Christians.” And later, in the 30s, it is largely the same, repeated by Chernigov merchant Litman Feigin and repeated more forcefully, through Benkendorf and Nicholas I Feigin was supported in bureaucratic circles. He defended the Talmud, but attacked the Melamed, claiming that they were “past ignorant” ... [they] teach theology based on fanaticism” and “inspire children contempt for other sciences, as well as hatred of the infidels.” He, too, thought it necessary to abolish Kahals. (Hesse, serial enemy of the Kahal system expresses that Kahal despotism was the “dumb anger” in the Jewish people. )

However, longer in coming was any practical way to force through secular education in a Jewish environment. The only exception was Vilna, under the influence of relations with Germany, and a group of maskilim in Odessa, young capital of New Russia, with many Jewish immigrants from Galicia (porous borders), but inhabited by ethnic diversity and full trade movement. Here the Kahal felt strong and intellectuals, on the contrary, felt independent and culturally merged with the surrounding population, including in their clothing and appearance. Even though most Odessa Jews resisted the establishment of schools of general education, the efforts of the local administration in the 30s and in Odessa and Chisinau achieved some success in secularizing Jewish education in those areas.

Throughout the 19th century, the development of Russian Jewry had historic consequences for Russia and for all humanity in the 20th century. Through concentration of the will, Jewry was able to break out of still-dangerous conditions achieve a lively and varied life. By the middle of the 19th century the revival and flowering of Russian Jewry tood out visibly.

### Chapter III. – Under the Reign of Nicholas, I

Nicholas, I was energetically opposed to Russian Jewry. Sources say that half of all official acts taken against Jews between the time of Alexei Mikhailovich to the death of Alexander II were initiated by Czar Nikolai. In Jewish historiography, the cruel and firm character of the monarch is consistently confirmed.

However, the personal intervention of Nicholas I was not always negative for the Jews. One instance is a case which was held over from the reign of Alexander I, the Velizh Affair.

Local Jews were accused of the ritual murder of a Christian boy. Says the *Jewish Encyclopedia*,

“There is no doubt that the acquittal of the accused Jews was largely due to the Sovereign’s determination to seek the truth, in spite of opposition from people whom he trusted.”

In another well-known case involving the prosecution of Jews, the Mstislavl riot, “The Emperor willingly sought out truth; although in a moment of anger he imposed punishment on the local Jewish population, he did not refuse to recognize his mistakes.” After the acquittal on Velizh case, Nicholas wrote to the local police and judiciary, making it clear that “other solutions cannot follow,” essentially ordering that there was to be no violence directed or allowed against the Jewish population. He added his inner conviction that ritual murder did take place, but this were the work of “Jews of some fanatical sect; unfortunately, among us Christians, there are sometimes sects no less terrible and incomprehensible.” Nicholas, I and many of his entourage continued to believe that some groups of Jews practiced ritual murder. This case and others confirmed the existing

prejudice that the Jewish faith is a danger to the Christian population.

Nicholas saw a danger that the Jews would convert Christians to Judaism. In 1823, the Interior Minister reported on the widely disseminated heresy of Judaizers in Russia. (See Chapter I) Legal measures were taken against quasi-Jewish sects and many of these formally returned to the Orthodox Church, although there was heavy suspicion that they continued secretly to observe Jewish rituals. All this led to a great deal of legislation regarding Jews in the era of Nicholas I, much of it with a distinctly religious tinge. His own religious belief left its mark on the decisions and actions of Nicholas I with respect to the Jews, such as his insistence on banning Jews use of Christian servants, in particular nurses, because “the service of the Jews insults and weakens the Christian faith in women.” In spite of repeated bans these orders were difficult to enforce and never carried out entirely.

### **Congscription of Jews**

The first measure was to equate Jews with the Russian population in bearing the burdens of state, namely to apply the conscription laws to young Jewish men, something which had never before been attempted. Prior to this, Jews had instead been taxed for the privilege of not serving their country. At this point in history draftees in Imperial Russia were inducted between the ages of 12 and 25, and for no less than 25 years. The underlying purpose of the new conscription law was to reduce the number of Jews who were not engaged in productive labor, but it was also believed that isolating a recruit from a wholly Jewish environment and breaking the iron spiritual hand of the rabbis would facilitate adaptation to the nationwide order of life. Gradually greater numbers of Jews were called to the colors and at earlier ages.

The Imperial decree on Jewish conscription met with massive resistance and evasion. There was much internal opposition from within the government itself, and various departments were slow to implement the order. The Council of Ministers debated as to whether it was ethical to take such a measure “to limit the multitude of the Jews” and “recognized the impropriety of taking people for money,” as Finance Minister E.F. Kankrin wrote. The *kagalom* (kahals) made every possible effort to protect the Jewish population from impending conscription or somehow to delay it. Exasperated by the foot-dragging, Nicholas ordered the relevant authorities to submit a final report as soon as possible, but the kahals seem to have exerted every possible influence to slow the process down or tie it up with bureaucratic red tape. Some military officers were also opposed to the move, and somehow the report was never filed. Yu. Hesse concludes “That mysterious episode hardly occurred without the participation of the Kahal.” Nicholas, exasperated, introduced conscription for Jews on his own in 1827.

There were loopholes in the new law. It completely exempted merchants of all guilds, residents of agricultural colonies, guild masters, mechanics in factories, rabbis, and all Jews who had secondary or higher education. This had the effect of Jews rushing frantically to enter themselves or their sons into the exempted occupations, or to obtain fraudulent documentation that they had done so. One common trick was to hire a Christian substitute to report for induction; at one stage the going rate for a Gentile recruit to replace a Jewish one was 500 rubles. In any event, records show that on average in most years only 10 conscripts per 1000 Jewish males were served with call-up notices.

The Jews protested that the bulk of conscription came down on the back of the Jewish poor. In 1829, Nicholas I attempted to take in an excess of Jewish recruits to cover unpaid back taxes from the Jewish community. This measure was soon halted due to abuse on the part of both excessively zealous local authorities and Jews who moved heaven and earth to evade the draft. Hesse wrote of this period that it was an “abnormality” in Russian legislation, and in Russia in general there was a tendency to impose greater obligations on the Jews than on another subject’s due to their alien nature.

Nicholas I remained determined to convert Jews into ordinary Russian citizens. One such project was the creation of “cantonments” similar to those created by Peter the Great in the 18th century for the sons of soldiers serving those long 25-year hitches, a kind of school for training military children and orphans for later service with the army. The revival of this traditional institution was thought by bureaucrats of the time to be quite suitable for Jewish boys, desirable because it would create early and long separation from their Jewish environment. With this in view, the 1827 decree granted the Jewish community at its discretion the right to provide a minor male child not younger than 12 years of age in place of a single adult recruit.

The *New Jewish Encyclopedia* refers to this measure as “a most heavy blow.” This was not exactly conscription as such, since the Russian army did not accept 12-year-old soldiers, but it gave the government a chance to remove at least a few young Jews from the *shtetl*, get them out of the yeshivas, place them in a secular environment in the cantonments and give them a proper education in some kind of physical and beneficial trade. At the age of 18 they would enter the regular army and exercise these trades. Local Kahals appear to have on at least some occasions used this

provision to fob the army off with the 12-year-old son of a poor family instead of a more economically or socially desirable young man, recompensing the new recruit's family monetarily for the loss of their son.

According to statistics from the military archives of the General Staff accounts, in 18471854, the year's most young Jews were sent to cantonments, they accounted for an average of 2.4% from all the cantonments in Russia, that is, their share does not exceed the proportionate share of the Jewish population the country, even according to the low *kagalom* data for the then Census.

It should be said that conditions in the Imperial army were not quite as grim as they may sound today. Soldiers were allowed to marry and live with their families in their place of garrison, and at the end of their 25 years of service could be given land in agricultural colonies or legal residence in towns and cities to practice a trade. Jews, however, were conditioned to a sedentary life in the more desirable cities and provinces of the Empire. Jewish soldiers found it difficult to maintain their faith, keep the Sabbath, adhere to the kosher dietary laws, and so on.

Jewish youngsters in the cantonment schools found it still more difficult to remain "good Jews" in the face of deliberate state pressure to secularize and adapt themselves to the modern world. One of the first things they were taught was to read and write in Cyrillic Russian, thus giving them intellectual access to the world outside the *shtetl*. It is difficult to determine how effective the cantonments were in secularizing or converting Jewish pupils. Jewish literature and oral tradition from this period are full of horror stories of abuse and coerced conversion, Jewish children drowned in rivers if they refused to become Christians, and so on. (800

of them at one go, according to legend, in a botched attempt at mass baptism.) At this distance in time it is hard to ascertain the degree of truth in these allegations, especially given the historical propensity of the Jewish people to embellish the undoubted reality of their suffering down through the centuries. It is certain that Nicholas I and his government proceeded with a deliberate policy of separating the Jewish students in the military cantonment schools from their heritage and dragging them into the modern world willy-nilly. However, stories of hundreds of Jewish children drowned in rivers by Czarist bureaucrats may probably be disregarded.

Obviously, some of the students in the cantonments must have converted in order to obtain the benefits of full participation in Russian society, and it was later to their advantage to exaggerate in the eyes of the Tribe the degree of force and coercion to which they were subjected. Also, as took place in Spain and elsewhere down through the centuries, many of the conversions were false conversions of convenience, and those involved continued to practice Judaism in secret.

After a Belarusian famine in 1822 Alexander I had sent inspectors to the Pale, and they essentially returned with the same conclusions that Derzhavin made a quarter of a century before. In 1823 the Czar established a Jewish Committee consisting of four ministers to address yet again the issue on what to do with the Jews and how to transform them into useful and productive citizens of the Russian state living in at least some semblance of peace and harmony with their Christian neighbors. In 1825 this Jewish Committee of ministers was replaced by a Director's Committee (the fifth in a row) consisting of directors of departments, which

studied and largely evaded the problem for another eight years.

Nicholas, I was too impatient to await this committee's final report and so he unilaterally introduced Jewish conscription, as described above. Once again, the Czar decreed a three-year period for the expulsion of the Jews from the villages of the western provinces, to at least try and get them away from the border areas, as well as a ban on their selling wine and liquor. Later he prohibited actual ownership or leasing of taverns and inns by Jews, but as was the case with all such measures, enforcement was spotty at best. In 1827 Nicholas introduced what amounted to a national liquor licensing system throughout the Empire, along with an attempt to turn many taverns throughout the Empire into government postal stations and lease them out to Christians, but without the Jews there were not enough bidders. What inevitably occurred was that official licenses for the sale of alcohol and tavern and inn leases fell into the hands of Jews, through various acts of chicanery or simple outright bribery of local officials. State efforts to compel Jews to perform productive physical labor failed time and again.

Another prominent Jewish economic activity in Imperial Russian history was the hated practice of tax farming. In addition to the high level of income though both legitimate and corrupt taxation, tax farmers under the Czars enjoyed full rights of residence and freedom of movement, and lived freely in the capital and other cities outside the Pale. Some tax farmers became prominent Jewish public figures, such as Feigin and Litman Evzel Gunzburg who went on to found a St. Petersburg banking house, the largest in Russia, and later took part in the placement of Russian and foreign government loans.

In 1826, Nicholas I ordered the eviction back to the Pale of Settlement of Jewish distillers and tavern keepers who had infiltrated into Great Russia, and in an attempt to replace them the state-owned and state-operated liquor industry was born, but with little success as far as barring Jews went. Jews infiltrated the state distilleries such as those in Irkutsk.

Throughout his reign the autocratic power of Nicholas, I, never succeeded in the kind of complete transformation of Jewish life and forced assimilation of the Jewish people he envisioned. So, it was with Jewish farming. The charter of conscription and military service for Jews in 1827 specifically exempted Jews who were members of government agricultural colonies from military service for a period of 50 years. This understandably led to at least a brief return of Jewish men to those colonies from their authorized and unauthorized absences, until other ways were found around the law and they were able to return to the cities and their multifarious nonmanual labor trades. By 1829 more detailed rules had been developed for Jewish farmers, involving rental to burgers or Christian citizens, payment of all debts, and permitting absences of draft-age men from the farm of up to three months V. N. Nikitin admits that when comparing the Jewish farmers' rights and benefits to those enjoyed by other taxpaying classes it cannot be denied that the government favored the Jews.

So, from 1829 to 1833 many Jews became zealous farmers, at least on paper. After the Turkish war of 1829 Jewish settlers, like all the colonists, begged the Czar to forgive all arrears in respect to taxes due to the burden they bore in feeding the troops. But according to reports of the Trusteeship Committee, a poor harvest in 1833 made it

impossible to hold Jews in the colonies. According to the Committee many Jews simply did not want to practice rural employment. Jews who were supposed to be farming refused to sow anything, or very little. They sold cattle in order to wander, to beg and not pay taxes. In 1834, they sold bread and cattle given to them by the government and the local authorities, owing to the difficulties in supervision, were unable to prevent “crafty twists” by settlers. Crop failures among Jews occurred more frequently than among other villagers because, in addition to sowing few crops, they worked the land randomly and out of season.

One would think that the 30-year-old experience of attempted Jewish arable farming would have been enough for the Russian government to give up the project and save the immense amount of money being wasted, but Czar Nicholas pressed on. He strongly believed in the beneficial effect of a secularized education for Jewish children to wean them away from the grip of the rabbis, and to overcome the Jewish alienation from the general population, which he saw as the main danger. In 1831, he memorandized the Director’s Committee that “among the measures that could improve the situation of the Jews, it is necessary to pay attention to the correction of their training institutions and to prohibition early marriage ... “Clearly the Czar intended to control and reduce their numbers. In 1840 yet another of these interminable committees stated as their primary objective “to act on the moral education of a new generation of Jews, and an establishment of Jewish schools in the spirit, not the current Talmudic doctrine.”

In 1835 His Majesty approved the Regulations of the Jews (the result of the work of Director’s Committee). Jewish agriculture was not only retained as the centerpiece of government Jewish policy but extended. Any Jew was now

permitted to go into farming and having done so, any arrears in taxes he might have would be erased. Jews were now allowed not only to receive state-owned land but to buy, sell, and rent land within the Pale of Settlement. Embracing the agricultural life earned a Jew exemption from poll tax. Jews turning into farmers were exempt from the poll tax for 25 years with 10 years' exemption county taxes and 50 years from conscription. Yet Jews remained an infinitesimal proportion of the nation's farmers. The majority of Jews continued to avoid agriculture or any manual labor like the plague. It is true that many Jews were often artisans—tailors, shoemakers, watchmakers, jewelers, anything involving remaining indoors all day. The Jewish national aversion to being outdoors whenever it can be avoided becomes even more pronounced.

The pre-revolutionary *Jewish Encyclopedia* says that the Jews began to contribute to the development of large-scale industry in the form of finance, and many of them followed Jewish development in Western countries and made money itself their stock in trade and profession. Jews were bankers and state tax-farmers, money-lenders and money-changers. Even a great taxfarmer and financier such as Shinkarev demanded and personally collected all payments from his tenants and debtors in cash.

By the 1840s there was a great development of the sugar industry in the southwest regions of Russia. Jewish capitalists and landlords first invested in and subsidized sugar mills, and then took over their management, and then built their own factories. In Ukraine and New Russia arose powerful sugar kings, for example Lazar and Lev Brodsky. Most Jewish sugar kings began their careers as tavern

owners and winesellers in the Pale. A similar pattern was visible in the textile milling industry.

Nicholas, I saw himself as an autocrat on the model of Peter the Great, authoritatively determined to mold the entirety of the Russian state and society to his liking, and like all autocrats he reduced the complexity of the human experience to simple, clearly understandable issues and obstacles to be overcome. The 1840 government committee on the perpetual Jewish problem floated a proposal on how to overcome the religious and national alienation of the Jews, with some input from prominent Tribesmen such as Levinson, Feigin, and Gezeanovsky. The government attempted to “explore the root of [the Jews’] persistent alienation from the common civil life and the absence among them of useful labor, and the proliferation of the harmful class of petty industry accompanied by all sorts of tricks and deceptions.” This “idleness” among many Jews was attributed to their “inveterate habits.” Nicholas believed that the Jewish mass could indeed find productive occupation but that they rejected some types of labor due to their traditions.

Minister Count Kiselyov suggested to the Emperor a measure of Jewish classification into two categories: in the first category, those who had settled and established wealth and property, the second to include those did not. Jews in the second category were to be given a 5 year period in order to become guild craftsmen or farmers. After five years, those who do not comply and yet remained in the state would be considered “useless” and applied to special military and labor service: they would be conscripted at age 20 at three times the normal Jewish intake, not for the usual 25 years of military service, but only for 10 years and were to use that ten years to learn a productive craft or trade which they

would practice on discharge—that is, to give them compulsory job training.

This project was approved by Nicholas I; the term “useless Jews” was replaced by “those with no productive work.”) Other measures also went forward, such as laws for the destruction and disbandment of the Kahal in all its forms; the establishment of government-sanctioned “provincial rabbis”; mandatory secular secondary education for Jews in an attempt to dismantle the yeshiva system; more settlement of Jews on state-owned land with plows thrust into their hands; and finally, a ban on the wearing of traditional Jewish dress. These laws of various kinds were in effect in Russia for almost a third of a century, and none of them worked. The 1840 regulations provided a five-year period of pre-employment selection, and through assorted bureaucratic misadventure which may or may not have arisen from massive bribes by the Jews to various Czarist functionaries, the measure itself was only officially promulgated in 1846, so that the analysis phase was to be completed in January 1852. In 1843, arguing against the “parsing” of the Jews, the GovernorGeneral of New Russia M. Vorontsov wrote that the occupation of the “numerous class of small traders and middlemen referred to the number of useless [80 percent] of the Jewish people”—that is, 80 percent of Jews were mainly involved in trade. But Vorontsov hoped that the spacious conditions and economic potential of the Novorossiysk Territory would attract enough Jews to make coercive measures unnecessary. He also warned about probable European indignation due to the “analysis,” and indeed this tendency on the part of European Jewry to meddle in Russia’s internal affairs did become of concern, notably with the Moses Montefiore intervention described below.

In order to avoid adverse European reaction provoked by previous attempts to evict Jews from the border zone, in 1846 the Russian government publicly announced a new policy: that the Jews in Poland had no nationality, no right to immovable property, and were forced to restrict their activities to petty trade and moneylending. While under the ongoing transition in Russia Jews received increased civil and economic rights, entry into the state of Russian commercial life, commercial, real property rights, the right to join an agricultural colony and the right to [secular] education, including universities and academies.<sup>1</sup> Clearly the objective was to try to lure the large Jewish population out of Poland and herd them into the vast interior, where they would not have an already surly and volatile Gentile population to subject to their predations, thus creating even more instability in Poland.

And let it be made clear that the Jews did in fact receive all these rights during the first decades in the notorious “prison of peoples” as Czarist Russia came to be called, in many cases enjoying legal status and economic benefits far superior to Gentiles. However, a century later, Jewish authors would recall a time of mass expulsions from the villages (occasionally begun but almost never completed); double taxation (often imposed and just as often canceled every few years); the establishment of Pale (we have seen that, in the circumstances of the late 18th century the boundaries of Settlement were initially the Jews’ geographical heritage, the lands where they already lived.)

The 1846 decree stated “Always a stranger to merger with the civil society among which they [the Jews] live, they have remained in their previous mode of existence at the expense of the labor of others, giving rise to fair complaints ... For the benefit of all, there is a need to take them out of

dependence on the elders of the community.” The Jewish population needed education and practical knowledge, to acquire which the government proposed to establish a special Jewish secondary school, provide the means for then to transition to farming, an idea which successive Czarist governments seemed unable ever completely to let go of.

Also in 1846, the Jewish Sir Moses Montefiore arrived in Russia with a letter to Nicholas from Queen Victoria, his mission being to “improve the plight of the Jewish people” in Russia. He toured some cities, densely populated by Jews; then from England he sent the Emperor a long letter with a proposal to release the Jews from all restrictive legislation, to grant them “equality with all other subjects” (except, of course, the serfs), “and as soon as possible eliminate restrictions on the right of residence and movement within the Pale of Settlement.” Merchants and craftsmen were to be allowed to travel in the interior provinces, Jews were to be allowed to hire Christians as servants and (more vitally) laborers and employees, and the Kahal was to be restored. In his response to the Montefiore memorandum Nicholas objected that if the conversion of the Jews to productive work were successful, this would by itself lead to the gradual reduction of constraints.

There was now enhanced resistance to conscription among the Jews. Evasion became so widespread that by 1850 a new order was issued that for each called-up recruit who failed to report for duty, three would be physically seized and sent to the army. What then occurred was one of the more notorious examples in history of the Jews turning on their own kind. The three-for-one rule gave the Jewish community a vested interest to catch their own draft-dodging fugitives. They hired men called *lovchikoviki* or “snatchers” who captured the *poymannikovi*, those who really were draft

evaders or simply anyone with an expired passport, even if from another province, or a teenager without a family, anyone to turn over to the recruiting sergeants in fulfillment of the quota.

But all this still did not make up the shortage of recruits. In 1852 two new statutes were added. One was that for each extra man surrendered to the recruiters a reward of 300 rubles would be paid in the form of relief from tax arrears, since virtually all Jews owed unpaid taxes. The second was a law *On Suppression Of The Practice Of Hiding Jews From Military Service*, which prescribed a series of punishments for those who fled from conscription, penalized the communities in which they are hiding, and allowed the army instead of the missing recruits to take the service of their family or community leaders who were responsible for the timely supply of manpower. Trying by every means to avoid conscription, many Jews fled abroad or went to other provinces.

The *lovchikoviks* grew more active and brutal, but still even more Jews fled the draft, often hiding and living by night, and fines and arrears grew. There were innumerable protests and petitions from settled, productive part of the Jewish population. The main bone of contention was the “analysis,” the classification system which designated certain Jews as “useful” and others as useless and therefore subject to conscription. In the early years there were repeated attempts to get the analysis and categorization delayed, bog it down in petty bureaucratic nitpicking over terminology, and so on. Finally, the Czar lost patience with the suspicious footdragging on the part of his officials and he issued *Interim Rules On The Analysis Of The Jews* which made it clear what criteria of wealth, occupation, and economic utility to society were to be followed. In February 1855 Nicholas I died

suddenly, and the “analysis” was permanently stopped. So the sudden death of the Emperor rescued Jews at a dangerous point in their history—as occurred a century later with Stalin’s death.

## **Chapter IV: During the Period of Reforms**

On the ascension of Alexander II to the throne, the Peasant Question in Russia had been overripe for a century and demanded immediate resolution. Then suddenly, the Jewish Question surfaced and demanded a no less urgent solution as well. In Russia, the Jewish Question was not as ancient as the deep-rooted and barbaric institution of serfdom and up to this time it did not seem to loom so large in the country. Yet henceforth, for the rest of 19th century, and right to the very year of 1917 in the State Duma, the Jewish and the Peasant questions would cross over and over again; they would contend with each other and thus become intertwined in their competing destiny.

Alexander II took the throne during the difficult impasse of the Crimean War against a united Europe. This situation demanded a difficult decision, whether to hold out or to surrender. Upon his ascension, voices were immediately raised in defense of the Jewish population. After several weeks, His Majesty gave orders to make the Jews equal with the rest of population in respect to military duty, and to end acceptance of underage recruits. Soon after, the “skillcategory” draft of Jewish philistines was cancelled; this meant that all classes of the Jewish population were made equal with respect to compulsory military service. This decision was confirmed in the Coronation Manifesto of 1856: “Jewish recruits of the same age and qualities which are defined for recruits from other population groups are to be admitted while acceptance of underage Jewish recruits is to

be abolished.” The institution of military cantonment schools for Jewish children was abolished as well; Jewish cantonists who were younger than 20 years of age were returned to their parents, even if they already had been turned into soldiers. (Cantonists were the sons of Russian conscripts who, from 1721, were educated in special canton or garrison schools for future military service.)

The lower ranks who had served out their full term (and their descendants) received the right to live anywhere on the territory of the Russian Empire. They usually settled where they terminated their service. They could settle permanently and had often become the founders of new Jewish communities. In a twist of fate and as a historical punishment, Russia and the Romanov dynasty got Yakov Sverdlov from the descendants of one such cantonist settler.

By the same manifesto the Jewish population was forgiven considerable back taxes from previous years. Yet in the course of the next five years, new tax arrears accumulated amounting to 22 percent of the total expected tax sum.

More broadly, Alexander II expressed his intention to resolve the Jewish Question — and in the most favorable manner. For this, the approach to the question was changed drastically. If during the reign of Nicholas, I the government saw its task as first reforming the Jewish inner life, gradually changing its character through productive work and education with consequent removal of administrative restrictions, then during the reign of Alexander II the policy was the opposite: to begin “with the intention of integrating this population with the native inhabitants of the country” as stated in the Imperial Decree of 1856. So, the government had begun quick removal of external constraints and restrictions not looking for possible inner causes of Jewish

seclusion and morbidity; it thereby hoped that all the remaining problems would then solve themselves.

To this end, still another Committee for Arranging the Jewish Way of Life was established in 1856. (This was already the seventh committee on Jewish affairs, but by no means the last). Its chairman, the above-mentioned Count Kiselyov, reported to His Majesty that “the goal of integrating Jews with the general population is hindered by various temporary restrictions, which, when considered in the context of general laws, contain many contradictions and beget bewilderment.” In response, His Majesty ordered “a revision of all existing statutes on Jews to harmonize them with the general strategy directed toward integration of this people with the native inhabitants, to the extent afforded by the moral condition of Jews”; that is, “the fanaticism and economic harmfulness ascribed to them.”

No, not for nothing had Herzen struggled with his Kolokol, or Belinsky and Granovsky, or Gogol! (For although not having such goals, the latter acted in the same direction as the former three did.) Under the shell of the austere reign of Nicholas I, the demand for decisive reforms and the will for them and the people to implement them were building up, and, astonishingly, new projects were taken by the educated high governmental dignitaries more enthusiastically than by the educated public in general. And this immediately impacted the Jewish Question. Time after time, the ministers of Internal Affairs (first Lanskoi and then Valuev) and the Governors General of the Western and Southwestern Krais [administrative divisions of Czarist Russia] shared their suggestions with His Majesty who was quite interested in them. Partial improvements in the legal situation of the Jews were enacted by the government on its own initiative, yet under direct supervision by His Majesty.

These changes went along with the general liberating reforms which affected Jews as well as the rest of population.

In 1858, Novorossiysk Governor General Stroganov suggested immediate, instant, and complete equalization of the Jews in all rights — but the Committee, now under the chairmanship of Bludov, stopped short, finding itself unprepared for such a measure. In 1859 it pointed out, for comparison, that “while the Western-European Jews began sending their children to public schools at the first invitation of the government, more or less turning themselves to useful occupations, the Russian government has to wrestle with Jewish prejudices and fanaticism.” Therefore, “making Jews equal in rights with the native inhabitants cannot happen in any other way than a gradual change, following the spread of true enlightenment among them, changes in their inner life, and turning their activity toward useful occupations.” The Committee also developed arguments against equal rights. It suggested that the question being considered was not so much a Jewish question, as it was a Russian one; that it would be precipitous to grant equal rights to Jews before raising the educational and cultural level of Russian population whose dark masses would not be able to defend themselves in the face of the economic pressure of Jewish solidarity; that the Jews hardly aspire toward integration with the rest of the citizens of the country; that they strive toward achieving all civil rights while retaining their isolation and cohesion which Russians do not possess among themselves.

However, these voices did not attain influence. One after another, restrictions had been removed. In 1859 the Prohibition of 1835 was removed: it had forbidden the Jews to take a lease or manage populated landowner’s lands. And thus, the right to rule over the peasants, though that prohibition was in some cases secretly violated. Although

after 1861 lands remaining in the property of landowners were not formally populated. The new changes were aimed to make it easier for landowners to turn for help to Jews if necessary in case of deterioration in the manorial economy, but also in order to somewhat widen the restricted field of economic activity of the Jews. Now the Jews could lease these lands and settle on them though they could not buy them. Meanwhile in the Southwestern Krai capital that could be turned to the purchase of land was concentrated in the hands of some Jews, yet the Jews refused to credit landowners against security of the estate because estates could not be purchased by Jews. Soon afterwards Jews were granted the right to buy land from landowners inside the Pale of Settlement.

### **The Jews and the Liquor Trade**

With development of railroads and steamships, Jewish businesses such as keeping of inns and postal stations had declined. In addition, because of new liberal customs tariffs introduced in 1857 and 1868, which lowered customs duties on goods imported into Russia, profits on contraband trade had immediately and sharply decreased.

In 1861 the prohibition on Jews acquiring exclusive rights to some sources of revenue from estates was abolished. In the same year the systems of tax farming and “wine farming” [concessions from the state to private entrepreneurs to sell vodka to the populace in particular regions] were abolished. This was a huge blow to a major Jewish enterprise. “Among Jews, *tax collector* and *contractor* were synonyms for wealth” Orshansky writes. They could just dream about the time of the Crimean War, when contractors made millions, thanks to the flexible conscience and peculiar view

of the Treasury in certain circles. Thousands of Jews lived and got rich under the beneficial wing of tax farming. Now the interests of the state had begun to be enforced and contracts had become much less profitable. And trading in spirits had become far less profitable than under the tax farming system.” However, as the excise was introduced in the wine industry in place of the wine farming system, no special restrictions were laid on Jews and so now they could sell and rent distillation factories on a common basis in the Pale of Settlement provinces.

They had so successfully exercised this right to rent and purchase over next two decades that by the 1880s between 32 percent and 76 percent of all distillation factories in the Jewish Pale of Settlement belonged to Jews, and almost all of them fell under category of a major enterprise. By 1872, 89 percent of distillation factories in the Southwestern Krai were rented by Jews. From 1863 Jews were permitted to run distillation in Western and Eastern Siberia (for the most remarkable specialists in the distillation industry almost exclusively came from among the Jews) and from 1865 Jewish distillers were permitted to reside everywhere.

Regarding the spirits trade in the villages, about one-third of the whole Jewish population of the Pale lived in villages at the start of 1880s, with two or three families in each village, as remnants of the *korchemstvo* (from “tavern” — the state-regulated business of retail spirits sale.) An official government report of 1870 stated that “the drinking business in the Western Krai is almost exclusively concentrated in the hands of Jews, and the abuses encountered in these institutions exceed any bounds of tolerance.” Thus, it was demanded of Jews to carry on the drinking business only from their own homes. The logic of

this demand was explained by G. B. Sllozberg: in the villages of Little Russia [Ukraine], that is, outside of the legal limits of the Polish autonomy, the landowners did not have the right to carry on trade in spirits — and this meant that the Jews could not buy spirits from landowners for resale. Yet at the same time the Jews might not buy even a small plot of peasant land; therefore, the Jews rented peasant homes and conducted the drinking business from them. When such trade was also prohibited — the prohibition was often evaded by using a “front” business: a dummy patent on a spirits business was issued to a Christian to which a Jew supposedly only served as an “attendant.”

Also, the “punitive clause” (as it is worded in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*), that is, a punishment accompanying the prohibition against Jews hiring a Christian as a personal servant, was repealed in 1865 as “incompatible with the general spirit of the official policy of tolerance.” And so from the end of the 1860s many Jewish families began to hire Christian servants.

Unfortunately, it is so typical for many scholars studying the history of Jewry in Russia to disregard hard-won victories: if yesterday all strength and attention were focused on the fight for some civil right and today that right is attained — then very quickly afterwards that victory is considered a trifle. There was so much said about the “double tax” on the Jews as though it existed for centuries and not for very few short years, and even then it was never really enforced in practice. The law of 1835, which was at the time greeted by Jews with a sense of relief, was, at the threshold of 20th century dubbed by S. Dubnov as a ‘Charter of Arbitrariness.’ To the future revolutionary Leo Deutsch, who in the 1860s was a young and still faithful subject, it looked like the administration “did not strictly enforce some

essential restrictions on the rights” of Jews. They turned a blind eye to violations. In general, the life of Jews in Russia in the sixties was not bad ... Among my Jewish peers I did not see anyone suffering from depression, despondency, or estrangement as a result of oppression” by their Christian mates. But then he suddenly recollects his revolutionary duty and calls everything given to the Jews during the reign of Alexander II as,

“in essence, insignificant alleviations” and, without losing a beat, mentions “the crimes of Alexander II”— although, in his opinion, the Czar shouldn’t have been killed. From the middle of the 20th century it already looks like for the whole of 19th century that various committees and commissions were being created for review of Jewish legal restrictions and they came to the conclusion that the existing legal restrictions did not achieve their aims and should be abolished. Yet not a single one of the projects worked out by the Committees was implemented.” It’s rid of, forgotten, and no toasts made.

### **The Escape from the Pale Begins**

After the first Jewish reforms by Alexander II, the existence of the Pale of Settlement had become the most painful issue. Once hope about the possibility of future state reforms had emerged, and first harbingers of expected renewal of public life had barely appeared, the Jewish intelligentsia began contemplating the daring step of raising the question of abolishing the Jewish Pale of Settlement altogether.

Yet still fresh in the Jewish memory was the idea of selectivity: to impose additional obligations on not-permanently-settled and unproductive Jews. And so in 1856 an idea to petition His Majesty appeared in the social strata

of Jewish merchants, citizens of St. Petersburg, and outoftowners, who by their social standing and by the nature of their activity, more closely interacted with the central authorities. The petition asked His Majesty “not to give privileges to the whole Jewish population, but only to certain categories,” to the young generation “raised in the spirit and under the supervision of the government to the upper merchant class,” and “to the good craftsmen, who earn their bread by sweat of their brow”; so that they would be “distinguished by the government with more rights than those who still exhibited nothing special about their good intentions, usefulness, and industriousness.... Our petition is so that the Merciful Monarch, distinguishing wheat from chaff, would be kindly disposed to grant several, however modest privileges to the worthy and cultivated among us, thus encouraging good and praiseworthy actions.” (Even in all their excited hopes they could not imagine how quickly the changes in the position of the Jews would be implemented in practice —already in 1862 some of the authors of this petition would ask about extending equal rights to all who graduate from secondary educational institutions, for the grammar school graduates “of course, must be considered people with a European education.”

And yes, in principle, the Czar did not mind violations of the laws concerning the Jewish Pale of Settlement in favor of individual groups of the Jewish population. In 1859 Jewish merchants of the 1st Guild were granted the right of residency in all of Russia (and the 2nd Guild in Kiev from 1861; and also for all three guilds in Nikolayev, Sevastopol, and Yalta) with the right of arranging manufacturing businesses, contracts, and acquiring real estate. Earlier, doctors and holders of master’s degrees in science had already enjoyed the right of universal residency (including

the right to occupy posts in government service; here we should note a professor of medicine G.A. Zakharyin, who in the future would pronounce the fatal judgment about the illness of Alexander III.) From 1861 this right was granted to candidates of universities, that is, simply to university graduates, and also “persons of free professions.”

The Pale of Settlement restrictions were now lifted even from persons, *desiring* to obtain higher education, namely to Jews entering medical academies, universities, and technical institutes. Then, as a result of petitions from individual ministers, governors, and influential Jewish merchants (e.g. Evzel Ginzburg), from 1865 the whole territory of Russia including St. Petersburg was opened to Jewish artisans, though only for the period of actual professional activity. (The notion of artisans was then widened to include all kinds of technicians such as typesetters and typographic workers.)

Here it is worth keeping in mind that merchants relocated with their clerks, office workers, various assistants, and Jewish service personnel, craftsmen, and also with apprentices and pupils. Taken altogether, this already made up a notable stream. Thus, a Jew with a right of residency outside of the Pale was free to move from the Pale, and not only with his family.

Yet new relaxations were outpaced by new petitions. In 1861, immediately after granting privileges for the “candidates of universities,” the Governor General of the Southwestern Krai had asked to allow exit from the Pale to those who completed state professional schools for the Jews, that is, incomplete high school-level establishments. He had vividly described the condition of such graduates: “Young people graduating from such schools find themselves completely cut off from Jewish society. If they do not find

occupations according to their qualifications within their own circles, they get accustomed to idleness and thus, by being unworthy representatives of their profession, they often discredit the prestige of education in the eyes of people they live among.”

In that same year, the Ministers of Internal Affairs and Education declared in unison that “a paramount cause of the disastrous condition of Jews is hidden in the abnormal share of Jews occupied in commerce and industry versus the rest engaged in agriculture”; and because of this “the peasant is unavoidably preyed upon by Jews as if he is obligated to surrender a part of his income to their maintenance.” Yet the internal competition between the Jews creates a “nearly impossible situation of providing for themselves by legal means.” And therefore, it is necessary to “grant the right of universal residence to merchants” of the 2nd and 3rd Guilds, and also to graduates of high or equivalent schools.

In 1862 the Novorossiysk Governor General again called for “complete abolition of the Jewish Pale of Settlement” by asking “to grant the right of universal residency to the entire Jewish people.”

Targeted permissions for universal residency of certain Jewish groups were being issued at a slower but constant rate. From 1865 acceptance of Jews as military doctors was permitted, and right after that (1866-1867), Jewish doctors were allowed to work in the ministries of Education and Interior. From 1879 they were permitted to serve as pharmacists and veterinarians; permission was also granted to those preparing for the corresponding type of activity, and also to midwives and feldshers, and those desiring to study medical assistant arts. Finally, a decree by

the Minister of Internal Affairs Makov was issued allowing residence outside the Pale to all those Jews who had already illegally settled there. Here it is appropriate to add that in the 1860s Jewish lawyers, in the absence of the official Bar College during that period were able to get jobs in government service without any difficulties.

Relaxations had also affected the Jews living in border regions. In 1856, when, according to the Treaty of Paris, the Russian state boundary retreated close to Kishinev and Akkerman, the Jews were not forced out of this newly-formed frontier zone. And in 1858 the decrees of Nicholas I, which directed Jews to abandon the fifty versts [an obsolete Russian measure, a verst is slightly more than a kilometer] boundary zone, were conclusively repealed. And from 1868 movement of Jews between the western provinces of Russia and the Polish kingdom was allowed where previously it was formally prohibited.

Alongside official relaxations to the legal restrictions, there were also exceptions and loopholes in regulations. For example, in the capital city of St. Petersburg, despite prohibitions, Jews all the same settled in for extended times; and with the ascension of Alexander II the number of Jews in St. Petersburg began to grow quickly. Jewish capitalists emerged who began dedicating significant attention to the organization of the Jewish community there; Baron Goratsy Ginzburg for example, L. Rozental, A. Varshavsky, and others. Toward the end of

Alexander II's reign, E. A. Peretz (the son of the tax farmer Abram Peretz) became the Russian Secretary of State. In the 1860s St. Petersburg started to attract quite a few members of the commercial, industrial and intellectual circles of Jewry. According to the data of the Commission for Arranging the Jewish Way of Life, in 1880-81, 6,290 Jews

were officially registered in St. Petersburg, while according to other official figures, 8,993; and according to a local census from 1881, there were 16,826 Jews in St. Petersburg, i.e., around 2 percent of the total city population.

In Moscow in 1856 the obligation of arriving Jewish merchants to reside exclusively in the Glebovsky Quarter was repealed; the Jews were allowed to stay in any part of the city. During the reign of Alexander II the Jewish population of Moscow grew quickly; by 1880 it was around 16,000. It was a similar situation in Kiev. After 1861 a quick growth of the Jewish population of Kiev had begun, from 1,500 in 1862, to 81,000 by 1913. From the 1880s there was an influx of

Jews to Kiev. Despite frequent police round-ups, which Kiev was famous for, the numbers of Jews there considerably exceeded the official figures. By the end of the 19th century, the Jews accounted for 44 percent of Kiev merchants.

Yu. I. Hessen calls the granting of the right of universal residency (1865) to artisans most important. Yet Jews apparently did not hurry to move out of the Pale. Well, if it was so overcrowded in there, so constraining, and so deprived with respect to markets and earnings, why then did they make almost no use of the right to leave the Pale of Settlement? By 1881, in thirtyone of the interior provinces, Jewish artisans numbered 28,000 altogether (and Jews in general numbered 34,000.) Hessen explains this paradox in the following way: prosperous artisans did not need to seek new places while the destitute did not have the means for the move, and the middle group, which somehow managed from day to day without enduring any particular poverty, feared that after their departure the elders of their community would refuse to extend an annual passport to them for tax

considerations, or even demand that the outgoing parties return home.

But one can strongly doubt all these statistics. We have just read that in St. Petersburg alone there were at least twice as many Jews than according to official data. Could the slow Russian state apparatus really account for the mercury-quick Jewish population within a definite time and in all places?

And the growth of Jewish population of Russia was rapid and confident. In 1864 it amounted to 1,500,000 without counting Jews in Poland. And together with Poland in 1850 it was 2,350,000; and in 1860 it was already 3,980,000. From the initial population of around 1,000,000 at the time of the first partitions of Poland, to 5,175,000 by the census of 1897 — that is, after a century, it grew more than five times. At the start of the 19th century Russian Jewry amounted to 30% of the world's Jewish population, while in 1880 it was already 51%. This was a major historical event. At the time, its significance was grasped neither by Russian society, nor by Russian administration.

This fast numerical growth alone, without all other peculiarities of the Jewish Question, had already posed a huge state problem for Russia. And here it is necessary, as always in any question, to try to understand both points of view. With such an enormous growth of Russian Jewry, two national needs were clashing ever more strongly. On one hand was the need of Jews (and a distinct feature of their dynamic 3,000-year existence) to spread and settle as wide as possible among non-Jews, so that a greater number of Jews would be able to engage in manufacturing, commerce, and serve as intermediaries (and to get involved into the culture of the surrounding population). On the other was the need of Russians, as the government understood it, to have control

over their economic and cultural life, and develop it themselves at their own pace. Let's not forget that simultaneously with all these relief measures for the Jews, the universal liberating reforms of Alexander II were implemented one after another, and so benefiting Jews as well as all other peoples of Russia. For example, in 1863 the capitation [i.e., poll or head] tax from the urban population was repealed, which meant the tax relief for the main part of Jewish masses; only land taxes remained after that, which were paid from the collected kosher tax.

Yet precisely the most important of these Alexandrian reforms, the most historically significant turning point in the Russian history—the liberation of peasants and the abolition of serfdom in 1861—turned out to be highly unprofitable for Russian Jews, and indeed ruinous for many. The general social and economic changes resulting from the abolition of peasant servitude had significantly worsened the material situation of broad Jewish masses during that transitional period. The social change was such that the multi-million disenfranchised and immobile peasant class ceased to exist, reducing the relative advantage of Jewish personal freedom. And the economic change was such that the peasant liberated from servitude was less in the need of services from the Jew, that is, the peasant was now at liberty from the strict prohibition against trading his products and purchasing goods himself through anyone other than a pre-assigned middleman, which in the western provinces was almost always a Jew. And now as the landowners were deprived of free serf labor, in order not to be ruined, they were compelled to get personally engaged in the economy of their estates, an occupation where earlier Jews played a conspicuous role as renters and middlemen in all kinds of commercial and manufacturing deals.

It's noteworthy that the land credit introduced in those years was displacing the Jew as the financial manager of the manorial economy. The development of consumer and credit associations led to the liberation of people from the tyranny of usury. Although access to government service and free professions was open to the Jews and although the industrial rights of the Jews were broadened, and there were more opportunities for education, and on every corner the rapprochement between the Jewish and Christian populations was visible, and although the remaining restrictions were far from being strictly enforced and the officials now treated the Jewish population with far more respect than before, yet the situation of Jews in Russia at the present time was very dismal. Not without reason, Jews expressed regret for the good old times. Everywhere in the Pale of Settlement one could hear the Jewish lamentations about the past.

For under serfdom an extraordinary development of mediation took place; the lazy landowner could not take a step without the Jewish trader or agent, and the browbeaten peasant also could not manage without him; he could only sell the harvest through him, and borrowed from him also. Before, the Jewish business class derived enormous benefit from the helplessness, wastefulness, and impracticality of landowners, but now the landowner had to do everything himself. Also, the peasant became less pliant and timid; now he often establishes contacts with wholesale traders himself, and he drinks less; and this naturally has a harmful effect on the trade in spirits, which an enormous number of Jews live on. The hope was that the Jews, as happened in Europe, would side with the productive classes and would not become redundant in the national economy.

Now Jews had begun renting and purchasing land. The Novorossiysk Governor General (1869) requested in a

staff report to forbid Jews in his region from buying land, as was already prohibited in nine western provinces. Then in 1872 there was a memorandum by the Governor General of the Southwestern Krai stating that “Jews rent land not for agricultural occupations but only for industrial aims; they hand over the rented land to peasants, not for money but for a certain amount of work, which exceeds the value of the usual rent on that land, and thereby they establish a sort of their own form of servitude. And though “they undoubtedly reinvigorate the countryside with their capital and commerce,” the Governor General considered concentration of manufacture and agriculture in the same hands un-conducive, since only under free competition can peasant farms and businesses avoid the “burdensome subordination of their work and land to Jewish capital, which is tantamount to their inevitable and impending material and moral perdition.” However, thinking to limit the renting of land to Jews in his Krai, he proposed to give the Jews an opportunity to settle in all of the Greater Russian provinces.

The memorandum was put forward to the just-created Commission for Arranging the Jewish Way of Life (the eighth of the Jewish Commissions, according to count), which was then highly sympathetic to the situation of the Jews. It received a negative review which was later confirmed by the government: to forbid the Jewish rent of land would be a complete violation of rights of landowners. Moreover, the interests of the major Jewish renter “merge completely with those of other landowners.” Well, it was true that the Jewish proletarians group around the major Jewish renters and live off the work and means of the rural population. But the same also happened the estates managed by the landowners themselves who up until this time cannot manage without the help of the Jews.

However, in the areas inhabited by the Don Cossacks, the energetic economic advancement of the Jews was restricted by the prohibition of 1880 against owning or renting real estate. The provincial government found that in view of the exclusive situation of the Don Province, the Cossack population of which was obligated to military service to a man, this was the only reliable way to save the Cossack economy from ruin and to secure the nascent manufacturing and commerce in the area. Too hasty exploitation of a region's wealth and quick development of industry are usually accompanied by an extremely uneven distribution of capital, and the swift enrichment of some accompanied by the impoverishment of others. Meanwhile, the Cossacks had to prosper, since they carried out their military service on their own horses and with their own equipment. Thus, they prevented a possible Cossack explosion.

### **Jews and Conscription Under Reform**

So what happened with the conscription of Jews into military service after all those Alexandrian relief measures of 1856? For the 1860s, this was the picture: when Jews managed to find out about the impending Imperial Manifest about recruit enrollment before it was officially published, all members of Jewish families fit for military service fled from their homes in all directions. Because of the peculiarities of their faith and lack of comradeship and the perpetual isolation of the Jewish soldier, military service for the Jews was the most threatening, the most ruinous, and the most burdensome of duties. Although from 1860 Jewish service in the Guards was permitted, and from 1861

promotions to petty officer ranks and service as clerks, there was still no access to officer ranks.

I. G. Orshansky, a witness to the 1860s, certifies: "It is true, there is much data supporting the opinion that in the recent years the Jews in fact have not fulfilled their conscription obligations number-wise. They purchase old recruit discharges and present them to the authorities; peasants sometimes keep them without knowing their value as far back as from 1812, so now Jewish resourcefulness puts them to use. Or, they hire volunteers in place of themselves and pay a certain sum to the treasury. Also they try to divide their families into smaller units, and by this each family claims the privilege of the only son." (The only son was exempt from the military service). Yet, he notes all the tricks for avoiding recruitment are similarly encountered among the pure-blooded Russians and provides comparative figures for Ekaterinoslav Guberniya. I. G. Orshansky had even expressed surprise that Russian peasants prefer to return to the favorite occupation of the Russian people, farming, instead of wanting to remain in the highly-paid military service.

In 1874 a unified regulation about universal military service had replaced the old recruit conscription obligation giving the Jews a significant relief. The text of the regulation did not contain any articles that discriminated against Jews. However, now Jews were not permitted to remain in residence in the interior provinces after completion of military service. Also, special regulations aimed to specify the figure of male Jewish population were introduced, for to that day it largely remained undetermined and unaccounted. Information about abuses of law by Jews wishing to evade military service was circulated to governors. In 1876 the first measures for ensuring the proper fulfillment of military duty

by Jews were adopted. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* saw “a heavy net of repressive measures” in them. “Regulations were issued about the registration of Jews at conscription districts and about the replacement of Jews not fit for service by Jews who were fit” and about verification of the validity of exemptions for family conditions: for violation of these regulations conscription of only sons was permitted.

A contemporary and then influential St. Petersburg newspaper, *Golos* (The Voice) cites quite amazing figures from the official governmental Report on the Results of Conscription in 1880. For all of the Russian Empire the shortfall of recruits was 3,309; out of this, the shortfall of Jews was 3,054, which amounts to 92%.

Shmakov, a prominent attorney not well-disposed toward Jews, cites such statistics from the reference, *Pravitelstvennyi Vestnik* [the Government Bulletin]: for the period 1876-1883: out of 282,466 Jews subject to conscription, 89,105—that is, 31.6%—did not show up. The general shortfall for the whole Empire was 0.19%. The administration could not help but notice this, and a number of steps toward the elimination of such abuse were introduced. This had an effect, but only short-term. In 1889 46,190 Jews were subjected to call-up, and 4,255 did not appear, that is 9.2 percent. But in 1891 from a general number of 51,248 Jews recorded on the draft list, 7,658, or 14.94 percent, failed to report; at that time the percentage of Christians not reporting was barely 2.67%. In 1892, 16.38 percent of Jews failed to report as compared with 3.18 percent of Christians. In 1894 6,289 Jews did not report for the draft, that is, 13.6 percent. Compare this to the Russian average of 2.6 percent.

However, the same document on the 1894 draft states that “in total, 873,143 Christians, 45,801 Jews, 27,424

Mohammedans, and 1,311 Pagans were to be drafted. These are striking figures. In Russia, there were 8.7% Muslims (according to the 1870 count) but their share in the draft was only 2.9%! The Jews were in an unfavorable position not only in comparison with the Mohammedans but with the general population too: their share of the draft was assigned 4.8 percent though they constituted only 3.2 percent of Russian population in 1870. (The Christian share in the draft was 92 percent or 87 percent of the Russian population.

From everything said here, one should not conclude that at the time of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, Jewish soldiers did not display courage and resourcefulness during combat. In the journal *Russkiy Evrei* [Russian Jew] we can find convincing examples of both virtues. Yet during that war much irritation against Jews arose in the army, mainly because of dishonest contractor-quartermasters—and such were almost exclusively Jews, starting with the main contractors of the Horovits, Greger, and Kagan Company. The quartermasters, undoubtedly under protection of higher circles, supplied overpriced and poor-quality equipment including the famous “cardboard soles”, due to which the feet of Russian soldiers fighting in the Shipka Pass were frostbitten.

### **The End of Jewish Agriculture**

In the age of Alexander II, the half-century-old official drive to accustom the Jews to agriculture was ending in failure. After the repeal of the disproportionate Jewish conscription imposed by Nicholas I, farming had immediately lost all its appeal for Jews, or, in words of one

government official, a false interpretation of the Manifest by them had occurred, according to which they now considered themselves free of the obligation to engage in farming and that they could now migrate freely. The petitions from the Jews about resettling with the intent to work in agriculture ended almost completely.

Conditions in the existing colonies remained the same if not worse: field were plowed and sowed pathetically, just for a laugh, or for appearance's sake only. For instance, in 1859 the grain yield in several colonies was even smaller than the amount sown. In the new 'paradigmatic' colonies, not only barns were lacking, there was even no overhangs or pens for livestock. The Jewish colonists leased most of their land to others, to local peasants or German colonists. Many asked permissions to hire Christians as workers, otherwise threatening to cut back on sowing even further—and they were granted such a right, regardless of the size of the actual crop.

Of course, there were affluent Jewish farmers among the colonists. The arrival of German colonists was very helpful too as their experience could now be adopted by Jews. And the young generation born there was already more accepting toward agriculture and German experience; they were more convinced of the advantageousness of farming in comparison to their previous life in the congestion and exasperating competition of *shtetls* and towns.

Yet the incomparably larger majority was trying to get away from agriculture. Gradually, inspectors' reports became invariably monotonic: "What strikes one most is the general Jewish dislike for farm work and their regrets about their former artisan occupations, trade, and business." They displayed "tireless zeal in any business opportunity." For example, at the very high point of field work they would

leave the fields if they discovered that they could profitably buy or sell a horse, an ox, or something else, in the vicinity. They had a predilection for pennywise trade, demanding according to their conviction less work and giving more means for living. Making money was easier for Jews in nearby German, Russian, or Greek villages, where the Jewish colonist would engage in tavern-keeping and small trade. Yet more damaging for the arable land were the long absences of the workers who left the area for distant places, leaving only one or two family members at home in the colonies, while the rest went to earn money in brokerages.

In the 1860s, a half-century after the founding of colonies, such departures were permitted for entire families or many family members simultaneously; in the colonies quite a few people were listed who had never lived there. After leaving the colonies, they often evaded registering with their trade guild in the new place, and many stayed there for several consecutive years, with family, unregistered to any guild, and thus not subject to any kind of tax or obligation, while in the colonies the houses built for them stood empty and fell into disrepair. In 1861, Jews were permitted to maintain drinking houses in the colonies.

Finally, the situation regarding Jewish agriculture had dawned on the St. Petersburg authorities in all its stark and dismal reality. Back taxes forgiven on numerous occasions such as an imperial marriage grew, and each amnesty had encouraged Jews not to pay taxes or repay loans from then on. In 1857, when the ten years granted to collect past due taxes had expired, five additional years were added. But even in 1863 the debt was still not collected. So what was all that resettling, privileges and loans for? On the one hand, the whole 60-year epic project had temporarily provided Jews with means of avoiding their duties to the state while at the

same time failing to instill love for agriculture among the colonists. The ends were not worthy of the means. On the other hand, simply a permission to live outside of the Pale, even without any privileges, attracted a huge number of Jewish farmers who stopped at nothing to get there.

If in 1858 there were officially 64,000 Jewish colonists, that is, eight to ten thousand families, then by 1880 the Ministry had found only 14,000, that is, less than two thousand families. For example, in the whole Southwestern Krai in 1872 the commission responsible for verifying whether or not the land is in use or lay unattended had found fewer than 800 families of Jewish colonists.

Russian authorities had clearly seen now that the entire affair of turning Jews into farmers had failed. They no longer believed that their cherished hope for the prosperity of colonies could be realized. It was particularly difficult for the Minister Kiselyov to part with this dream, but he retired in 1856. Official documents admitted failure, one after another: resettlement of the Jews for agricultural occupation "has not been accompanied by favorable results." Meanwhile "enormous areas of rich productive black topsoil remain in the hands of the Jews unexploited." After all, the best soil was selected and reserved for Jewish colonization. That portion, which was temporarily rented to those willing, gave a large income (Jewish colonies lived off it) as the population in the South grew and everyone asked for land. And now even the worst land from the reserve, beyond that allotted for Jewish colonization, had also quickly risen in value. The Novorossiysk Krai had already absorbed many active settlers and no longer needed any state-promoted colonization.

So, the Jewish colonization had become irrelevant for state purposes. In 1866 Alexander II ordered an end to the enforcement of several laws aimed at turning Jews into

farmers. Now the task was to equalize Jewish farmers with the rest of the farmers of the Empire. Everywhere, Jewish colonies turned out to be incapable of independent existence in the new free situation. So now it was necessary to provide legal means for Jews to abandon agriculture, even individually and not in whole families (1868), so they could become artisans and merchants. They had been permitted to redeem their parcels of land; and so they redeemed and resold their land at a profit.

However, in the dispute over various projects in the Ministry of State Property, the question about the reform of Jewish colonies dragged out and even stopped altogether by 1880. In the meantime, with a new recruit statute of 1874, Jews were stripped of their recruiting privileges, and with that any vestiges of their interest in farming were conclusively lost. By 1881 in the colonies there was a preponderance of farmsteads with only one house, around which there were no signs of settlement, that is, no fence, no housing for livestock, no farm buildings, no beds for vegetables, nor even a single tree or shrub; there were very few exceptions.

The state councilor Ivashintsev, an official with 40 years of experience in agriculture, was sent in 1880 to investigate the situation with the colonies. He had reported that in all of Russia “no other peasant community enjoyed such generous benefits as had been given to Jews” and “these benefits were not a secret from other peasants, and could not help but arouse hostile feelings in them.” Peasants adjacent to the Jewish colonies “were indignant because due to a shortage of land they had to rent the land from Jews for an expensive price, the land which was given cheaply to the Jews by the state in amounts in fact exceeding the actual Jewish needs.” It was namely this circumstance which in part

explained the hostility of peasants toward Jewish farmers, which manifested itself in the destruction of several Jewish settlements.

In those years, there were commissions allotting land to peasants from the excess land of the Jewish settlements. Unused or neglected sectors were taken back by the government. In Volynsk, Podolsk, and Kiev guberniyas, out of 39,000 desyatins [one desyatina = 2.7 acres] only 4,082 remained under Jewish cultivation.

Yet several quite extensive Jewish farming settlements remained: Yakshitsa in the Minsk Guberniya, not known for its rich land, had 740 desyatins for 46 Jewish families; that is, an average of 16 desyatins per family, something you will rarely find among peasants in Central Russia. In 1848 in Annengof of Mogilyov Guberniya, also not vast in land, twenty Jewish families received 20 desyatins of state land each, but by 1872 it was discovered that there were only ten families remaining, and a large part of the land was not cultivated and was choked with weeds. In Vishenki of Mogilyov Guberniya, they had 16 desyatins per family; and in Ordynovshchina of Grodno Guberniya 12 desyatins per Jewish family. In the more spacious southern guberniyas in the original settlements there remained: 17 desyatins per Jewish family in Bolshoi Nagartav; 16 desyatins per Jewish family in Seidemenukh; and 17 desyatins per family in Novo-Berislav. In the settlement of Roskoshnaya in Ekaterinoslav Guberniya they had 15 desyatins per family, but if total colony land is considered, then 42 desyatins per family. In Veselaya by 1897 there were 28 desyatins per family. In Sagaidak, there were 9 desyatins, which was considered a small allotment. And in Kiev Province's Elyuvka, there were 6 Jewish families with 400 desyatins

among them, or 67 desyatins per family! And land was rented to the Germans.

Yet from a Soviet author of the 1920s we read a categorical statement that “Czarism had almost completely forbidden the Jews to engage in agriculture.” On the pages which summarize his painstaking work, the researcher of Jewish agriculture V. N. Nikitin concludes: “The reproaches against the Jews for having poor diligence in farming, for leaving without official permission for the cities to engage in commercial and artisan occupations, are entirely justified. We by no means deny the Jewish responsibility for such a small number of them actually working in agriculture after the last 80 years.” Yet he puts forward several excuses for them: “The authorities had no faith in Jews; the rules of the colonization were changed repeatedly.” Sometimes “officials who knew nothing about agriculture or who were completely indifferent to Jews were sent to regulate their lives Jews who used to be independent city dwellers were transformed into villagers without any preparation for life in the country.”

At around the same time, in 1884, N. S. Leskov, in a memorandum intended for yet another governmental commission on Jewish affairs headed by Palen, had suggested that the Jewish “lack of habituation to agricultural living had developed over generations” and that it is “so strong, that it is equal to the loss of ability in farming,” and that the Jew would not become a plowman again unless the habit is revived gradually.

Lev Tolstoy had allegedly pondered: who are those “confining the entire [Jewish] nation to the squeeze of city life, and not giving it a chance to settle on the land and begin to do the only natural man’s occupation, farming. After all, it’s the same as not to give the people air to breathe. What’s

wrong with Jews settling in villages and starting to live a pure working life, which probably this ancient, intelligent, and wonderful people has already yearned for?" On what planet was he living? What did he know about the 80 years of practical experience with Jewish agricultural colonization?

And yet the experience of the development of Palestine where the Jewish settlers felt themselves at home had showed their excellent ability to work the land; moreover, they did it in conditions much more unfavorable than in Novorossiya. Still, all the attempts to persuade or compel the Jews toward arable farming in Russia and afterwards in the USSR failed, and from that came the degrading legend that the Jews in general are incapable of farming. And thus, after 80 years of effort by the Russian government it turned out that all that agricultural colonization was a grandiose but empty affair; all the effort, all the massive expenditures, the delay of the development of Novorossiya — all were for nothing. The resulting experience shows that it shouldn't have been undertaken at all.

### **Jews in Business and Finance Under Alexander II**

Generally examining Jewish commercial and industrial entrepreneurship, I. G. Orshansky justly wrote at the start of the 1870s that the question about Jewish business activity is "the essence of the Jewish Question on which fate of Jewish people in any country depends. An entrepreneur from the quick, mercantile, resourceful Jewish tribe turns over a ruble five times while a Russian turns it two times. There is stagnation, drowsiness, and monopoly among the Russian merchants. For example, after the expulsion of the

Jews from Kiev, life there had become more expensive. The strong side of Jewish participation in commercial life lies in the acceleration of capital turnover, even of the most insignificant working capital.” Debunking the opinion that so-called Jewish corporate spirit gives them a crucial advantage in any competition, that Jewish merchants always support each other, having their bankers, contractors, and carriers, Orshansky attributed the Jewish corporate spirit only to social and religious matters, and not to commerce, where he claimed Jews fiercely compete against each other. This contradicts the *Halacha* prescribing separation of spheres of activity, which according to him had gradually disappeared following the change in legal standing of Jews. He had also contested the opinion that any Jewish trade does not enrich the country, that it exclusively consists of exploitation of the productive and working classes, and that the profit of the Jews is a pure loss for the nation. He disagreed, suggesting that Jews constantly look for and find new sales markets and thereby

“open new sources of earnings for the poor Christian population as well.”

Jewish commercial and industrial entrepreneurship in Russia had quickly recovered from the two noticeable blows of 1861, the abolition of serfdom and the abolition of wine farming. The financial role of Jews had become particularly significant by the 1860s, when previous activities amassed capital in their hands, while liberation of peasants and the associated impoverishment of landowners created a huge demand for money on the part of landowners statewide.

Jewish capitalists played a prominent role in organization of land banks. The whole economic life of the country quickly changed in many directions and the invariable Jewish determination, inventiveness, and capital

were keeping pace with the changes and were even ahead of them. Jewish capital flowed, for example, to the sugar industry of the Southwest, so that in 1872 one fourth of all sugar factories had a Jewish owner, as well as one third of joint-stock sugar companies. and to the flour-milling and other factory industries both in the Pale of Settlement and outside. After the Crimean War an intensive construction of railroads was undertaken; all kinds of industrial and commercial enterprises, joint stock companies and banks arose and many Jews found wide application for their strengths and talents in those undertaking with a few of them getting very rich incredibly fast.

Jews were involved in the grain business for a long time but their role had become particularly significant after the peasant liberation and from the beginning of large-scale railroad construction. Already in 1878, 60% of grain export was in the hands of Jews and afterwards it was almost completely controlled by Jews. And thanks to Jewish industrialists, lumber had become the second most important article of Russian export after grain. Woodcutting contracts and the acquisition of forest estates by Jews were not prohibited since 1835. The lumber industry and timber trade were developed by Jews. Also, Jews had established timber export. The timber trade is a major aspect of Jewish commerce, and, at the same time, a major area of concentration of capital. Intensive growth of the Jewish timber trade began in the 1860-1870s, when as a result of the abolition of serfdom, landowners unloaded a great number of estates and forests on the market. The 1870s were the years of the first massive surge of Jews into industries such as manufacturing, flax, foodstuff, leather, cabinetry, and furniture industries, while tobacco industry had long since been concentrated in the hands of Jews.

In the words of Jewish authors: "In the epoch of Alexander II, the wealthy Jewish bourgeoisie was completely loyal to the monarchy. The great wealth of the Gintsburgs, the Polyakovs, the Brodskys, the Zaitsevs, the Balakhovskys, and the Ashkenazis was amassed exactly at that time." As already mentioned, the tax-farmer Evzel Gintsburg had founded his own bank in St. Petersburg. Samuil Polyakov had built six railroad lines; the three Polyakov brothers were granted hereditary nobility titles. Thanks to railroad construction, which was guaranteed and to a large extent subsidized by the government, the prominent capital of the Polyakovs, I. Bliokh, A. Varshavsky and others were created. Needless to say, many more smaller fortunes were made as well, such as that of A. I. Zaks, the former assistant to E. Gintsburg in tax-farming, who had moved to St. Petersburg and created the Savings and Loan Bank there; he arranged jobs for his and his wife's many relatives at the enterprises he was in charge of.

Not just the economy, the entire public life had been transformed in the course of Alexandrian reforms, opening new opportunities for mercurial Jewry. In the government resolutions permitting certain groups of Jews with higher education to enter government service, there was no restriction in regard to movement up the job ladder. With the attainment of the Full State Advisor rank, a Jew could be elevated to the status of hereditary nobility on common grounds.

In 1864 the land reform began. It affected all social classes and strata. Its statute did not in any way restrict the eligibility of Jews to vote in country administrative elections or occupy elected country offices. In the course of twenty-six years of the statute being in effect, Jews could be seen in

many places among town councilors and in the municipal executive councils.

Similarly, the judicial statutes of 1864 stipulated no restrictions for Jews. As a result of the judicial reform, an independent judicial authority was created, and in place of private mediators the legal bar guild was established as an independent class with a special corporate structure (and notably, even with the un-appealable right to refuse legal assistance to an applicant on the basis of “moral evaluation of his person,” including evaluation of his political views). There were no restrictions on Jews entering this class. Gessen wrote: “Apart from the legal profession, in which Jews had come to prominence, we begin noticing them in court registries among investigative officials and in the ranks of public prosecutors; in some places we already see Jews in the magistrate and district court offices.” They also served as jurors without any quota restrictions during the first decades after the reform. Remarkably, during civil trials the Jews were taking conventional juror’s oath without any provision made for the Jewish religion. At the same time, municipal reform was being implemented. Initially it was proposed to restrict Jewish representation among town councilors and in the municipal executive councils by fifty percent, but because of objections by the Minister of Internal Affairs, the City Statute of 1870 had reduced the maximal share to one third; further, Jews were forbidden from occupying the post of mayor.

It was feared that otherwise Jewish internal cohesion and self-segregation would allow them to obtain a leading role in town institutions and give them an advantage in resolution of public issues. On the other hand, Jews were equalized in electoral rights (earlier they could vote only as a faction), which led to the increased influence of Jews in all

city governing matters (though in the free city of Odessa these rules were in place from the very beginning; later, it was adopted in Kishinev too. Generally speaking, in the south of Russia the social atmosphere was not permeated by contempt toward Jews, unlike in Poland where it was diligently cultivated.

Thus perhaps the best period in Russian history for Jews went on. Access to the civil service was opened for Jews. The easing of legal restrictions and the general atmosphere of the Age of Great Reforms had affected the spirit of the Jewish people beneficially. It appeared that under the influence of the Age of Great Reforms the traditional daily life of the Jewish populace had turned toward the surrounding world and that Jewry had begun participating as far as possible in the struggle for rights and liberty. There was not a single area in the economic, public and spiritual life of Russia unaffected by the creative energies of Russian Jews. And remember that from the beginning of the century, the doors of Russian general education were opened wide for Jews, though it took a long time for the unwilling Jews to enter.

Later, a well-known lawyer and public figure, Ya. L. Teytel, thus recalled the Mozyr grammar school of the 1860s: "The director of the school often appealed to the Jews of Mozyr, telling them about the benefits of education and about the desire of government to see more Jews in grammar schools. Unfortunately, such pleas had fallen on deaf ears. So they were not enthusiastic to enroll during the first years after the reform, even when they were offered free education paid for by state and when school charters (1864) declared that schools are open to everyone regardless confession. The Ministry of National Education tried to make admission of

Jews into general education institutions easier; it exhibited “benevolence toward young Jewish students.”

Here L. Deutsch particularly distinguished the famous surgeon N. I. Pirogov, then a trustee of the Novorossiysk school district, suggesting that he had “strongly contributed to the alleviation of hostility among my tribesmen toward *goyish* schools and sciences.” Soon after the ascension of Czar Alexander II, the Minister of Education thus formulated the government plan: “It is necessary to spread, by any means, the teaching of subjects of general education, while avoiding interference with the religious education of children, allowing parents to take care of it without any restrictions or hindrances on the part of government.” Education in state public schools was made mandatory for children of Jewish merchants and honorary citizens.

Yet all these measures, privileges and invitations, did not lead to a drastic increase in Jewish admissions. By 1863 the share of Jewish students in Russian schools reached 3.2 percent, that is, equal to their percentage in the population of the empire. Apart from the rejection of Russian education by the Jewry, there was a certain influence from Jewish public leaders who now saw their task differently: With the advent of the Age of Great Reforms, the friends of enlightenment had merged the question of mass education with the question of the legal situation of Jews, that is, they began struggling for the immediate removal of all remaining restrictions. After the shock of the Crimean War, such a liberal possibility seemed quite realistic. But after 1874, following enactment of the new military statute which granted military service privileges to educated individuals, almost a magical change happened with Jewish education. Jews began entering public schools in mass. After the military reform of 1874, even

Orthodox Jewish families started sending their sons into high schools and institutions of higher learning to reduce their term of military service. Among these privileges were not only draft deferral and easement of service but also, according to the recollections of Mark Aldanov, the possibility of taking the officer's examination and receiving officer rank. Sometimes they attained titles of nobility.

In the 1870s an enormous increase in the number of Jewish students in public education institutions occurred, leading to creation of numerous degreed Jewish intelligentsia. In 1881 Jews composed around 9 percent of all university students; by 1887, their share increased to 13.5 percent, i.e., one out of every seven students. In some universities, Jewish representation was much higher: in the Department of Medicine of Kharkov University Jews comprised 42 percent of student body; in the Department of Medicine of Odessa University — 31 percent, and in the School of Law — 41 percent. In all schools of the country, the percentage of Jews doubled to 12 percent from 1870 to 1880 (and compared to 1865, it had quadrupled). In the Odessa school district, it reached 32 percent by 1886, and in some schools, it was 75 percent and even more. When D. A. Tolstoy, the Minister of Education from 1866, began school reforms in 1871 by introducing the Classical education standard with emphasis on antiquity, the ethnic Russian intelligentsia boiled over, while Jews did not mind.

However, for a while, these educational developments affected only the Jewish bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. The wide masses remained faithful to their cheders and yeshivas as the Russian elementary school offered nothing in the way of privileges. The Jewish masses remained in isolation as before due to specific conditions of their internal and outside life. Propagation of modern

universal culture was extremely slow and new things took root with great difficulty among the masses of people living in *shtetls* and towns of the Pale of Settlement in the atmosphere of very strict religious traditions and discipline. Concentrated within the Pale of Settlement, the Jewish masses felt no need for the Russian language in their daily lives. As before, the masses were still confined to the familiar hold of the primitive cheder education. And whoever had just learned how to read had to immediately proceed to reading the Bible in Hebrew.

From the government's point of view, opening up general education to Jews rendered state Jewish schools unnecessary. From 1862 Jews were permitted to take posts as senior supervisors in such schools and so the personnel were gradually replenished with committed Jewish pedagogues who, acting in the spirit of the time, worked to improve mastery of Russian language and reduce teaching of specifically Jewish subjects.

In 1873 these specialized schools were partially abolished and partially transformed, some into primary specialized Jewish schools of general standard, with three or six year study courses, and two specialized rabbinical schools in Vilna and Zhitomir were transformed into teacher training colleges. The government sought to overcome Jewish alienation through integrated education; however, the Commission for Arranging the Jewish Way of Life was receiving reports both from Jewish advocates, often high-ranked, and from the opponents of reform who insisted that Jews must never be treated in the same way as other ethnic groups of the Empire, that they should not be permitted unrestricted residence all over the country; it might be allowed only after all possible measures were tried to turn Jews into useful productive citizens in the places where they

live now and when these measures would prove their success beyond any doubt.

Meanwhile, through the shock of ongoing reforms, especially of the abolition of the burdensome recruiting obligation in 1856 (and through it the negation of the corresponding power of Jewish leaders over their communities), and then of the repeal of the associated special taxation in 1863, the administrative power of the community leaders was significantly weakened in comparison to their almost unrestricted authority in the past inherited from the Kahal (abolished in 1844), that omnipotent arbiter of the Jewish life.

### **The Book of Kahal**

It was at the end of 1850s and during the 1860s when the baptized Jew Yakov Brafman, appeared before the government and later came out publicly in an energetic attempt at radical reformation of the Jewish way of life. He had petitioned the Czar with a memorandum and was summoned to St. Petersburg for consultations in the Synod. He set about exposing and explaining the Kahal system (though a little bit late, since the Kahal had already been abolished.)

For that purpose, he had translated into Russian the resolutions of the Minsk Kahal issued in the period between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Initially he published the documents in parts and later in 1869 and 1875 as a compilation, *The Book of Kahal*, which revealed the all-encompassing absoluteness of the personal and material powerlessness of the community member. The book had acquired exceptional weight in the eyes of the authorities and was accepted as an official guidebook; it won

recognition (often by hearsay) in wide circles of Russian society; it was referred to as the “Brafman’s triumph” and lauded as an “extraordinary success.” Later the book was translated into French, German, and Polish. *The Book of Kahal* managed to instill in a great number of individuals a fanatical hatred toward Jews as the worldwide enemy of Christians; it had succeeded in spreading misconceptions about Jewish way of life.

The mission of Brafman, the collection and translation of the acts issued by the Kahal had alarmed the Jewish community. At their demand, a government commission which included the participation of Jewish community representatives was created to verify Brafman’s work. Some Jewish writers were quick to come forward with evidence that Brafman distorted some of the

Kahal documents and wrongly interpreted others; one detractor had even had doubts about their authenticity. A century later in 1976, the *Short Jewish Encyclopedia* confirmed the authenticity of Brafman’s documents and the good quality of his translation but blamed him for false interpretation. The *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia* (1994) pointed out that “the documents published by Brafman are a valuable source for studying the history of Jews in Russia at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries.” (Apropos, the poet Khodasevich was the grand-nephew of Brafman).

Brafman claimed that governmental laws cannot destroy the malicious force lurking in the Jewish self-administration. According to him, Jewish self-rule is not limited to Kahals but allegedly involves the entire Jewish people all over the world and because of that the Christian peoples cannot get rid of Jewish exploitation until everything that enables Jewish selfsegregation is eliminated. Further,

Brafman viewed the Talmud not as a national and religious code but as a civil and political code going against the political and moral development of Christian nations and creating a “Talmudic republic.” He insisted that Jews form a nation within a nation; that they do not consider themselves subject to national laws that one of the main goals of the Jewish community is to confuse the Christians to turn the latter into no more than fictitious owners of their property. On a larger scale, he accused the Society for the Advancement of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia and the Alliance Israélite Universelle for their role in the Jewish world conspiracy. According to Yu. Gessen’s opinion, “the only demand of the *The Book of Kahal* was the radical extermination of Jewish self-governance,” regardless of all their civil powerlessness.

The State Council, having mitigated the uncompromised style of *The Book of Kahal*, declared that even if administrative measures would succeed in erasing the outward differences between Jews and the rest of population, “it will not in the least eliminate the attitudes of seclusion and nearly the outright hostility toward Christians which thrive in Jewish communities. This Jewish separation, harmful for the country, can be destroyed, on one hand, through the weakening of social connections between the Jews and reduction of the abusive power of Jewish elders to the extent possible, and, on the other hand, through spreading of education among Jews, which is actually more important.”

### **Culture and Enlightenment**

And precisely the latter process — education — was already underway in the Jewish community. A previous Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah Movement of the 1840s,

was predominantly based on German culture; they were completely ignorant of Russian culture (they were familiar with Goethe and Schiller but did not know Pushkin and Lermontov). Until the mid19th century, even educated Jews, with rare exceptions, having mastered the German language, at the same time did not know the Russian language and literature.

However, as those Maskilim sought self-enlightenment and not the mass education of the Jewish people, the movement died out by the 1860s. In the 1860s, Russian influences burst into the Jewish society. Until then Jews were not living but rather residing in Russia, perceiving their problems as completely unconnected to the surrounding Russian life. Before the Crimean War the Jewish intelligentsia in Russia acknowledged German culture exclusively but after the reforms it began gravitating toward Russian culture. Mastery of the Russian language increases self-esteem. From now on the Jewish Enlightenment developed under the strong influence of the Russian culture. The best Russian Jewish intellectuals abandoned their people no longer; they did not depart into the area of exclusively personal interests, but cared about making their people's lot easier. Well, after all, Russian literature taught that the strong should devote themselves to the weak.

However, this new enlightenment of the Jewish masses was greatly complicated by the strong religiosity of said masses, which in the eyes of progressives was doubtlessly a regressive factor, whereas the emerging Jewish Enlightenment movement was quite secular for that time. Secularization of the Jewish public consciousness was particularly difficult because of the exceptional role religion played in the Diaspora as the foundation of Jewish national consciousness over the course of the many centuries. And so

the wide development of secular Jewish national consciousness began, in essence, only at the end of the century. It was not because of inertia but due to a completely deliberate stance as the Jew did not want risking separation from his God.

So, the Russian Jewish intelligentsia met the Russian culture at the moment of birth. Moreover, it happened at the time when the Russian intelligentsia was also developing expansively and at the time when Western culture gushed into Russian life (Buckle, Hegel, Heine, Hugo, Comte, and Spencer).

It was pointed out that several prominent figures of the first generation of Russian Jewish intelligentsia (S. Dubnov, M. Krol, G. Sliozberg, O. Gruzenberg, and Saul Ginzburg) were born in that period, 1860-1866, though their equally distinguished Jewish revolutionary peers — M. Gots, G. Gershuni, F. Dan, Azef, and L. Akselrod — were also born during those years and many other Jewish revolutionaries, such as P. Akselrod and L. Deych, were born still earlier, in the 1850s. In St. Petersburg in 1863, the authorities permitted establishment of the Society for the Spreading of Enlightenment among the Jews in Russia (SSE) supported by the wealthy Evzel Gintsburg and A. M. Brodsky. Initially, during the first decade of its existence, its membership and activities were limited; the Society was preoccupied with publishing activities and not with school education; yet still its activities caused a violent reaction on the part of Jewish conservatives (who also protested against publication of the Pentateuch in Russian as a blasphemous encroachment on the holiness of the Torah).

From the 1870s, the SSE provided financial support to Jewish schools. Their cultural work was conducted in Russian, with a concession for Hebrew, but not Yiddish,

which was then universally recognized as a “jargon.” In the opinion of Osip Rabinovich, a belletrist, the “spoiled jargon” used by Jews in Russia “cannot facilitate enlightenment, because it is not only impossible to express abstract notions in it, but one cannot even express a decent thought with it. Instead of mastering the wonderful Russian language, we Jews in Russia stick to our spoiled, cacophonous, erratic, and poor jargon.” (In their day, the German Maskilim ridiculed Yiddish even more sharply.)

And so, a new social force arose in Russian Jewry, which did not hesitate to enter the struggle against the union of capital and synagogue, as expressed by the liberal Yu. I. Gessen. That force, nascent and for the time being weak, was the Jewish periodical press in the Russian language. Its first-born was the Odessa magazine *Rassvet* [Dawn], published for two years from 1859 to 1861 by the above-mentioned O. Rabinovich. The magazine was positioned to serve as a medium for dissemination of “useful knowledge, true religiousness, rules of communal life and morality”; it was supposed to predispose Jews to learn the Russian language and to “become friends with the national scholarship.” *Rassvet* also reported on politics, expressing love for the Fatherland and the intention to promote the government’s views with the goal of “communal living with other peoples, participating in their education and sharing their successes, while at the same time preserving, developing, and perfecting our distinct national heritage.” The leading *Rassvet* publicist, L. Levanda, defined the goal of the magazine as twofold: “to act defensively and offensively: defensively against attacks from the outside, when our human rights and confessional (religious) interests must be defended, and offensively

against our internal enemy: obscurantism, everydayness, social life troubles, and our tribal vices and weaknesses.”

This last direction, to reveal the ill places of the inner Jewish life, aroused a fear in Jewish circles that it might lead to new legislative repressions. So, the existing Jewish newspapers (in Yiddish) saw the *Rassvet*’s direction as extremely radical. Yet these same moderate newspapers by their mere appearance had already shaken the patriarchal structure of Jewish community life maintained by the silence of the people. Needless to say, the struggle between the rabbinate and Hasidic Judaism went on unabated during that period, and this new 1860s struggle of the leading publicists against the stagnant foundations of daily life had added to it. Gessen noted that “in the 1860s, the system of repressive measures against ideological opponents did not seem offensive even for the conscience of intelligent people.” For example, publicist A. Kovner, “the Jewish Pisarev”, a radical Russian writer and social critic, could not refrain from tipping off a Jewish newspaper to the Governor General of Novorossiysk. In the 1870s Pisarev was extremely popular among Jewish intellectuals.

M. Aldanov thinks that Jewish participation in Russian cultural and political life had effectively begun at the end of the 1870s and possibly a decade earlier in the revolutionary movement.

In the 1870s new Jewish publicists (L. Levanda, the critic S. Vengerov, the poet N. Minsky) began working with the general Russian press. (According to G. Aronson, Minsky expressed his desire to go to the Russo-Turkish War to fight for his brothers Slavs). The Minister of Education Count Ignatiev then expressed his faith in Jewish loyalty to Russia. After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, rumors about major auspicious reforms began circulating among the

Jews. In the meantime, the center of Jewish intellectual life shifted from Odessa to St. Petersburg, where new writers and attorneys gained prominence as leaders of public opinion. In that hopeful atmosphere, publication of *Rassvet* was resumed in St. Petersburg in 1879. In the opening editorial, M. I. Kulisher wrote: "Our mission is to be an organ of expression of the necessities of Russian Jews for promoting the awakening of the huge mass of Russian Jews from mental hibernation it is also in the interests of Russia in that goal the Russian Jewish

intelligentsia does not separate itself from the rest of Russian citizens."

Alongside the development of the Jewish press, Jewish literature could not help but advance —first in Hebrew, then in Yiddish, and then in Russian, inspired by the best of Russian literature. Under Alexander II, there were quite a few Jewish authors who persuaded their coreligionists to study the Russian language and look at Russia as their homeland.

Naturally, in the conditions of the 1860s-1870s, the Jewish educators, still few in numbers and immersed in Russian culture, could not avoid moving toward assimilation, in the same direction which under analogous conditions led the intelligent Jews of Western Europe to unilateral assimilation with the dominant people. However, there was a difference: in Europe, the general cultural level of the native peoples was consistently higher and so in Russia these Jews could not assimilate with the Russian people, still weakly touched by culture, nor with the Russian ruling class (who rejected them); they could only assimilate with the Russian intelligentsia, which was then very small in number but already completely secular, rejecting, among other things, their God. Now Jewish educators also tore away from

Jewish religiosity and, being unable to find an alternative bond with their people, they were becoming completely estranged from them and spiritually considered themselves solely as Russian citizens.

A worldly rapprochement between the Russian and Jewish intelligentsias was developing. It was facilitated by the general revitalization of Jewish life with several categories of Jews now allowed to live outside the Pale of Settlement. Development of railroad communications and possibilities of travel abroad all contributed to a closer contact of the Jewish ghetto with the surrounding world. Moreover, by the 1860s up to one-third of Odessa's Jews could speak Russian. The population there grew quickly, because of massive resettlement to Odessa of both Russian and foreign Jews, the latter primarily from Germany and Galicia. The blossoming of Odessa by the middle of the 19th century presaged the prosperity of all Russian Jewry toward the end of the 19th to the beginning of 20th century. Free Odessa developed according to its own special laws, differing from the All-Russian statutes since the beginning of the 19th century. It used to be a free port and was even open to Turkish ships during the war with Turkey.

The main occupation of Odessa's Jews in this period was the grain trade. Many Jews were small traders and middlemen (mainly between the landowners and the exporters), as well as agents of prominent foreign and local (mainly Greek) wheat trading companies. At the grain exchange, Jews worked as stockbrokers, appraisers, cashiers, scalers, and loaders; the Jews were in a dominant position in grain commerce: by 1870 most of grain export was in their hands. In 1910 89.2% of grain exports was under their control. In comparison with other cities in the Pale of Settlement, more Jews of the independent professions lived

in Odessa and they had better relations with educated Russian circles, and were favorably looked upon and protected by the high administration of the city N. Pirogov a prominent Russian scientist and surgeon, the Trustee of the Odessa School District from 1856-1858, particularly patronized the Jews. A contemporary observer had vividly described this Odessa's clutter with fierce competition between Jewish and Greek merchants, where in some years half the city, from the major bread bigwigs, to the thrift store owners, lived off the sale of grain products. In Odessa, with her non-stop business commotion bonded by the Russian language, it was impossible to draw a line, to separate clearly a wheat merchant or a banker from a man of an intellectual profession.

Thus, in general among the educated Jews the process of adopting all things Russian had accelerated. European education and knowledge of the Russian language had become necessities; everyone hurried to learn the Russian language and Russian literature; they thought only about hastening integration and complete blending with their social surroundings; they aspired not only for the mastery of the Russian language but for the complete Russification and adoption of "the Russian spirit," so that the Jew would not differ from the rest of citizens in anything but religion.

The contemporary observer M. G. Morgulis wrote: "Everybody had begun thinking of themselves as citizens of their homeland; everybody now had a new Fatherland."

Members of the Jewish intelligentsia believed that for the state and public good they had to get rid of their ethnic traits and to merge with the dominant nationality. A contemporary Jewish progressive wrote that "Jews, as a nation, do not exist", that they "consider themselves Russians

of the Mosaic faith. Jews recognize that their salvation lies in the merging with the Russian people.”

Here it is perhaps worth naming Veniamin Portugalov, a doctor and publicist. In his youth, he harbored revolutionary sentiments and because of that he even spent some time as a prisoner in the Peter and Paul Fortress. From 1871 he lived in Samara. He played a prominent role in development of rural health service and public health science. He was one of the pioneers of therapy for alcoholism and the struggle against alcohol abuse in Russia. He also organized public lectures. From a young age, he shared the ideas of Narodniks, a segment of the Russian intelligentsia, who left the cities and went to the people (“narod”) in the villages, preaching on the moral right to revolt against the established order about the pernicious role of Jews in the economic life of the Russian peasantry. These ideas laid the foundation for the dogmas of the Judeo-Christian movement of the 1880s (The Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood). Portugalov deemed it necessary to free Jewish life from ritualism, and believed that “Jewry can exist and develop a culture and civilization only after being dissolved in European peoples.” He meant the Russian people.

A substantial reduction in the number of Jewish conversions to Christianity was observed during the reign of Alexander II as it became unnecessary after the abolishment of the institution of military cantonism and the widening of Jewish rights. And from now on the sect of Skhariya the Jew began to be professed openly too. Such an attitude on the part of affluent Jews, especially those living outside the Pale of Settlement and those with Russian education, toward Russia as undeniably a homeland is noteworthy. It had to be noticed and was. In view of the great reforms, all responsible Russian

Jews were, without exaggeration, patriots and monarchists and adored Alexander II. M. N. Muravyov, then Governor General of the Northwest Krai famous for his ruthlessness toward the Poles [who rebelled in 1863], patronized Jews in the pursuit of the sound objective of winning the loyalty of a significant portion of the Jewish population to the Russian state. Though during the Polish uprising of 1863 Polish Jewry was mainly on the side of the Poles a healthy national instinct prompted the Jews of the Vilnius, Kaunas, and Grodno Guberniyas to side with Russia because they expected more justice and humane treatment from Russians than from the Poles, who, though historically tolerating the Jews, had always treated them as a lower race.

This is how Ya. Teitel described it: “The Polish Jews were always detached from the Russian Jews; they looked at Russian Jews from the Polish perspective.” On the other hand, the Poles in private shared their opinion on the Russian Jews in Poland: “The best of these Jews are our real enemy. Russian Jews, who had infested Warsaw, Lodz, and other major centers of Poland, brought with them Russian culture, which we do not like.”

In those years, the Russification of Jews on its territory was highly desirable for the Czarist government. Russian authorities recognized socialization with Russian youth as a sure method of re-education of the Jewish youth to eradicate their hostility toward Christians. Still, this newborn Russian patriotism among Jews had clear limits. The lawyer and publicist I. G. Orshansky specified that to accelerate the process “it was necessary to create conditions for the Jews such that they could consider themselves as free citizens of a free civilized country.” The above-mentioned Lev Levanda, a Jewish scholar living under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Vilnius, then wrote: “I will become a

Russian patriot only when the Jewish Question is resolved conclusively and satisfactorily.” A modern Jewish author who experienced the long and bitter 20th century and then had finally emigrated to Israel, replied to him looking back across the chasm of a century: “Levanda does not notice that one cannot lay down conditions to Motherland. She must be loved unconditionally, without conditions or pre-conditions; she is loved simply because she is the Mother. This stipulation — love under conditions — was consistently maintained by the Russian Jewish intelligentsia for one hundred years, though in all other respects they were ideal Russians.

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And yet in the described period only small and isolated groups of Jewry became integrated into Russian civil society; moreover, it was happening in the larger commercial and industrial centers leading to the appearance of an exaggerated notion about victorious advance of the Russian language deep into Jewish life, all the while the wide Jewish masses were untouched by the new trends isolated not only from the Russian society but from the Jewish intelligentsia as well. In the 1860s and 1870s, the Jewish people en masse were still unaffected by assimilation, and the danger of the Jewish intelligentsia breaking away from the Jewish masses was real. In Germany, Jewish assimilation went smoother as there were no Jewish popular masses there — the Jews were better off socially and did not historically live in such crowded enclaves.

However, as early as the end of the 1860s, some members of the Jewish intelligentsia began voicing opposition to such a conversion of Jewish intellectuals into simple Russian patriots. Perets Smolensky was the first to speak of this in 1868: that assimilation with the Russian

character is fraught with national danger for the Jews; that although education should not be feared, it is necessary to hold on to the Jewish historical past; that acceptance of the surrounding national culture still requires perservation of the Jewish national character; and that the Jews are not a religious sect, but a nation. So if the Jewish intelligentsia withdraws from its people, the latter would never liberate itself from administrative oppression and spiritual stupor. The poet I. Gordon had put it this way: "Be a man on the street and a Jew at home."

The St. Petersburg journals *Rassvet* (1879-1882) and *Russkiy Evrei* [Russian Jew] had already followed this direction. They successfully promoted the study of Jewish history and contemporary life among Jewish youth. At the end of the 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s, cosmopolitan and national directions in Russian Jewry became distinct. In essence, the owners of *Rassvet* had already abandoned the belief in the truth of assimilation. *Rassvet* unconsciously went by the path of the awakening of ethnic identity; it was clearly expressing a Jewish national bias. The illusions of Russification were disappearing.

The general European situation of the latter half of the 19th century facilitated development of national identity. There was a violent Polish uprising, the war for the unification of Italy, and then of Germany, and later of the Balkan Slavs. The national idea blazed and triumphed everywhere. Obviously, these developments would continue among the Jewish intelligentsia even without the events of 1881-1882. Meanwhile, in the 1870s, the generally favorable attitudes of Russians toward Jews, which had developed during the Alexandrian reforms, began to change.

Russian society was concerned with Brafman's publications, which were taken quite seriously. All this coincided with

the loud creation of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris in 1860; its goal was to defend the interests of Jewry all over the world; its Central Committee was headed by Adolphe Cremieux. Insufficiently well-informed about the situation of Jews in Russia, the Alliance took interest in Russian Jewry and soon began consistently working on behalf of Russian Jews.

The Alliance did not have Russian branches and did not function within Russia. Apart from charitable and educational work, the Alliance, in defending Russian Jews, several times addressed the Russian government directly, though often inappropriately. For example, in 1866 the Alliance appealed to prevent the execution of Itska Borodai who was convicted of politically motivated arson. However, he was not sentenced to death at all, and other Jews implicated in the affair were acquitted even without the petition. In another case, Cremieux protested against the resettlement of Jews to the Caucasus and the Amur region, although there was no such Russian government plan whatsoever. In 1869 he again protested, this time against the nonexistent persecution of Jews in St. Petersburg. Cremieux had also complained to the President of the United States about similarly nonexistent persecutions against the Jewish religion by the Russian government.

Nevertheless, according to the report of the Russian ambassador in Paris, the newlyformed Alliance (with the Mosaic tablets over the earth on its emblem) had already enjoyed “extraordinary influence on Jewish societies in all countries. All this alarmed the Russian government as well as Russian public. Yakov Brafman actively campaigned against the Universal Jewish Alliance. He claimed that the Alliance, like all Jewish societies, is double-faced (its official documents proclaim one thing while the secret ones say

another) and that the task of the Alliance is to shield the Jewry from the perilous influence of Christian civilization. As a result, the Society for the Spreading of Enlightenment among the Jews in Russia was also accused of having a mission to achieve and foster universal Jewish solidarity and caste-like seclusion.

Fears of the Alliance were also nurtured by the very emotional opening proclamation of its founders to the Jews of all nations and by the dissemination of false Alliance documents. Regarding Jewish unity the proclamation contained the following wording: “Jews! If you believe that the

Alliance is good for you, that while being the parts of different nations you nevertheless can have common feelings, desires, and hopes if you think that your disparate efforts, good aspirations and individual ambitions could become a major force when united and moving in one direction and toward one goal then please support us with your sympathy and assistance.”

Later in France a document surfaced containing an alleged proclamation *To Jews of the Universe* by Adolphe Cremieux himself. It was very likely a forgery. Perhaps it was one of the drafts of the opening proclamation not accepted by the Alliance founders. However, it had resonated well with Brafman’s accusations of the Alliance having hidden goals: “We live in alien lands and we cannot take an interest in the variable concerns of those nations until our own moral and material interests are endangered the Jewish teachings must fill the entire world.” Heated arguments were exchanged in this regard in Russian press. I. S. Aksakov concluded in his newspaper *Rus* that “the question of the document under discussion being a falsehood is rather

irrelevant in this case because of veracity of the expressed herein Jewish views and aspirations.”

The pre-revolutionary *Jewish Encyclopedia* writes that from the 1870s fewer voices were heard in defense of Jews in the Russian press. The notion of Jews allegedly united under the aegis of a powerful political organization administered by the Alliance Israélite Universelle was taking root in Russian society. Thus, the foundation of the Alliance produced in Russia (and possibly not only in Russia) a reaction counterproductive to the goals that the Alliance had specified. If the founders of the Alliance could have foreseen the sheer scale of condemnations against the idea of worldwide Jewish solidarity and even the accusations of conspiracy which had erupted after the creation of the organization, they might have refrained from following that route, especially considering that the Alliance did not alter the course of Jewish history.

After 1874, when a new military charter introducing universal military service obligation in Russia came into force, numerous news articles on draft evasion by Jews began fueling resentment that would arise once again precisely a century later, in the 1970s. Cremieux replied that the mission of the Alliance was the struggle against religious persecution and that the Alliance had decided henceforth not to assist Jews trying to evade military obligation in Russia. Rather it would issue “an appeal to our co-religionists in Russia in order to motivate them to comply with all the requirements of the new law.”

Besides crossing the border, another way to evade military service was self-mutilation. General Denikin (who was quite a liberal before and even during the revolution) described hundreds of bitter cases of the self-mutilation he personally saw during several years of service at the military

medical examination board in Volyn Guberniya. Such numerous and desperate selfinjuries to evade military service on the part of the Jews are all the more striking considering that it was already the beginning of the 20th century.

As previously mentioned, the influx of Jews into public schools, professional schools and institutions of higher learning had sharply increased after 1874 when a new military charter stipulating educational privileges came into force. This increase was dramatic. While calls to restrict Jewish enrollment in public education institutions were heard from the Northwestern Krai even before, in 1875, the Ministry of Public Education informed the government that it was impossible to admit all Jews trying to enter public educational institutions without constraining the Christian population.

It is worth mentioning here the G. Aronson's regretful note that even D. Mendeleev of St. Petersburg University showed anti-Semitism. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* summarizes all of the 1870s period as "a turnaround in the attitudes of a part of Russian intelligentsia which rejected the ideals of the previous decade especially in regard to the Jewish Question."

An interesting feature of that time was that it was the press (the rightist one, of course) and not governmental circles that was highly skeptical and in no way hostile towards the project of full legal emancipation of the Jews. The following quotes are typical: "How can all the citizenship rights be granted to this stubbornly fanatical tribe, allowing them to occupy the highest administrative posts? Only education and social progress can truly bring together Jews and Christians. Introduce them into the universal family of civilization, and we will be the first to say words of love and reconciliation to them."

“Civilization will generally benefit from such a rapprochement as the intelligent and energetic tribe will contribute much to it. The Jews will realize that time is ripe to throw off the yoke of intolerance which originates in the overly strict interpretations of the Talmud. Until education brings the Jews to the thought that it is necessary to live not only at the expense of Russian society but also for the good of this society, no discussion could be held about granting them more rights than those they have now.”

“Even if it is possible to grant the Jews all civil rights, then in any case they cannot be allowed into any official positions’where Christians would be subject to their authority and where they could have influence on the administration and legislation of a Christian country.”

The attitude of the Russian press of that time is well reflected in the words of the prominent St. Petersburg newspaper *Golos*: “Russian Jews have no right to complain that the Russian press is biased against their interests. Most Russian periodicals favor equal civil rights for Jews; it is understandable that Jews strive to expand their rights toward equality with the rest of Russian citizens; yet some dark forces drive Jewish youth into the craziness of political agitation. Why is that only a few political trials do not list Jews among defendants, and, importantly, among the most prominent defendants? That and the common Jewish practice of evading military service are counterproductive for the cause of expanding the civil rights of Jews; one aspiring to achieve rights must prove beforehand his ability to fulfill the duties which come with those rights” and “avoid putting himself into an extremely unfavorable and dismal position with respect to the interests of state and society.”

Yet, the *Encyclopedia* notes, “Despite all this propaganda, bureaucratic circles were dominated by the idea

that the Jewish Question could only be resolved through emancipation. For instance, in March 1881 a majority of the members of the Commission for Arranging the Jewish Way of Life tended to think that it was necessary to equalize the Jews in rights with the rest of the population." Raised during the two decades of Alexandrian reforms, the bureaucrats of that period were in many respects taken by the reforms' triumphant advances. And so proposals quite radical and favorable to Jews were put forward on several occasions by Governors General of the regions constituting the Pale of Settlement.

Let's not overlook the new initiatives of the influential Sir Moses Montefiore, who paid another visit to Russia in 1872; and the pressure of both Benjamin Disraeli and Bismarck on Russian State Chancellor Gorchakov at the Berlin Congress of 1878. Gorchakov had uneasily to explain that Russia was not in the least against religious freedom and did grant it fully, but religious freedom should not be confused with Jews having equal political and civil rights.

Yet the situation in Russia developed toward emancipation.

And when in 1880 the Count Loris-Melikov was made the Minister of the Interior with exceptional powers, the hopes of Russian Jews for emancipation had become really great and well-founded. Emancipation seemed impending and inevitable.

And at this very moment the members of Narodnaya Volya assassinated Alexander II, thus destroying in the bud many liberal developments in Russia, among them the hopes for full Jewish civil equality.

Sliozberg noted that the Czar was killed on the eve of Purim. After a series of attempts, the Jews were not surprised at this coincidence, but they became restless about the future.

## Chapter V: After the Murder of Alexander II

The murder of the Czar-Liberator, Alexander II, shocked the people's consciousness— something the *Narodovol'tsi* intended, but that has been intentionally or unintentionally ignored by historians with the passing of decades. The deaths of heirs or czars of the previous century— Aleksei Petrovich, Ivan Antonovich, Peter III, and Paul—were violent, but that was unknown to the people. The murder of March 1st, 1881, caused a panic in minds nationwide. For the common people, and particularly for the peasant masses, it was as if the very foundations of their lives were shaken. Again, as the *Narodovol'tsi* calculated, this could not help but invite some explosion. And an explosion did occur, but an unpredictable one: Jewish pogroms in Novorossiya and Ukraine.

Six weeks after the regicide, the pogroms of Jewish shops, institutions, and homes suddenly engulfed a vast territory, with tremendous, epidemic force. Indeed, it was rather spontaneous. Local people who for the most different reasons desired to get even with the Jews posted incendiary posters and organized basic cadres of pogromists, which were quickly joined by hundreds of volunteers who joined without any exhortation, caught up in the generally wild atmosphere and promise of easy money. In this there was something spontaneous. However, even the crowds fueled by alcohol while committing theft and violence directed their blows in one direction only: in the direction of the Jews. The unruliness only stopping at the thresholds of Christian homes.

The first pogrom occurred in Elizavetgrad, on 15 April. Disorder intensified when peasants from the neighboring settlements arrived, in order to profit off the

goods of the Jews. At first the military did not act, because of uncertainty; finally, significant cavalry forces succeeded in ending the pogrom.

The arrival of fresh forces put an end to the pogrom. There was no rape and murder in this pogrom. According to other sources, one Jew was killed. The pogrom was put down on 17 April by troops who fired into the crowd of thugs. However, from Elizavetgrad the stirring spread to neighboring settlements. In the majority of cases, the disorders were confined to plundering of taverns. After a week, a pogrom occurred in the Anan'evskiy Uezd district of Odessa Guberniya province, then in Anan'ev itself, where it was caused by some petty bourgeois, who spread a rumor that the Czar was killed by Jews, and that there was an official order for the massacre of Jews but the authorities were hiding this. On 23 April, there was a brief pogrom in Kiev, but it was soon stopped with military force. However, on 26 April a new pogrom broke out, and by the following day it had spread to the Kiev suburbs. This was the largest pogrom in the whole chain of them; but it as well ended without human fatalities. (Another tome of the same *Encyclopedia* reports the opposite, that several Jews were killed.) After Kiev, pogroms took place again in approximately fifty settlements in the Kiev Guberniya, during which property of the Jews was subjected to plunder, and in isolated cases battery occurred. At the end of the same April a pogrom took place in Konotop, caused mainly by workers and railroad hands, accompanied by one human fatality; in Konotop there were instances of self-defense from the Jewish side. There was still an echo of the Kiev Pogrom in Zhmerinka, in several settlements of Chernigov Guberniya; at the start of May, in the small town of Smel, where it was suppressed with arriving troops the next day (an apparel store was plundered).

With echoes in the course of May, at the start of summer pogroms still broke out in separate areas in Ekaterinoslav and Poltava guberniyas of Aleksandrovsk, Romni, Nezhin, Pereyaslavl, and Borisov. Insignificant disorders took place somewhere in Melitopol Uezd. There were cases when peasants immediately compensated Jews for their losses.

The pogrom movement in Kishinev, which began on 20 April, was nipped in the bud. There were no pogroms in all of Byelorussia—not in that year, nor in the following years, although in Minsk a panic started among the Jews during rumors about pogroms in the Southwestern Krai, on account of a completely unexpected occurrence. And next in Odessa. Only Odessa already knew Jewish pogroms in the 19th century, in 1821, 1859, and 1871. Those were sporadic events, caused mainly by unfriendliness toward Jews on the part of the local Greek population, on account of the commercial competition of the Jews and Greeks. In 1871 there was a three-day pogrom of hundreds of Jewish taverns, shops, and homes, but without human fatalities.

I.G. Orshanskiy writes in more detail about this pogrom, and states, that Jewish property was intentionally destroyed: heaps of watches from the jewelers — they did not steal them, but carried them out to the roadway and smashed them. He agrees that the nerve center of the pogrom was hostility toward the Jews on the part of the Greek merchants, particularly owing to the fact, that after the Crimean War the Odessa Jews took the grocery trade and colonial commodities from the Greeks. But there was a general dislike toward the Jews on the part of the Christian population of Odessa. This hostility manifested far more consciously and prominently among the intelligent and affluent class than among the common working people. You see, however, that different peoples get along in Odessa; why then did only

Jews arouse general dislike toward themselves, which sometimes turns into severe hatred? One high school teacher explained to his class: “The Jews are engaged in incorrect economic relations with the rest of population.” Orshanskiy objects that such an explanation removes the heavy burden of moral responsibility. He sees the same reason in the psychological influence of Russian legislation, which singles out the Jews, namely and only to place restrictions on them. And in the attempt of Jews to break free from restrictions, people see impudence, insatiableness, and grabbing. As a result, in 1881 the Odessa administration, already having experience with pogroms – which other local authorities did not have – immediately put down disorders which were reignited several times, and the masses of thugs were placed in vessels and dragged away from the shore – a highly resourceful method. (In contradiction to the prerevolutionary, the modern *Encyclopedia* writes, that this time the pogrom in Odessa continued for three days.)

### **Pogroms Blamed On The Czarist Government**

The pre-revolutionary *Encyclopedia* recognizes, that “the government considered it necessary to decisively put down violent attempts against the Jews”; so it was the new Minister of Interior Affairs, Count N.P. Ignatiev, (who replaced Loris-Melikov in May, 1881) who firmly suppressed the pogroms; although it was not easy to cope with rising disturbances of epidemic strength – in view of the complete unexpectedness of events, the extremely small number of Russian police at that time (Russia’s police force was then incomparably smaller than the police forces in the West European states, much less than those in the Soviet

Union) and the rare stationing of military garrisons in those areas. Firearms were used for defense of the Jews against pogromists. There was firing in the crowd, and people were shot dead. For example, in Borisov soldiers shot and killed several peasants. Also, in Nezhin troops stopped a pogrom, by opening fire at the crowd of peasant pogromists; several people were killed and wounded. In Kiev 1,400 people were arrested.

All this together indicates a highly energetic picture of enforcement. But the government acknowledged its insufficient preparedness. An official statement said that during the Kiev pogrom the measures to restrain the crowds were not taken with sufficient timeliness and energy. In a report to His Majesty in June 1881 the Director of the Police Department, V.K. Plehve, named the fact that courts martial “treated the accused extremely leniently and in general dealt with the matter quite superficially” as “one of the reasons for the development and insufficiently quick suppression of the disorders” Alexander III made a note in the report: “This is inexcusable.”

But forthwith and later it did not end without accusations that the pogroms were arranged by the government itself – a completely unsubstantiated accusation, much less absurd, since in April 1881 the same liberal reformer Loris Melikov headed the government, and all his people were in power in the upper administration. After 1917, a group of researchers – S. Dubnov, G. Krasniy-Admoni, and S. Lozinskiy – thoroughly searched for the proof in all the opened government archives and only found the opposite, beginning with the fact that Alexander III himself demanded an energetic investigation. But to utterly ruin Czar Alexander III’s reputation a nameless someone invented the malicious slander that the Czar – unknown to anyone, when, and under

what circumstances – said: “And I admit that I myself am happy when they beat Jews!” And this was accepted and printed in émigré liberation brochures, it went into liberal folklore, and even until now, after 100 years, it has turned up in publications as historically reliable.

And even in the *Short Jewish Encyclopedia*: “The authorities acted in close contact with the arrivals,” that is, with outsiders. And it was “clear” to Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana that it was “obvious”: all matters were in the hands of the authorities. If “they wanted one they could bring on a pogrom; if they didn’t want one there would be no pogrom.”

As a matter of fact, not only was there no incitement on the part of the government, but as Gessen points out: “the rise of numerous pogrom brigades in a short time in a vast area and the very character of their actions eliminates the thought of the presence of a single organizational center.” And here is another contemporary, living testimony from a pretty much unexpected quarter

– from the Black Repartition’s Worker’s Leaflet; that is, a proclamation to the people, in June 1881. The revolutionary leaflet thus described the picture: “Not only all the governors, but all other officials, police, troops, priests, *zemstvo* [elected district councils], and journalists – stood up for the kulak-Jews...The government protects the person and property of the Jews.” Threats are announced by the governors “that the perpetrators of the riots will be dealt with according to the full extent of the law...The police looked for people who were in the crowd [of pogromists], arrested them, dragged them to the police station...Soldiers and Cossacks used the rifle butt and the whip...they beat the people with rifles and whips...some were prosecuted and locked up in jail or sent to do hard labor, and others were thrashed with birches on the spot by the police.”

## Exaggeration of Pogrom Violence and Bloodshed

Next year, in the spring of 1881, pogroms were renewed but already not in the same numbers and not in the same scale as in the previous year. The Jews of the city of Balta experienced a particularly heavy pogrom, riots also occurred in the Baltskiy Uezd and still in a few others. However, according to the number of incidents, and according to their character, the riots of 1882 were significantly inferior to the movement of 1881 – the destruction of the property of Jews was not so frequent a phenomenon. The pre-revolutionary *Jewish Encyclopedia* reports, that at the time of the pogrom in Balta, one Jew was killed.

A famous Jewish contemporary wrote: “In the pogroms of the 1880s, they robbed unlucky Jews, and they beat them, but they did not kill them.” (According to other sources, six or seven deaths were recorded.) At the time of the 1880–1890s, no one remembered mass killings and rapes. However, more than a half-century passed, and many publicists, not having the need to delve into the ancient [official] Russian facts, but then having an extensive and credulous audience, now began to write about massive and premeditated atrocities.

For example, we read in Max Raisin’s frequently republished book that the pogroms of 1881 led to the rape of women, murder, and maiming of thousands of men, women, and children. It was later revealed, that these riots were inspired and thought out by the very government, which had incited the pogromists and hindered the Jews in their self-defense. A G.B. Sliozberg, so rationally familiar with the

workings of the Russian state apparatus, suddenly declared out of country in 1933 that the pogroms of 1881 originated not from below but from above, with Minister Ignatiev (who at that time was still not Minister – the old man's memory failed him) and

“there was no doubt, that threads of the work of the pogrom could be found in the Department of

Police.” Thus, the experienced jurist afforded himself dangerous and ugly groundlessness.

And yes, here in a serious present-day Jewish journal from a modern Jewish author we find that, contrary to all the facts and without bringing in new documents that in Odessa in 1881 a three day pogrom took place; and that in the Balta pogrom there was “direct participation of soldiers and police”; “40 Jews were killed and seriously wounded, 170 lightly wounded.” We just read in the old *Jewish Encyclopedia*: in Balta one Jew was killed, and wounded – several. But in the *New Jewish Encyclopedia*, a century after the events, we read that in Balta “soldiers joined the pogromists...Several Jews were killed, hundreds wounded, many women were raped.” Pogroms are too savage and horrible a form of reprisal, for one to so lightly manipulate casualty figures. There – spattered, basted – is it necessary to begin excavations again?

### **Who Was Really Behind the Pogroms?**

The causes of those first pogroms were persistently examined and discussed by contemporaries. As early as 1872, after the Odessa pogrom, the General-Governor of the Southwestern Krai warned in a report that similar events could happen in his Krai also, for “here the hatred and hostility toward Jews has a historical basis, and only the

material dependence of the peasants upon Jews together with the measures of the administration currently holds back an indignant explosion of the Russian population against the Jewish tribe.” The General-Governor reduced the essence of the matter to economics, as he reckoned and evaluated the business and manufacturing property in Jewish hands in the Southwestern Krai, and pointed to the fact that “being increasingly engaged in the rent of landed estates, the Jews have re-rented and shifted this land to the peasants on very difficult terms.” And such a causation received wide recognition in 1881 which was full of pogroms.

In the spring of 1881, Loris-Melikov also reported to His Majesty: “The deep hatred of the local population toward the Jews who enslave it lies at the foundation of the present disorders, but ill-intentioned people have undoubtedly exploited this opportunity.”

And thus, explained the newspapers of the time: examining the causes which provoked the pogroms, only a few organs of the periodical press refer to the tribal and religious hatred; the rest think that the pogrom movement arose on economic grounds; in so doing, some see a protest in the unruly behaviors directed specially against the Jews, in light of their economic dominance over the Russian population. Yet others maintained that the mass of the people, in general squeezed economically, looked for someone to vent their anger on and the Jews fit this purpose because of their having little rights. A contemporary of these pogroms, the cited educator, V. Portugalov, also said “In the Jewish pogroms of the 1880s, I saw an expression of protest by the peasants and the urban poor against social injustice.” Ten years later, Yu. I. Gessen emphasized, that the Jewish population of the southern guberniyas in general was able to find sources of livelihood among the Jewish capitalists, while

the local peasantry went through extremely difficult times as it did not have enough land, to which the wealthy Jews contributed in part, by re-renting the landowner's lands and raising the rental fee beyond the ability of the peasants.

Let us not leave out still another witness, known for his impartiality and thoughtfulness, whom no one has accused of being reactionary or of anti-Semitism – Gleb Uspenskiy. At the beginning of the 1980s, he wrote: “The Jews were beaten up, namely because they amassed a fortune on other people’s needs, other people’s work, and did not make bread with their own hands. Under canes and lashes, you see, the people endured the rule of the Tatar and the German, but when the Yid began to harass the people for a ruble – they did not take it!”

But we should note that when soon after the pogroms a deputation of prominent Jews from the capital, headed by Baron G. Gintsburg, came to Alexander III at the beginning of May 1881,

His Majesty confidently estimated that “in the criminal disorders in the south of Russia, the Jews served only as a pretext, that this business was the hand of the anarchists.” And in those same days, the brother of the Czar, the Grand Prince Vladimir Alexandrovich, announced to the same Gintsburg, that “the disorders, as is now known by the government, have their sources not exclusively agitation against the Jews, but an aspiration to the work of sedition in general.” And the General-Governor of the Southwestern Krai also reported, that “the general excited condition of the population is the responsibility of propagandists.” In this the authorities turned out to be well-informed. Such quick statements from them reveal that the authorities did not waste time in investigation. But because of the usual misunderstanding of the Russian administration of that time,

and its incomprehension of the role of publicity, they did not report the results of the investigation to the public. Sliazberg blames that on the central authority in that it did not even make attempts to vindicate itself of accusations of permitting the pogroms. (True, but after all, it accused the government, as we saw, of deliberate instigation and guidance of the pogroms. It is absurd to start with proof that you are not a criminal.)

Yet not everyone wanted to believe that the incitements came from the revolutionaries. Here a Jewish memoirist from Minsk recalls: “for Jews, Alexander II was not a Liberator – he did not do away with the Jewish Pale of Settlement, and although the Jews sincerely mourned his death, they did not say a single bad word against the revolutionaries; they spoke with respect about them, that they were driven by heroism and purity of thought.” And during the spring and summer pogroms of 1881, they did not in any way believe that the socialists incited toward them: it was all because of the new Czar and his government. The government wished for the pogroms, it had to have a scapegoat. And now, when reliable witnesses from the South later indeed confirmed that the socialists engineered them, they continued to believe that it was the fault of the government.

However, toward the start of the 20th century, thorough authors admitted: “In the press there is information about the participation of separate members of the *Narodnaya Vol'ya* [People’s Will] in the pogroms; but the extent of this participation is still not clear. . . . Judging by the party organ, members of the party considered the pogroms as a sort of revolutionary activity, suggesting that the pogroms were training the people for revolutionary action, that the action which was easiest of all to direct against the Jews now

could in its further development, come down on the nobles and officials. Accordingly, proclamations calling for an attack on the Jews were prepared." Today, it is only superficially talked about, like something generally known: both members of *Narodnaya Vol'ya* and the Black Repartition was prepared to stir rebellion to any fertile soil, including anti-Semitism.

From emigration, Tkachev, irrepressible predecessor of Lenin in conspiratorial tactics, welcomed the broadening pogrom movement.

Indeed, the *Narodovol'tsi* and the weaker *Chernoperedel'tsi* [members of Black Repartition] could not wait much longer after the murder of the Czar which did not cause the instantaneous mass revolution which had been predicted and expected by them. With such a state of general bewilderment of minds after the murder of the Czar-Liberator, only a slight push was needed for the reeling minds to re-incline into any direction.

In that generally unenlightened time, that re-inclination could probably have happened in different ways. For example, there was then such a popular conception that the Czar was killed by nobles, in revenge for the liberation of the peasants. In Ukraine, anti-Jewish motives existed. Still, it is possible the first movements of spring 1881 anticipated the plot of the *Narodovol'tsi* - but right then and there they suggested which way the wind would blow: it went against the Jews - never lose touch with the people! A movement from the heart of the masses - Of course! Why not use it? Beat the Jews, and later we will get to the landowners! And now the unsuccessful pogroms in Odessa and Ekaterinoslav were most likely exaggerated by the Narodniks. The movement of the pogromists along the railroads, and participation of the railroad workers in the pogroms—

everything points to the instigation of pogroms by easily mobile agitators, especially with that particularly inciting rumor that “they are hiding the order of the Czar,” namely to beat the Jews for the murder of his father.

The public prosecutor of the Odessa Judicial Bureau thus emphasized that in perpetrating the Jewish pogroms, the people were completely convinced of the legality of their actions, firmly believing in the existence of a Czar’s decree allowing and even authorizing the destruction of Jewish property. And according to Gessen, “the realization that had taken root in the people that the Jews stood outside of the law, and that the authorities defending the Jews could not come out against the people – had now taken effect.” The *Narodovol’tsi* wanted to use this imaginary notion. A few such revolutionary leaflets are preserved for history. Such a leaflet from 30 August 1881 is signed by the Executive Committee of the *Narodnaya Vol’ya* and reads straight away in Ukrainian:

“Who seized the land, forests, and taverns? The Yid. From whom, *muzhik* peasant, do you have to ask for access to your land, at times hiding tears? From Yids. Wherever you look, wherever you ask, the Yids are everywhere. The Yid insults people and cheats them; drinks their blood” ...and it concludes with the appeal: “Honest working people! Free yourselves!” Later, in the newspaper *Narodnaya Vol’ya* No. 6: “All attention of the defending people is now concentrated, hastily and passionately, on the merchants, tavern keepers, and moneylenders; in a word, on the Jews, on this local bourgeoisie, who avariciously rob working people like nowhere else.” And after, in a forward to a leaflet of the *Narodnaya Vol’ya* (already in 1883), some

“corrections”: “the pogroms began as a nationwide movement, but not against the Jews as Jews, but against Yids; that is, exploiter peoples.”

In the said leaflet Zerno, the *Chernoperedel’tsi*: “The working people cannot withstand the Jewish robbery anymore. Wherever one goes, almost everywhere he runs into the Jew-Kulak. The Jew owns the taverns and pubs; the Jew rents land from the landowners, and then re-rents it at three times higher to the peasant; he buys the wholesale yields of crop and engages in usury, and in the process, charges such interest rates, that the people outright call them ‘Yiddish rates’...”

“This is our blood!” said the peasants to the police officials who came to seize the Jewish property back from them. But the same “correction” is in Zerno: “...and far from all among the Jews are wealthy...not all of them are kulaks...Discard hostility toward differing peoples and differing faiths and unite with them against the common enemy: The Czar, the police, the landowners, and the capitalists.”

However, these “corrections” came quite late in the day. Such leaflets were later reproduced in Elizavetgrad and other cities of the South; and in the South Russian Worker’s Soviet in Kiev, where the pogroms were already over, the Narodniks tried to stir them up again in 1883, hoping to renew, and through them to spread the Russian-wide revolution.

Of course, the pogrom wave in the South was extensively covered in the contemporary press in the capital. In the “reactionary” *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* the writer M. N. Katkov, who always defended the Jews, branded the pogroms as originating with “malicious intriguers who intentionally darkened the popular consciousness, forcing

people to solve the Jewish Question, albeit not by a path of thorough study, but with the help of raised fists.”

The articles by prominent writers stand out. I. S. Aksakov, a steadfast opponent of complete civil liberty for the Jews, attempted to warn the government against too daring steps on this path, as early as the end of the 1850s. When a law came out allowing Jews with higher degrees to be employed in the administration, he objected (1862) saying that the Jews are “a bunch of people who completely reject Christian teachings, the Christian ideal and code of morality and therefore, the entire foundation of Russian society, and practice a hostile and antagonistic faith.” He was against political emancipation of the Jews, though he did not reject their equalization in purely civil rights, in order that the Jewish people could be provided complete freedom in daily life, selfmanagement, development, enlightenment, commerce, and even allowing them to reside in all of Russia. In 1867, he wrote that economically speaking “we should talk not about emancipation for Jews, but rather about the emancipation of Russians from Jews.” He noted the blank indifference of the liberal press to the conditions of peasant’s life and their needs. And now Aksakov explained the wave of pogroms in 1881 as a manifestation of the popular anger against “the Jewish yoke over the Russian local people”; that’s why during the pogroms, there was an absence of theft, only the destruction of property and a kind of simplehearted conviction in the justness of their actions; and he repeated, that it was worth putting the question not about Jews enjoying equal rights with Christians, but about the equal rights of Christians with Jews, about abolishing factual inequality of the Russian population in the face of the Jews.

On the other hand, an article by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin was full of indignation: “History has never drawn

on its pages a question more difficult, more devoid of humanity, and more tortuous, than the Jewish Question...There is not a more inhumane and mad legend than that coming out from the dark ravines of the distant past...carrying the mark of disgrace, alienation, and hatred...Whatever the Jew undertakes, he always remains stigmatized." Shchedrin did not deny that "a significant contingent of moneylenders and exploiters of various kinds are enlisted from the Jews," but he asked, can we really place blame on the whole Jewish tribe, on account of one type?

Examining the whole discussion of that time, a present-day Jewish author writes: "the liberal, and conditionally speaking, progressive press was defending the thugs." And the prerevolutionary *Jewish Encyclopedia* comes to a similar conclusion: "Yet in the progressive circles, sympathies toward the woes of the Jewish people were not displayed sufficiently ...they looked at this catastrophe from the viewpoint of the aggressor, presenting him as destitute peasant, and completely ignoring the moral sufferings and material situation of the mobbed Jewish people." And even the radical *Patriotic Notes* evaluated it thus: "the people rose up against the Jews because they took upon themselves the role of pioneers of capitalism, because they live according to the new truth and confidently draw their own comfortable prosperity from that new source at the expense of the surrounding community," and therefore, "it was necessary that the people be protected from the Jew, and the Jew from the people", and for this the condition of the peasant needs to be improved.

### **Trying to Resolve the Jewish Question**

In *A Letter from a Christian on the Jewish Question*, published in the Jewish magazine *Rassvet*, D. Mordovtsev, a writer sympathetic to the Jews, pessimistically urged the Jews to emigrate to Palestine and America, seeing only in this a solution to the Jewish Question in Russia.

Jewish social-political journalism and the memoirs of this period expressed grievance because the printed publications against the Jews, both from the right and from the revolutionary left, followed immediately after the pogroms. Soon (and all the more energetically because of the pogroms) the government would strengthen restrictive measures against the Jews. It is necessary to take note of and understand this insult. It is necessary thoroughly to examine the position of the government. The general solutions to the problem were being sought in discussions in government and administrative spheres. In a report to His Majesty, N. P. Ignatiev, the new Minister of Internal Affairs, outlined the scope of the problem for the entire previous reign: "Recognizing the harm to the Christian population from the Jewish economic activity, their tribal exclusivity and religious fanaticism, in the last 20 years the government has tried to blend the Jews with the rest of the population using a whole row of initiatives, and has almost made the Jews equal in rights with the native inhabitants."

However, the present anti-Jewish movement "incontrovertibly proves, that despite all the efforts of the government, the relations between the Jews and the native population of these regions remain abnormal as in the past," because of the economic issues: after the easing of civil restrictions, the Jews have not only seized commerce and trade, but they have acquired significant landed property. Moreover, because of their cohesion and solidarity, they have, with few exceptions, directed all their efforts not

toward the increase of the productive strength of the state, but primarily toward the exploitation of the poorest classes of the surrounding population.” And now, after we have crushed the disorders and defended the Jews from violence, “it seems just and urgent to adopt no less energetic measures for the elimination of these abnormal conditions...between the native inhabitants and the Jews, and to protect the population from that harmful activity of the Jews.’

In accordance with that, in November 1881 governmental commissions comprised of representatives of all social strata and groups (including Jewish), were established in 15 guberniyas of the Jewish Pale of Settlement, and also in Kharkov Guberniya. The commissions sought to examine the Jewish Question and propose their ideas on its resolution. It was expected that the commissions would provide answers on many factual questions, such as:

\*In general, which aspects of Jewish economic activity are most harmful for the way of life of the native population in the region?

\*Which difficulties hinder the enforcement of laws regulating the purchase and rental of land, trade in spirits, and usury by Jews?

\*Which changes are necessary to eliminate evasion of these laws by Jews?

\*Which legislative and administrative measures in general are necessary to negate the harmful influence of the Jews in various kinds of economic activity?

The liberal Palenskaya inter-ministerial High Commission established two years later for the revision of laws on the Jews, noted that “the harm from the Jews, their bad qualities, and traits” were somewhat recognized *a priori* in the program that was given to the provincial commissions.

Yet many administrators in those commissions were pretty much liberal, as they were brought up in the stormy epoch of Czar Alexander II's reforms, and moreover, public delegates participated also. And Ignatiev's ministry received rather inconsistent answers. Several commissions were in favor of abolishing the Jewish Pale of Settlement. Individual members of the commissions – and they were not few – declared that the only just solution to the Jewish Question was the general repeal of all restrictions.

On the other hand, the Vilnius Commission stated that because of the mistakenly understood notion of universal human equality wrongly applied to Judaism to the detriment of the native people, the Jews managed to seize economic supremacy; that “the Jewish law permits them to profit from any weakness and gullibility of gentile. Let the Jews renounce their seclusion and isolation, let them reveal the secrets of their social organization allowing light where only darkness appeared to outsiders; and only then can one think about opening new spheres of activity to the Jews, without fear that Jews wish to use the benefits of the nation while not being members of the nation, and not taking upon themselves a share of the national burden.

Regarding residence in the villages and hamlets, the commissions found it necessary to restrict the rights of the Jews: to forbid them to live there altogether or to make it conditional upon the agreement of the village communities. Some commissions recommended completely depriving the Jews of the right to possess real estate outside of the cities and small towns, and others proposed establishing restrictions. The commissions showed the most unanimity in prohibiting any Jewish monopoly on alcohol sales in villages.

The Ministry gathered the opinions of the governors, and with rare exceptions comments from the regional authorities were not favorable to the Jews. “To protect the Christian population from so haughty a tribe as the Jews, one can never expect the Jewish tribe to dedicate its talents to the benefit of the homeland; Talmudic morals do not place any obstacles before the Jews if it is a question of making money at the expense of someone outside of the tribe.” Yet the Kharkov General-Governor did not consider it possible to take restrictive measures against the whole Jewish population without distinguishing the lawful from the guilty; he proposed to expand the right of movement for Jews and spread enlightenment among them.

That same autumn, by Ignatiev’s initiative, a special Committee on the Jews was established (the ninth by count already, with three permanent members, two of them professors) with the task of analyzing the materials of the provincial commissions and in order to draft a legislative bill. The previous “Commission for the Organization of the Life of the Jews” – that is, the eighth committee on Jews, which existed since 1872 – was soon abolished due to the gap between its original purpose and the present state of the Jewish Question.

The new Committee proceeded with the conviction that the goal of integrating the Jews with the rest of the population, toward which the government had striven for the last 25 years, had turned out to be unattainable. Therefore, “the difficulty of resolving the complicated Jewish Question compels us to turn for the instruction to the old times, when various novelties did not yet penetrate either our own or foreign legislation, and did not bring with them the regrettable consequences which usually appear upon adoption of new things that are contrary to the national spirit

of the country.” From time immemorial the Jews were considered aliens, and should be considered as such. Gessen comments: “the reactionary could not go further.” And if you were so concerned about the national foundations then why you didn’t worry about genuine emancipation of the peasantry during the past 20 years?

And it was also true that Czar Alexander II’s emancipation of the peasants proceeded in a confused, unwholesome and corrupt environment.

However, in government circles there were still people who did not consider it possible, in general, to change the policy of the preceding reign – and they were in important posts and strong. And some ministers opposed Ignatiev’s proposals. Seeing resistance, he divided the proposed measures into fundamental (for which passing in the regular way required moving through the government and the State Council) and provisional, which could by law be adopted through an accelerated and simplified process.

To convince the rural population that the government would protect them from exploitation by Jews, the permanent residence of Jews outside of their towns and *shtetls* (since the government was powerless to protect them from pogroms in the scattered villages) and the buying and renting of real estate there, and also trading in spirits was prohibited. Regarding the Jews already living there, it granted to the rural communities the right to evict the Jews from the villages, based upon a verdict of the village meeting. But other ministers – particularly the Minister of Finance, N. Kh. Bunge, and the Minister of Justice, D.N. Nabokov, did not let Ignatiev implement these measures: they rejected the bill, claiming that it was impossible to adopt such extensive prohibitive measures without debating them within the usual legislative process.

So much for the boundless and malicious arbitrariness of the Russian autocracy under the Czars. Ignatiev's fundamental measures did not pass, and the provisional ones passed only in a greatly truncated form. Rejected were the provisions to evict the Jews already living in the villages, to forbid their trade in alcohol and their renting and buying land in villages. And only because of the fear that the pogroms might happen again around Easter of 1882, a temporary measure until passing of comprehensive legislation about the Jews was passed which again prohibited the Jews henceforth to take residence and enter into ownership, or make use of real estate property outside of their towns and *shtetls* (that is, in the villages), and also forbade them to trade on Sundays and Christian holidays. Concerning the Jewish ownership of local real estate, the government acted to suspend temporarily the completion of sales and purchase agreements and loans in the name of the Jews, the notarization of real estate rental agreements, and the proxy management and disposal of property by them.

This mere relic of Ignatiev's proposed measures was approved on 3 May 1882, under title of Temporary Regulations (known as the May Regulations). Ignatiev himself went into retirement after a month, his Committee on the Jews ceased its brief existence, and a new Minister of Internal Affairs, Count D. A. Tolstoy, issued a stern directive against possible new pogroms, placing full responsibility on the provincial authorities for the timely prevention of disorders.

Thus, according to the Temporary Regulations of 1882, the Jews who had settled in rural regions before the 3rd of May were not evicted and their economic activity there was essentially unrestricted. Moreover, these regulations only applied to the guberniyas of permanent Jewish

settlement, not to the guberniyas of the Russian interior. These restrictions did not extend to doctors, attorneys, and engineers - i.e., individuals with the right of universal residence according to educational requirement. These restrictions also did not affect any existing Jewish colonies still engaged in agriculture, and there was still a considerable (and later growing) list of rural settlements, according to which, in exception to the Temporary Regulations, Jews were permitted to settle.

After issuance of the Regulations, inquiries began flowing from the regions and Senate explanations were issued in response. For example: journeys through rural regions, temporary stops and even temporary stays of individuals without the right of permanent residence were not prohibited by the Law of 3 May 1882; that only the rent of real estates and agrarian lands was prohibited, while rent of all other types of real estate property, such as distillation plants, buildings for trade and industry, and living quarters was not prohibited. Also, "the Senate deems permissible the notarization of lumbering agreements with the Jews, even if the clearing of a forest was scheduled for a prolonged period, and even if the buyer of the forest was allowed use of the underbrush land"; and finally, that violations of the Law of 3rd May would not be subjected to criminal prosecution.

It is necessary to recognize these Senate clarifications as mitigating, and in many respects, good-natured. In the 1880s the Senate wrestled with the arbitrary interpretation of the laws. However, the regulations forbidding the Jews to settle outside the towns and *shtetls* and/or to own real estate, and the extremely restricted permission for alcohol distillation business by Jews was very significant.

It was exactly this measure to restrict the Jews in the rural wine trade (first proposed as early as 1804) that stirred

universal indignation at the “extraordinary severity of the May Regulations,” even though it was only implemented, and incompletely at that, in 1882. The government stood before a difficult choice: to expand the wine industry in the face of peasant proneness to drunkenness and thus to deepen the peasant poverty, or to restrict the free growth of this trade by allowing Jews already living in the villages to remain while stopping others from coming. And that choice – restriction – was deemed cruel.

Yet how many Jews lived in rural regions in 1882? We have already come across postrevolutionary estimates from the state archives: one third of the entire Jewish population of the Pale lived in villages, another third lived in *shtetls*, 29% lived in mid-size cities, and 5 percent in the major cities. So the Regulations now prevented the “village” third from further growth?

Today these May Regulations are portrayed as a decisive and irrevocably repressive boundary of Russian history. A Jewish author writes: “This was the first push toward emigration! – first internal migration, then massive overseas migration. – The first cause of Jewish emigration was the Ignatiev Temporary Regulations, which violently threw around one million Jews out of the hamlets and villages, and into the towns and *shtetls* of the Jewish Pale.”

Wait a second—how did they throw the Jews out, and an entire million at that? Didn’t they apparently only prevent new arrivals? No, no! It was already picked up and sent rolling: that from 1882 the Jews were not only forbidden to live in the villages everywhere, but in all the cities, too, except in the 13 guberniyas; that they were moved back to the *shtetls* of the Pale – that is why the mass emigration of Jews from Russia began!

Well, let us set the record straight. The first time the idea about Jewish emigration from Russia to America voiced was as early as in 1869 at the Conference of the Alliance of the World Jewish Union – with the thought that the first who settled there with the help of the Alliance and local Jews would become a magnet for their Russian co-religionists. Moreover, the beginning of the emigration of Jews from Russia dates back to the mid-19th century and gains significant momentum after the pogroms of 1881. But only since the mid-1890s does emigration become a major phenomenon of Jewish economic life, assuming a massive scale—note that it says economic life, not political life.

From a global viewpoint, Jewish immigration into the United States in the 19th century was part of an enormous century-long and worldwide historical process. There were three successive waves of Jewish emigration to America: first the Spanish-Portuguese (Sephardic) wave, then the German wave (from Germany and Austria-Hungary), and only then from Eastern Europe and Russia (Ashkenazik). For reasons not addressed here, a major historical movement of Jewish emigration to the U.S. took place in the 19th century, and not only from Russia. In light of the very lengthy Jewish history, it is difficult to overestimate the significance of this emigration.

From the Russian Empire, a river of Jewish emigration went from all the guberniyas that made up the Jewish Pale of Settlement, but Poland, Lithuania, and Byelorussia gave the greatest number of emigrants; meaning they did not come from Ukraine, which was just experiencing the pogroms. The reason for this was this emigration was the same throughout—overcrowding, which created inter-Jewish economic competition. Moreover, relying on Russian state statistics, V. Tel'nikov turns our attention to the last two

decades of the 19th century; just after the pogroms of 1881–1882, comparing the resettlement of Jews from the Western Krai, where there were no pogroms, to the Southwest, where they were.

The latter was numerically not less and was possibly more than the Jewish departure out of Russia. In addition, in 1880, according to official data, 34,000 Jews lived in the internal guberniyas, while seventeen years later (according to the census of 1897) there were already 315,000 – a ninefold increase. Of course, the pogroms of 1881–1882 caused a shock, but was it really a shock for the whole of Ukraine? For example, Sliozberg writes: “The 1881 pogroms did not alarm the Jews in Poltava, and soon they forgot about them.”

In the 1880s in Poltava “the Jewish youth did not know about the existence of the Jewish Question, and in general, did not feel isolated from the Russian youth.” The pogroms of 1881–82, in their complete suddenness, could have seemed unrepeatable, and the unchanging Jewish economic pull was prevailing: go settle hither, where fewer Jews live.

But undoubtedly and inarguably, a decisive turn of progressive and educated Jewry away from the hopes of a complete integration with the nation of Russia and the Russian population began in 1881. G. Aronson even concluded hastily, that “the 1881 Odessa Pogrom shattered the illusions of assimilation.” No, it wasn’t that way yet! But if, for example, we follow the biographies of prominent and educated Russian Jews, then around 1881–1882 we will note in many of them a drastic change in their attitudes toward Russia and about possibilities of complete assimilation. By then it was already clear and not contested that the pogrom wave was indubitably spontaneous without any evidence for the complicity of the authorities.

On the contrary, the involvement of the revolutionary *narodniks* was proven. However, the Jews did not forgive the Russian Government for these pogroms—and never have since. And although the pogroms originated mainly with the Ukrainian population, the Russians have not been forgiven and the pogroms have always been tied with the name of Russia.

The pogroms of the 1880s sobered many of the advocates of assimilation but not all: the idea of assimilation still remained alive. And here, other Jewish publicists moved to the other extreme: in general, it was impossible for Jews to live among other peoples, for they will always be looked upon as alien. And the Palestinian Movement began to grow quickly.

It was under the influence of the 1881 pogroms that the Odessa doctor, Lev Pinsker, published his brochure, *Auto-Emancipation: The Appeal of a Russian Jew to his Fellow Tribesmen* in Berlin in 1882, and anonymously. It made a huge impression on Russian and West European Jewry. It was an appeal about the ineradicable foreignness of Jews in eyes of surrounding peoples. We will discuss this further in Chapter 7.

P. Aksel'rod claims that it was then that radical Jewish youths discovered that Russian society would not accept them as their own and thus they began to depart from the revolutionary movement. However, this assertion appears to be too far-fetched. In the revolutionary circles, except the *Narodnaya Vol'ya*, they did always think of the Jews as their own.

However, despite the cooling of attitudes of the Jewish intelligentsia toward assimilation, the government, as a result of inertia from Alexander II's reign for a while maintained a sympathetic attitude toward the Jewish problem

and did not yet fully replace it by a harshly restrictive approach. After the year-long ministerial activities of Count Ignatiev, who experienced such persistent opposition on the Jewish Question from liberal forces in the upper governmental spheres, an Imperial High Commission for Revision of the Active Laws about the Jews in the Empire was established in the beginning of 1883 – or as it was named for its chairman, Count Palen, the Palenskaya Commission (so that by then, it became the tenth such Jewish Committee.)

It consisted of fifteen to twenty individuals from the upper administration, members of ministerial councils, department directors. Some were members of great families, such as Bestuzhev-Ryumin, Golytsin, and Speranskiy, and it also included seven Jewish experts – influential financiers, including Baron Goratsiy Gintsburg and Samuil Polyakov, and prominent public figures, such as Ya. Gal'pern, physiologist and publicist N. Bakst. It is highly likely that the favorable attitude of the majority of the members of the Commission toward resolution of the Jewish Question was caused, to certain degree, by the influence of Bakst and Rabbi A. Drabkin. In large part, it was these Jewish experts who prepared the materials for the Commission's consideration.

The majority of the Palenskaya Commission expressed the conviction, that “the final goal of legislation concerning the Jews should be nothing other than its abolition,” and “there is only one outcome and only one path: the path of liberation and unification of the Jews with the whole population, under the protection of the same laws.” (Indeed, rarely in Russian legislation did such complicated and contradictory laws pile up as the laws about Jews that accumulated over the decades: 626 statutes by 1885! And

they were still added later and in the Senate, they constantly researched and interpreted their wording...)

And even if the Jews did not perform their duties as citizens in equal measure with others, nevertheless it was impossible to deprive the Jew of those fundamentals, on which his existence was based – his equal rights as a subject. Agreeing that several aspects of internal Jewish life required reforming and that certain Jewish activities constituted exploitation of the surrounding population, the majority of the Commission condemned the system of repressive and exclusionary measures. The Commission set as the legislative goal to equalize the rights of Jews, with those of all other subjects,” although it recommended the utmost caution and gradualness with this.

Practically, however, the Commission only succeeded in carrying out a partial mitigation of the restrictive laws. Its greatest efforts were directed of the Temporary Regulations of 1882, particularly in regard to the renting of land by Jews. The Commission made the argument as if in the defense of the landowners, not the Jews: prohibiting Jews to rent manorial lands not only impedes the development of agriculture, but also leads to a situation when certain types of agriculture remain in complete idleness in the Western Krai – to the loss of the landowners as there is nobody to whom they could lease them.

However, the Minister of Interior Affairs, D. A. Tolstoy, agreed with the minority of the Commission: the prohibition against new land-leasing transactions would not be repealed. The Palenskaya Commission lasted for five years, until 1888, and in its work the liberal majority always clashed with the conservative minority. From the beginning, Count Tolstoy certainly had no intention to revise the laws to

increase the repressive measures, and the 5-year existence of the Palenskaya Commission confirms this.

At that moment, His Majesty also did not wish to influence the decisions of his government on the matter of the increase of repressions against Jews. Ascending to the throne at such a dramatic moment, Alexander III did not hasten either to replace liberal officials, nor to choose a harsh political course: for long time he carefully examined things. In the course of the entire reign of Alexander III, the question about a general revision of the legislation about the Jews remained open. But by 1886-87, His Majesty's view already leaned toward hardening of the partial restrictions on the Jews and so the work of the Commission did not produce any visible result.

One of the first motivations for stricter control or more constraint on the Jews than during his father's reign was the constant shortfall of Jewish conscripts for military service; it was particularly noticeable when compared to conscription of Christians. According to the Charter of 1874, which abolished recruiting, compulsory military service was now laid on all citizens without any difference in social standing, but with the stipulation that those unfit for service would be replaced: Christians with Christians, and Jews with Jews.

In the case of Jews there were difficulties in implementation of that rule as there was both straightforward emigration of conscripts and their evasion of service, which all benefited from great confusion and negligence in the official records on Jewish population, in the keeping of vital statistics, in the reliability of information about the family situation and exact place of residence of conscripts.

The tradition of all these uncertainties stretched back to the times of the Kahals, a theocratic organizational

structure that originated in ancient Israelite society, and was consciously maintained for easing the tax burden. In 1883 and 1884, there were many occasions when Jewish recruits, contrary to the law, were arrested simply upon suspicion that they might disappear.

This method was first applied to Christian recruits, but sporadically. In some places, they began to demand photographs from the Jewish recruits, a very unusual requirement for that time. And in 1886 a highly constraining law was issued, including several measures for providing for regular fulfillment of military conscription by Jews, which established a 300-ruble fine from the relatives of each Jew who evaded military call-up. From 1887 they stopped allowing Jews to apply for the examination for officer rank. Educated soldiers had privileges in choosing military specialty in the course of service. (During the reign of Alexander II, the Jews could serve in the officers' ranks.) But officer positions in military medicine always remained open to Jews.

Yet if we consider that in the same period up to 20 million other aliens of the Empire were completely freed from compulsory military service, then wouldn't it be better to free the Jews of it altogether, thus offsetting their other constraints with such a privilege? Or was it the legacy of the idea of Nicholas I continuing here – to graft the Jews into Russian society through military service? To occupy the idle?

At the same time, Jews on the whole flocked into institutions of learning. From 1876 to 1883, the number of Jews in gymnasiums and gymnasium preparatory schools almost doubled, and from 1878 to 1886 – for an 8-year period – the number of Jewish students in the universities increased six times and reached 14.5 percent. By the end of the reign

of Alexander II they were receiving alarming complaints from the regional authorities about this. Thus, in 1878 the Governor of the Minsk Guberniya reported that “being wealthier, the Jews can bring up their children better than the Russians; the material condition of the Jewish pupils is better than that of Christians, and therefore in order that the Jewish element does not overwhelm the remaining population, it is necessary to introduce a quota system for the admission of Jews into secondary schools.” Next, after disturbances in several southern gymnasiums in 1880, the Trustee of the Odessa School District publicly came out with a similar idea. And in 1883 and 1885 two successive Novorossiysk (Odessa) General-Governors stated that an over-filling of learning institutions with Jews was taking place there, and it is either necessary to limit the number of Jews in the gymnasiums and gymnasium preparatory schools to 15 percent of the general number of pupils, or to a fairer norm, equal to the proportion of the Jewish population to the whole. By 1881, Jews made up 75 percent of the general number of pupils in several gymnasiums of the Odessa District. In 1886, a report was made by the Governor of Kharkov Guberniya, complaining about the influx of Jews to the common schools.

In all these instances, the ministers did not deem it possible to adopt general restrictive solutions, and only directed the reports for consideration to the Palenskaya Commission, where they did not receive support.

From the 1870s onward, students became primary participants in the revolutionary excitement. After the assassination of Alexander II, the general intention to put down the revolutionary movement could not avoid student revolutionary nests, and the senior classes of the gymnasiums were already supplying them. Within the government there arose the alarming connection that together with the increase

of Jews among the students, the participation of students in the revolutionary movement noticeably increased. Among the higher institutions of learning, the Medical-Surgical Academy (later the Military-Medical Academy) was particularly revolutionized. Jews were very eager to enter it, and the names of Jewish students of this academy began already appearing in the court trials of the 1870s. And so the first special restrictive measure of 1882 restricted Jewish admissions to the Military-Medical Academy to an upper limit of 5%.

In 1883, a similar order followed with respect to the Mining Institute; and in 1884 a similar quota was established at the Institute of Communications. In 1885, the admission of Jews to the Kharkov Technological Institute was limited to 10%, and in 1886 their admission to the Kharkov Veterinary Institute was completely discontinued, since the city of Kharkov was always a center of political agitation, and the residence of Jews there in more or less significant numbers is generally undesirable and even dangerous. Thus, they thought to weaken the crescendo of revolutionary waves.

## **Volume Two: The Jews In the Soviet Union**

### **Chapter XIII: The February Revolution**

The 123-year-old history of unequal citizenship of the Jewish people in Russia, from the Act of Catherine the Great of 1791, ended with the 1917 February Revolution. [Ed. Note: *Solzhenitsyn refers to the first Russian revolution that overthrew the Czar, not the subsequent Bolshevik Revolution in October of that same year.*] It bears looking into the atmosphere of those February days; what was the state of society by the moment of emancipation?

There were no newspapers during the first week of the Revolutionary events in Petrograd. And then they began trumpeting, not looking for the ways to rebuild the state but vying with each other in denouncing all the things of the past. In an unprecedented gesture, the newspaper of the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets), *Rech*, announced that from now on “all Russian life must be rebuilt from the roots.” (A thousand-year life! — why, all of a sudden from “the roots”?) And the *Stock-Market News* announced a program of action: “Yank, yank all these weed-roots out! No need to worry that there might be some useful plants among them — it’s better to weed them all even at the price of unavoidable innocent victims. (Was this really March 1917 or March 1937?) The new Minister of Foreign Affairs Milyukov bowed and scraped: “Up to now we blushed in front of our allies because of our government.... Russia was a dead weight for our allies.”

Rarely in those beginning days was it possible to hear reasonable suggestions about rebuilding Russia. The streets of Petrograd were in chaos, the police were non-functional and all over the city there was continuous disorderly gunfire. But everything poured into a general rejoicing, though for every concrete question, there was a mess of thoughts and opinions, a cacophony of debating pens. All the press and society agreed on one thing — the immediate legislative

enactment of Jewish equality. Fyodor Sologub eloquently wrote in the *Birzheviye Vedomosti*: “The most essential beginning of the civil freedom, without which our land cannot be blessed, the people cannot be righteous, national achievements would not be sanctified, is the repeal of all religious and racial restrictions.”

### **The Liberation of the Jews**

The equality of Jews advanced very quickly. The 1st of March [old calendar style], one day before the abdication, a few hours before the infamous Order No. 1, which pushed the army to collapse, V. Makhlakov and M. Adzhemov, two commissars of the Duma Committee delegated to the Ministry of Justice, had issued an internal Ministry of Justice directive, ordering to enlist all Jewish-assistants to attorneys-at-law into the Guild of Judicial Attorneys. Already by the 3rd of March the Chairman of the State Duma, M. Rodzianko, and the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, Prince G. Lvov, signed a declaration which stated that one of the main goals of the new government is a ‘repeal of all restrictions based upon religion, nationality and social class.’ Then, on the 4th of March, the Defense Minister Guchkov proposed to open a path for the Jews to become military officers, and the Minister of Education Manuelov proposed to repeal the percentage quotas on the Jews. Both proposals were accepted without obstacles. On the 6th of March the Minister of Trade and Manufacturing, Konovalov started to eliminate national restrictions in corporative legislation, that is, a repeal of the law forbidding purchase of land by companies with Jewish executives.

These measures were quickly put into practice. By the 8th of March 1917 in Moscow, 110 Jewish “assistants” were

raised to the status of attorneys-at-law; by March 9th in Petrograd — 124 such Jews; by the 8th of March in Odessa — 60. On the 9th of March the City Duma of Kiev, not waiting for the upcoming elections, included in its body five Jews with voting power. And here — on March 20 the Provisional Government made a resolution, prepared by the Minister of Justice, A. Kerensky, with the participation of members of the political bureau of Jewish deputies in the 4th State Duma, legislated an act, published on March 22, that repealed all restrictions on the rights of Russian citizens, regardless of religious creed, dogma or nationality. This was, in essence, the first broad legislative act of the Provisional Government. At the request of the political bureaus (of Jewish deputies), the Jews were not specifically mentioned in the resolution.

But in order to “repeal all the restrictions on Jews in all of our laws, in order to uproot ... completely the inequality of Jews,” G.B. Sliozberg recalls, “it was necessary to make a complete list of all the restrictions ... and the collation of the list of laws to be repealed required great thoroughness and experience.” (This task was undertaken by Sliozberg and L.M. Bramson.) The *Jewish Encyclopedia* says: “The Act listed the statutes of Russian law that were being abolished by the Act — almost all those statutes (there were nearly 150) contained some or other antiJewish restrictions. Subject to repeal were, in part, all proscriptions connected to the Pale of Settlement; thereby its factual liquidation in 1915 was legally validated. The restrictions were removed layer by layer: travel, habitation, educational institutions, participation in local selfgovernment, the right to acquire property anywhere in Russia, participation in government contracts, from stock exchanges, hiring servants, workers and stewards of a different religion, the right to

occupy high positions in the government and military service, guardianship and trusteeship. Recalling a cancellation of an agreement with the United States, they repealed similar restrictions on “foreigners who are not at war with the Russian government,” mainly in reference to Jews coming from the United States.

The promulgation of the Act inspired many emotional speeches. Deputy Freedman of the State Duma asserted: “For the past thirty-five years the Jews have been subjected to oppression and humiliation, unheard of and unprecedented even in the history of our long-suffering people.

All of it was the result of state-sponsored anti-Semitism.” Attorney O.O. Gruzenberg stated: “If the pre-Revolution Russian government was a vast and monstrous prison then its most stinking, terrible cell, its torture chamber was carted away for us, the six million Jewish people. And for the first time the Jewish child learned about this usurious term ‘interest’ in the state school.... Like hard labor camp prisoners on their way to camp, all Jews were chained together as despised aliens.... The drops of blood of our fathers and mothers, the drops of blood of our sisters and brothers fell on our souls, there igniting and enlivening the unextinguishable Revolutionary fire.” Rosa Georgievna, the wife of Vinaver, recalls: “The events (of the March 1917 Revolution) coincided with the Jewish Passover. It looked like this was a second escape from Egypt. Such a long, long path of suffering and struggle has passed, and how quickly everything had happened. A large Jewish meeting was called at which Milyukov spoke: “At last, a shameful spot has been washed away from Russia, which can now bravely step into the ranks of civilized nations.”

Vinaver proposed to the gathering to build “a large Jewish public house in Petrograd in memory of the meeting, which will be called The House of Freedom.”

Three members of the State Duma, M. Bomash, E. Gurevich and N. Freedman published an open letter to the Jewish people: that now “our military misfortunes could deal grave damage to the still infirm free Russia. Free Jewish warriors will draw new strength for the ongoing struggle, with the tenfold energy extending the great feat of arms.” And here was the natural plan: “The Jewish people should quickly re-organize their society. The long-obsolete forms of our communal life must be renewed on the free, democratic principles.”

The author-journalist David Eisman responded to the Act with an outcry: “Our Motherland! Our Fatherland! They are in trouble! With all our hearts we will defend our land. Not since the defense of the Temple has there been such a sacred feat of arms.”

Yet from the memoirs of Sliozberg: “The great fortune to have lived to see the day of the declaration of emancipation of Jews in Russia and the elimination of our lack of rights — everything I have fought for with all my strength over the course of three decades — did not fill me with the joy as it should have done,” because the collapse had begun right away. Seventy years later one Jewish author expressed doubts too: “Did that formal legislative Act really change the situation in the country, where all legal norms were precipitously losing their power?” We answer: in hindsight, from great distance, one should not downplay the significance of what was achieved. Then the Act suddenly and dramatically improved the situation of the Jews. As for the rest of the country, falling with all its peoples, into an abyss — that was the unpredictable way of the history.

## The First Acts of Jewish Retaliation

The most abrupt and notable change occurred in the judiciary. If earlier, the Batyushin's commission on bribery investigated the business of the obvious crook D. Rubinstein, now the situation became reversed: the case against Rubinstein was dropped, and Rubinstein paid a visit to the Extraordinary Investigatory Commission in the Winter Palace and successfully demanded prosecution of the Batyushin's commission itself. Indeed, in March 1917 they arrested General Batyushin, Colonel Rezanov, and other investigators.

The investigation of activities of that commission began in April, and, as it turned out, the extortion of bribes from the bankers and sugar factory owners by them was apparently significant. Then the safes of Volga-Kama, Siberian, and Junker banks, previously sealed up by Batyushin, were unsealed and all the documents returned to the banks. (Semanovich and Manus were not so lucky. When Simanovich was arrested as secretary to Rasputin, he offered 15,000 rubles to the prison convoy guards, if they would let him make a phone call, yet the request was of course turned down. As for Manus, suspected of being involved in shady dealings with the German agent Kolyshko, he battled the counterintelligence agents who came for him by shooting through his apartment's door. After his arrest, he fled the country).

The situation in the Extraordinary Investigatory Commission of the Provisional Government can be manifestly traced by records of interrogations in late March. Protopopov was asked how he came to be appointed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and in response he mentioned

the directive issued by him: the residence rights of the Jews were significantly expanded in Moscow. Asked about the priorities of his Ministry, he first recalled the foodstuffs affair, and, after then the progressive issue — the Jewish question. The director of the Department of Police, A.T. Vasilyev didn't miss an opportunity to inform the interrogators that he helped defend the sugar factory owners (Jews): "Gruzenberg called me in the morning in my apartment and thanked me for my cooperation. Rosenberg visited me to thank me for my efforts on his behalf." In this way, the accused tried to get some leniency for themselves.

A notable aspect of the weeks of March was an energetic pursuit of known or suspected Judeophobes. The first one arrested, on February 27, was the Minister of Justice Scheglovitov.

He was accused of personally giving the order to unjustly pursue the 1911 case against Mendel Beilis. In subsequent days Beilis's accusers, the prosecutor Vipper and Senator Chaplinsky, were also arrested. However, they were not charged with anything specific, and in May 1917 Vipper was merely dismissed from his position as the chief prosecutor of the Criminal Department of the Senate; his fate was sealed later, by the Bolsheviks.

The court investigator Mashkevich was ordered to resign — for during the Beilis trial he had sanctioned not only expert witness testimony against the argument on the ritual murder, but he also allowed a second expert testimony arguing *for* the case of such murder. The Minister of Justice Kerensky requested transfer of all materials of the Beilis case from the Kiev Regional Court, planning a loud re-trial, but during the stormy course of 1917 that didn't happen. The chairman of the Union of the Russian People, Dmitry Dubrovin, was arrested and his archive was seized; the

publishers of the far-right newspapers Glinka-Yanchevsky and Poluboyarinova were arrested too; the bookstores of the Monarchist Union were simply burned down.

For two weeks, they hunted for the fugitive “anti-Semites” N. Markov and Zamyslovsky, doing nightly searches for two weeks in St. Petersburg, Kiev and Kursk. Zamislovsky was hunted for his participation in the case against Beilis, and Markov obviously for his speeches in the State Duma. At the same time, they didn’t touch Purishkevich, one assumes because of his Revolutionary speeches in the Duma and his participation in the murder of Rasputin. An ugly rumor arose that Stolypin took part in the murder of Iollos, and in Kremenchuk, a street that had previously been named after Stolypin was renamed after Iollos. Over all of Russia there were hundreds of arrests, either because of the Gentile victims’ former positions or even because of their former attitudes.

It should be noted that the announcement of Jewish equality did not cause a single pogrom. It is worth noticing not only for the comparison to 1905, but also because all through March and April, all major newspapers were constantly reporting the preparation of pogroms, and that somewhere the pogroms had already supposedly begun.

Rumors started on March 5, that somewhere either in Kiev or Poltava Province Jewish pogroms were brewing, and someone in Petrograd put up a hand-written anti-Jewish flyer. As a result, the Executive Committee of Soviet Workers and Soldiers’ Deputies formed a special visiting commission led by Rafes, Aleksandrovich, and Sukhanov. Their task was to delegate commissars to various towns, with the first priority to go into the regions where the Black Hundreds, the servants of the old regime, were allegedly trying to sow ethnic antagonism among the population. In the

newspaper *Izvestia* of the Soviet Workers and Soldiers' Deputies there was an article entitled *Incitement to Pogrom*: "It would be a huge mistake, tantamount to a crime, to close our eyes to a new attempt of the overthrown dynasty... because it is them [the Monarchists] who organize the trouble ... In Kiev and Poltava provinces, among the underdeveloped, backward classes of the population at this moment there is incitement against Jews ... Jews are blamed for the defeats of our Army, for the revolutionary movement in Russia, and for the fall of the monarchy.... It's an old trick, but all the more dangerous because of its timing.... It is necessary to quickly take decisive measures against the pogrom instigators." After this the commander of the Kiev Military District General Khodorovich issued an order: all military units were to be on high alert and be ready to prevent possible anti-Jewish riots.

Long after this, but still in April, in various newspapers every two or three days they published rumors of preparations for Jewish pogroms, or at the very least about moving of piles of "pogrom literature" by railroad. Yet the most stubborn rumors circulated about a coming pogrom in Kishinev — that was to happen at the end of March, right between the Jewish (and Russian) Orthodox Passovers, as happened in 1903. And there were many more such alarming press reports. One even said that the police in Mogilev were preparing a pogrom near the Headquarters of Supreme High Command. Not one of these proved true.

One need only get acquainted with the facts of those months, to immerse oneself in the whole "February" atmosphere — of the defeated Right and the triumphant Left, of the stupor and confusion of the common folk — to dismiss outright any realistic possibility of anti-Jewish pogroms. But how could ordinary Jewish residents of Kiev or Odessa

forget those horrible days twelve years before? Their apprehension, their wary caution to any motion in that direction was absolutely understandable. The well-informed newspapers were a different story. The alarms raised by the newspapers, by enlightened leaders of the liberal camp, and half-baked socialist intellectuals — one cannot call this anything except political provocation.

Provocation, however, that fortunately didn't work. One actual episode occurred at the Bessarabian bazaar in Kiev, on April 28: a girl stole a piece of ribbon in a Jewish shop and ran away; the store clerk caught up to her and began to beat her. A crowd rushed to lynch the clerk and the store owner, but the police defended them. In another incident, in the Rogachevsky district, people angered by exorbitant prices smashed the stores, including Jewish ones.

Where and by whom was the Jewish emancipation met with hostility? Those were our legendary revolutionary Finland, and our “powerful” ally, Romania. In Finland (as we learned in Chapter 10 from Jabotinsky) the Jews were forbidden to reside permanently, and since 1858, only descendants of Jewish soldiers who served there in Finland, during the Crimean War, were allowed to settle. The passport law of 1862 confirmed that Jews were forbidden entry into Finland, although temporary habitation was permitted at the discretion of a local governor. Jews could not become Finnish citizens; in order to get married, a Jew had to go to Russia; the rights of Jews to testify in Finnish courts were restricted. Several attempts to mitigate the restriction of the civil rights of the Jews in Finland were not successful. And now, with the advent of Jewish equal rights in Russia, Finland, not having yet announced its complete independence from Russia, did not legislate Jewish equality. Moreover, they were deporting Jews who had illegally

moved to Finland, and not in a day, but in an hour, on the next train out. (One such case on March 16 caused quite a splash in the Russian press.) But Finland was always extolled for helping the revolutionaries, and liberals and socialists stopped short of criticizing her. Only the Bund sent a wire to very influential Finnish socialists, reprimanding them that this “medieval” law was still not repealed. The Bund, “the party of the Jewish proletariat, expresses strong certainty that you will take out that shameful stain from free Finland.” However, in this certainty, the Bund was mistaken.

And a huge alarm was raised in the post-February press about the persecution of Jews in Romania. They wrote that in Jassy it was even forbidden to speak Yiddish at public meetings. The All-Russian Zionist Student Congress *Gekhover* proposed “to passionately protest this civil inequality of Jews in Romania and Finland, which is humiliating to the world Jewry and demeaning to worldwide democracy.” At that time Romania was weakened by major military defeats. So, the Prime Minister Bratianu was making excuses in Petrograd in April saying that “most of the Jews in Romania migrated there from Russia,” and in particular that “prompted Romanian government to limit the political rights of the Jews”; he promised equality soon. However, in May we read: “In fact, nothing is happening in that direction.” In May, the Romanian communist Rakovsky reported that “the situation of the Jews in Romania is unbearable”. The Jews were blamed for the military defeat of the country; they were accused of fraternizing with Germans in the occupied parts of the country. If the Romanian government was not afraid to anger their allies in the Entente, then one would fear for the very lives of the Jews.

The worldwide response among the allies of the February Revolution was expressed in a tone of deep

satisfaction, even ecstasy among many, but in this response, there was also a shortsighted calculation: that now Russia will become invincible in war. In Great Britain and the USA there were large meetings in support of the Revolution and the rights of the Jews. (I wrote about some of these responses in *March 1917* in Chapters 510 and 621). From America, they offered to send a copy of the Statue of Liberty to Russia, yet as the situation in Russia continued to deteriorate, they never got around to the Statue.

On March 9 in the House of Commons of the British Parliament the Minister of Foreign Affairs was asked a question about the situation of the Jews in Russia: does he plan to consult with the Russian government regarding guarantees to the Russian Jews for the future and reparations for the past?

The answer showed the full trust that the British government had for the new Russian government. From Paris, the president of the International Jewish Union congratulated Russian Prime Minister Prince Lvov, and Lvov answered: “From today onward liberated Russia will be able to respect the faiths and customs of all of its peoples, forever bound by a common religion of love of their homeland.”

The newspapers *Birzhevka*, *Rech* and many others reported on the sympathies of Jacob Schiff, a well-known leader of North American circles hostile to Russia. He wrote: “I was always the enemy of Russian absolutism, which mercilessly persecuted my co-religionists. Now let me congratulate the Russian people for this great act which they committed so perfectly. And now he “invites the new Russia to conduct broad credit operations in America.” Indeed, at the time he provided substantial credit to the Kerensky government. Later in emigration, the exiled Russian right-wing press published investigative reports attempting to

show that Schiff actively financed the Revolution itself. Perhaps Schiff shared the short-sighted Western hope that the liberal revolution in Russia would strengthen Russia in the war. Still, the known and public acts of Schiff, who had always been hostile to Russian absolutism, had even greater effect than any possible secret assistance to such a revolution.

The February Revolution itself often consciously appealed for support to Jews, an entire nation enslaved. Eye-witness testimonies that Russian Jews were very ecstatic about the February Revolution are rife. Yet there are counter-witnesses too, such as Gregory Aronson, who formed and led the Soviet of Workers' Deputies of Vitebsk (which later had as a member Y.V. Tarle, a future historian). He wrote that on the very first day, when news of the Revolution reached Vitebsk, the newly formed Security Council met in the city Duma, and immediately afterwards Aronson was invited to a meeting of representatives of the Jewish community (clearly not rank and file, but leaders). "Apparently, there was a need to consult with me as a representative of the new dawning era, what to do further ... I felt alienation from these people, from the circle of their interests and from the tense atmosphere, which was at that meetin ... I had a sense that this society belonged mostly to the old world, which was retreating into the past. We were not able to eliminate a certain mutual chill that had come from somewhere. The faces of the people I was working with, displayed no uplift or faith. At times, it appeared that these selfless social activists perceived themselves as elements of the old order."

That is a precise witness account. Such bewilderment, caution and wavering predominated among religiously conservative Jews, one assumes, not only in Vitebsk. The sensible old Jewry, carrying a sense of many centuries of experience of hard ordeals, was apparently shocked by the

sudden overthrow of the monarchy and had serious misgivings. Yet, in the spirit of the 20th century, the dynamic masses of every nation, including Jews, were already secular, not chained to traditions and very eager to build “the happy new world.” The *Jewish Encyclopedia* notes “a sharp intensification of the political activity of Jewry, noticeable even against a background of stormy social uplift that gripped Russia after February 1917.”

Myself, having worked for many years on the “February” press and memoirs of the contemporaries of the February, could not fail to notice this “sharp strengthening,” this gusting. In those materials, from the most varied witnesses and participants of those events, there are so many Jewish names, and the Jewish theme is very loud and persistent. From the memories of Rodzyanko, from the town governor Balk, from General Globachyov and many others, from the first days of the Revolution in the depths of the Tavrichesky Palace, the numbers of Jews jumped out at me — among the members of the commandant’s office, the interrogation commissions, the pamphletmerchants and so on.

V. D. Nabokov, who was well disposed towards Jews, wrote that on March 2 at the entrance to the Tavrichesky mini-park in front of the Duma building, there was an unbelievable crush of people and shouting; at the entrance of the gates some young, Jewish-looking men were questioning the bypassers. According to Balk, the crowd that went on the rampage at the Astoria, an elite hotel in St. Petersburg, on the night of February 28, consisted of armed soldiers, sailors and Jews. I would indulge some emigrant irritability here as they used to say “well, that’s all the Jews”; yet the same was witnessed by another neutral observer, the Methodist pastor Dr. Simons, an American who had already been in Petrograd

for ten years and knew it well. He was debriefed by a commission of the American Senate in 1919: “Soon after the March Revolution of 1917, everywhere in Petrograd you could see groups of Jews, standing on benches, soap boxes and such, making speeches ... There had been restrictions on the rights of Jews to live in Petrograd, but after the Revolution they came in droves, and the majority of agitators were Jews ... they were apostate Jews.”

A certain “Student Hanokh” came to Kronstadt a few days before a planned massacre of sixty officers, who were named on a hit-list. He became the founder and chairman of the Kronstadt’s Committee of the Revolutionary Movement. The order of the Committee was to arrest and try each and all officers. Somebody had carefully prepared and disseminated false information, triggering massacres first in Kronstadt, then in Sveaborg; it was because of the uncertainty of the situation, when every fabrication was taken for a hard fact. The baton of the bloody Kronstadt affair was carried by the drop-out psychoneurologist Dr. Roshal. (Later, after the October coup, S. G. Roshal was appointed the Commandant of the Gatchina, and from November he was the commissar of the whole Romanian Front, where he was killed upon arrival.)

A certain Solomon and a Kaplan spoke on behalf of the newly-formed revolutionary militia of the Vasilievsky Island (in the future, the latter would become the bloody henchman of Zinoviev). The Petrograd Bar created a special “Commission for the Examination of the Justice of Imprisoning Persons Arrested During the Time of the Revolution” (thousands were arrested during this time in Petrograd)—that is, to virtually decide their fate without due process, and that of all the former gendarmes and police. This commission was headed by the barrister Goldstein. Yet the

unique story of the petty officer Timofey Kirpichnikov, who triggered the street Revolution, was written in March 1917 and preserved for us by the Jew Jacob Markovich Fishman — a curious historical figure. (I gratefully relied on this story in *The Red Wheel*.)

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* concludes: “Jews for the first time in Russian history had occupied posts in the central and regional administrations.” On the very heights, in the Executive

Committee of the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, invisibly ruling the country in those months, two leaders distinguished themselves: Nakhamkis-Steklov and GummerSukhanov. On the night of March 1st to March 2nd they dictated to the complacently-blind Provisional Government a program which preemptively destroyed its power for the entire period of its existence.

Reflective contemporary G.A. Landau thus explains the active participation of the Jews in the revolution: “The misfortune of Russia, and the misfortune of the Russian Jewry, is that the results of the first Revolution [1905] were still not processed, not transformed into a new social fabric; no new generation was born, when a great and back-breaking war broke out. And when the hour of disintegration came, it came upon the generation that from the very beginning was a kind of exhausted remnant of the previous revolution; it found the inertia of depleted spirituality, lacking an organic connection to the situation, and chained by spiritual stagnation to the tenyears-agobygone period.” And so the organic Revolutionism of the beginning of the 20th century [of the First Russian Revolution of 1905] had turned into the mechanical “permanent Revolution” of the wartime era.

Through many years of detailed studies I have spent much time trying to comprehend the essence of the February

Revolution and the Jewish role in it. I came to this conclusion and can now repeat: no, the February Revolution was not something the Jews did to the Russians, but rather it was done by the Russians themselves, which I believe I amply demonstrated in *The Red Wheel*. We committed this downfall ourselves: our anointed Czar, the court circles, the hapless highranking generals, obtuse administrators, and their enemies — the elite intelligentsia, the Octobrist Party, the Zemstvo, the Kadets, the Revolutionary Democrats, socialists and revolutionaries, and along with them, a bandit element of army reservists, distressingly confined to the Petersburg's barracks. And this is precisely why we perished. True, there were already many Jews among the intelligentsia by that time, yet that is in no way a basis to call it a Jewish revolution.

One may classify revolutions by their main animating forces, and then the February Revolution must be seen as a Russian national Revolution, or more precisely, a Russian ethnic Revolution. Though if one would judge it using the methodology of materialistic sociologists — asking who benefited the most, or benefited most quickly, or the most solidly and in the long term from the Revolution, — then it could be called otherwise, Jewish, for example.

But then again why not German? After all, Kaiser Wilhelm initially benefited from it. Although the remaining Russian population got nothing but harm and destruction, that doesn't make the Revolution "non-Russian." Jewish society got everything it fought for from the Revolution, and the October Revolution was altogether unnecessary for them, except for a small slice of young cutthroat Jews, who with their Russian internationalist brothers accumulated an explosive charge of hate for the Russian governing class and burst forth to "deepen" the Revolution.

So how, having understood this, was I to move through March 1917 and then April 1917? Describing the Revolution literally hour by hour, I frequently found the many episodes in the sources that had a Jewish theme. Yet would it be right simply to pour all that on the pages of *March 1917*? Then that easy and piquant temptation — to put all the blame on Jews, on their ideas and actions, to see them as the main reason for these events — would easily skew the book and overcome the readers, and divert the research away from the truly main causes of the Revolution. And so in order to avoid the self-deception of the Russians, I persistently and purposely downplayed the Jewish theme in *The Red Wheel*, relative to its actual coverage in the press and on the streets in those days.

The February Revolution was carried out by Russian hands and Russian foolishness. Yet at the same time, its ideology was permeated and dominated by the intransigent hostility to the historical Russian state that ordinary Russians didn't have, but the Jews had. So, the Russian intelligentsia too had adopted this view. (This was discussed in Chapter 11). This intransigent hostility grew especially sharp after the trial of Beilis, and then after the mass expulsion of Jews in 1915. And so, this intransigence overcame the moderation.

Yet the Executive Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which was formed within hours of the Revolution, appears very different. This Executive Committee was in fact a tough shadow government that deprived the liberal Provisional Government of any real power, while at the same time, criminally refused to accept responsibility for its power openly. By its Order No. 1, the Executive Committee wrested the power from the military and created support for itself in the demoralized garrison of Petrograd. It was precisely this Executive Committee, and

not the judiciary, not the timber industrialists, not the bankers, which fast-tracked the country to her doom. In the summer of 1917 Joseph Goldenberg, a member of the Executive Committee, explained to the French Diplomat Claude Anet: “The Order No. 1 was not a mistake; it was a necessity ... the day we executed the Revolution, we realized that if we did not destroy the old army, it would crush the Revolution. We had to choose between the army and the Revolution, and we did not waver: we chose the latter, and we inflicted, I dare say, a brilliant blow.” So there you have it. The Executive Committee quite purposely destroyed the army in the middle of the war.

Is it legitimate to ask who were those successful and fatal-for-Russia leaders of the Executive Committee? Yes, it is legitimate, when the actions of such leaders abruptly change the course of history. And it must be said that the composition of the Executive Committee greatly concerned the public and the newspapers in 1917, during which time many members of the Committee concealed themselves behind pseudonyms from the public eye. Who was ruling Russia? No one knew.

As it turned out, there were a dozen soldiers who were there just for show and weren’t very bright. They were kept out of any real power or decision making. From the other thirty, though, of those who actually wielded power, more than half were Jewish socialists. There were also Russians, Caucasians, Latvians and Poles. Less than a quarter were Russians.

The moderate socialist V.B. Stankevich noted: “What really stuck out in the composition of the Committee was the large foreign element ... totally out of proportion to their part of the population in Petrograd or the country in general.” Stankevich asks, “Was this the unhealthy scum of Russian

society? Or was this the consequence of the sins of the old regime, which by its actions violently pushed the foreign element into the Leftist parties? Or was that simply the result of free competition?" And then, there remains an open question — who bears more guilt for this — the foreign born, who were there, or the Russians who could have been there but weren't? For a socialist that might be a case to look for a guilty party. Yet wouldn't it be better for all — for us, for you, for them — to avoid sinking into that mad dirty torrent altogether?

## Chapter XIV: During 1917

At the beginning of April 1917, the Provisional Government discovered to its surprise that Russian finances, already for some time in quite bad shape, were on the brink of complete collapse. In an attempt to mend the situation and stir enthusiastic patriotism, the government loudly announced the issuance of domestic Freedom Loan bonds.

Rumors about the loan had begun circulating as early as March, and Minister of Finance Tereshchenko informed the press that there were already multi-million pledges from bankers to buy bonds, mainly from the Jewish bankers, "which is undoubtedly related to the abolition of religious and national restrictions." Indeed, as soon as the loan was officially announced names of large Jewish subscribers began appearing in newspapers, accompanied by prominent frontpage appeals: "Jewish citizens! Subscribe to the Freedom Loan!" and "Every Jew must have the Freedom Loan bonds!" In a single subscription drive in a Moscow synagogue, 22 million rubles was collected. During the first two days, Jews in Tiflis subscribed to 1.5 million rubles of bonds; Jews in Minsk half a million in the first week; the Saratov community 800 thousand rubles of bonds. In Kiev,

the heirs of Brodsky and Klara Ginzburg each spent one million. The Jews abroad came forward as well: Jacob Schiff, 1 million; Rothschild in London, 1 million; in Paris, on the initiative of Baron Ginzburg, Russian Jews participated actively and subscribed to several million worth of bonds. At the same time, the Jewish Committee in Support for Freedom Loan was established and appealed to public.

However, the government was very disappointed with the overall result of the first month of the subscription. For encouragement, the lists of major subscribers (who purchased bonds on 25 thousand rubles or more) were published several times: in the beginning of May, in the beginning of June and in the end of July. The rich who did not subscribe were shamed. What is most striking is not the sheer number of Jewish names on the lists (assimilated Russian-Germans with their precarious situation during the Russo-German War were in the second place among bond-holders) but the near absence of the top Russian bourgeoisie, apart from a handful of prominent Moscow entrepreneurs.

In politics, left and center parties burgeoned and many Jews had became politically active. From the very first days after the February Revolution, central newspapers published an enormous number of announcements about private meetings, assemblies and sessions of various Jewish parties, initially mostly the Bund, but later Poale Zion, Zionists, Socialist Zionists, Territorialist Zionists, and the Socialist Jewish Workers' Party (SJWP). By March 7 we already read about an oncoming assembly of the All-Russian Jewish Congress – finally, the prerevolutionary idea of Dubnov had become widely accepted. However, because of sharp differences between Zionists and Bundists, the Congress did not materialize in 1917 (nor did it occur in 1918 either, because of the Civil War and antagonism of Bolshevik

authorities.) In Petrograd, the Jewish People's Group was re-established with M. Vinaver at the helm. They were liberals, not socialists; initially, they hoped to establish an alliance with Jewish socialists. Vinaver declared: "we applaud the Bund – the vanguard of the revolutionary movement." Yet the socialists stubbornly rejected all gestures of rapprochement.

### **The Jews Rally to the Revolution**

The rallying of Jewish parties in Petrograd had indirectly indicated that by the time of revolution the Jewish population there was already substantial and energetic. Surprisingly, despite the fact that almost no Jewish proletariat existed in Petrograd, the Bund was very successful there. It was extraordinarily active in Petrograd, arranging a number of meetings of local organization (in the lawyer's club and then on April 1 in the Tenishev's school; there was a meeting with a concert in the Mikhailovsky Theatre; then on April 14-19 the All-Russian Conference of the Bund took place, at which a demand to establish a national and cultural Jewish autonomy in Russia was brought forward again. After the conclusion of speeches, all the conference participants had sung the Bund's anthem Oath, the Internationale, and La Marseillaise.

As in past, Bund had to balance its national and revolutionary platforms: in 1903, it struggled for the independence from the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, and yet in 1905 it rushed headlong into the All-Russian revolution. Likewise, now in 1917, the Bund's representatives occupied prominent positions in the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' and

Soldiers' Deputies [a Soviet is the Russian term used for an elected (at least in theory) council] and later among the Social Democrats of Kiev. By the end of 1917 the Bund had nearly 400 sections countrywide, totaling around 40,000 members.

Developments in Poale Zion were no less amazing. In the beginning of April, they also held their All-Russian Conference in Moscow. Among its resolutions we see on the one hand a motion to organize the All-Russian Jewish Congress and discuss the problem of emigration to Palestine. On the other hand, the Poale Zion Conference in Odessa had simultaneously announced the party's uncompromising program of class warfare: "Through the efforts of Jewish revolutionary democracy the power over destinies of the Jewish nation was wrested from the dirty grasp of wealthy and settled Jews despite all the resistance of bourgeoisie to the right and the Bund to the left.... Do not allow the bourgeois parties to bring in the garbage of the old order.... Do not let the hypocrites speak – they did not fight but sweated out the rights for our people on their bended knees in the offices of anti-Semitic ministers ... they did not believe in the revolutionary action of the masses." Then, in April 1917, when the party had split the "radical socialist" Poale Zion moved toward the Zionists, breaking away from the main "social democratic" Poale Zion which later would join the Third International.

Like the two above-mentioned parties, the SJWP also held its statewide conference at which it had merged with the Socialist Zionists, forming the United Jewish Socialist Workers' Party (Fareynikte) and parting with the idea of any extraterritorial Jewish nation with its own parliament and national autonomy. Fareynikte appealed to the Provisional Government asking it to declare equality of languages and to

establish a council on the affairs of nationalities which would specifically fund Jewish schools and public agencies. At the same time, Fareynikte closely collaborated with the Socialist Revolutionaries.

However, it was Zionism that became the most influential political force in the Jewish milieu. As early as the beginning of March, the resolution of Petrograd's Zionist Assembly contained the following wording: "Russian Jewry is called upon to support the Provisional Government in every possible way, to enthusiastic work, to national consolidation and organization for the sake of the prosperity of Jewish national life in Russia and the national and political renaissance of the Jewish nation in Palestine."

And what an inspiring historical moment it was – March 1917 – with the British troops closing on Jerusalem right at that time! Already on March 19 the proclamation of Odessa's Zionists stated: "today is the time when states rearrange themselves on national foundations. Woe to us if we miss this historic opportunity." In April, the Zionist movement was strongly reinforced by the public announcement of Jacob Schiff, who had decided to join the Zionists because of fear of Jewish assimilation as a result of Jewish civil equality in Russia. He believed that Palestine could become the center to spread ideals of Jewish culture all over the world.

In the beginning of May, Zionists held a large meeting in the building of Petrograd Stock Exchange, with Zionist hymns performed several times. In the end of May the All-Russian Zionist Conference was held in the Petrograd Conservatory. It outlined major Zionist objectives: cultural revival of the Jewish nation, social revolution in the economic structure of Jewish society to transform the nation of merchants and artisans into the nation of farmers and

workers, an increase in emigration to Palestine and mobilization of Jewish capital to finance the Jewish settlers. Both Jabotinsky's plan on creation of a Jewish legion in the British Army and the I. Trumpeldor's plan for the formation of a Jewish army in Russia which would cross the Caucasus and liberate Eretz Yisrael [The land of Israel] from Turkish occupation had been discussed and rejected on the basis of the neutrality of Zionists in the World War I.

The Zionist Conference decreed to vote during the oncoming local elections for the parties not farther to the right than the People's Socialists, and even to refuse to support Constitutional Democrats like D. Pasmanik, who later complained: "It was absolutely meaningless – it looked like the entire Russian Jewry, with its petty and large bourgeoisie, are socialists." His bewilderment was not unfounded.

The congress of student Zionist organizations, Gekhover, with delegates from 25 cities and all Russian universities, had taken place in the beginning of April in Petrograd. Their resolution stated that the Jews were suffering not for the sake of equality in Russia but for the rebirth of Jewish nation in their native Palestine. They decided to form legions in Russia to conquer Palestine. Overall, during the summer and fall of 1917 Zionism in Russia continued to gain strength: by September its members numbered 300,000. It is less known that in 1917 Jewish orthodox movements enjoyed substantial popularity second only to the Zionists and ahead of the socialist parties (as illustrated by their success during elections of the leadership of reorganized Jewish communities).

There were rallies ("The Jews are together with the democratic Russia in both love and hatred!"), public lectures ("The Jewish Question and the Russian Revolution"), city-

wide assemblies of Jewish high school students in Petrograd and other cities (aside from general student meetings). In Petrograd, the Central Organ of Jewish Students was established, though not recognized by the Bund and other leftist parties. While many provincial committees for the assistance to the victims of the war (i.e., to Jewish refugees and deportees) ceased to exist because at this time, democratic forces needed to engage in broader social activities, and so the Central Jewish Committee for providing such aid was formed by April.

In May the Jewish People's Union was established to facilitate consolidation of all Jewish forces, to prepare for the convocation of the All-Russian Jewish Union and to get ready for the oncoming elections to the Constituent Assembly. In the end of May there was another attempt of unification: the steering committee of the Jewish Democratic Alliance convened the conference of all Jewish democratic organizations in Russia. Meanwhile, lively public discussion went on regarding convocation of the All-Russian Jewish Congress: The Bund rejected it as inconsistent with their plans; the Zionists demanded the Congress include on their agenda the question of Palestine – and were themselves rejected by the rest; in July the All-Russian Conference on the Jewish Congress preparation took place in Petrograd. Because of social enthusiasm, Vinaver was able to declare there that the idea of united Jewish nation, dispersed among different countries, is ripe, and that from now on the Russian Jews may not be indifferent to the situation of Jews in other countries, such as Romania or Poland. The Congress date was set for December.

What an upsurge of Jewish national energy it was! Even amid the upheavals of 1917, Jewish social and political activities stood out in their diversity, vigor and organization.

The period between February and November 1917 was a time of blossoming of Jewish culture and healthcare. In addition to the Petrograd publication *The Jews of Russia*, the publisher of the *Jewish Week* had moved to Petrograd; publication of the *Petrograd-Torgblat* in Yiddish had begun; similar publications were started in other cities. The Tarbut and Culture League, a network of secular Hebrew-language schools, had established dozens of kindergartens, secondary and high schools and pedagogic colleges teaching both in Yiddish and in Hebrew. A

Jewish grammar school was founded in Kiev. In April, the first All-Russian Congress on Jewish Culture and Education was held in Moscow. It requested state funding for Jewish schools. A conference of the Society of Admirers of Jewish Language and Culture took place. The Habima Theatre, the first professional theatre in Hebrew in the world opened in Moscow. There were an exposition of Jewish artists and a conference of the Society on Jewish Health Care in April in Moscow. These Jewish activities are all the more amazing given the state of general governmental, administrative and cultural confusion in Russia 1917.

A major event in the Jewish life of the time was the granting of official permission for Jewish youth to enlist as officers in the Russian Army. It was a large-scale move: in April, the headquarters of the Petrograd military district had issued an order to the commanders of Guards military units to immediately post all Jewish students to the training battalion at Nizhny Novgorod with the purpose of their further assignment to military academies – that is virtually mass-scale promotion of young Jews into the officer ranks. Already in the beginning of June 1917, 131 Jews graduated from the accelerated military courses at the Konstantinovsky military academy in Kiev as officers; in the summer 1917

Odessa, 160 Jewish cadets were promoted into officers. In June 2600 Jews were promoted to warrant-officer rank all over Russia.

There is evidence that in some military academies Junkers [young noblemen used in Czarist Russia for cadets and young officers] met Jewish newcomers unkindly, as it was in the Alexandrovsky military academy after more than 300 Jews had been posted to it. In the Mikhailovsky military academy a group of Junkers proposed a resolution that: "Although we are not against the Jews in general, we consider it inconceivable to let them into the command ranks of the Russian Army." The officers of the academy dissociated themselves from this statement and a group of socialist cadets (141-strong) had expressed their disapproval, "finding anti-Jewish protests shameful for the revolutionary army," and the resolution did not pass. When Jewish warrant officers arrived at their regiments, they often encountered mistrust and enmity on the part of soldiers for whom having Jews as officers was extremely unusual and strange. (Yet the newlyminted officers who adopted new revolutionary style of behavior gained popularity lightning-fast.)

On the other hand, the way Jewish Junkers from the military academy in Odessa behaved was simply striking. In the end of March, 240 Jews had been accepted into the academy. Barely three weeks later, on April 18 old-style, there was a First of May parade in Odessa and the Jewish Junkers marched ostentatiously singing ancient Jewish songs.

Did they not understand that Russian soldiers would hardly follow such officers? What kind of officers were they going to become? It would be fine if they were being prepared for the separate Jewish battalions. Yet according to General Denikin, the year 1917 saw successful formation of

all kinds of national regiments – Polish, Ukrainian, Transcaucasian (the Latvian units were already in place for a while) – except for Jewish ones: it was the only nationality not demanding national self-determination in military. And every time when in response to complaints about bad acceptance of Jewish officers in army formation of separate Jewish regiments was suggested, such a proposal was met with a storm of indignation on the part of Jews and the Left and with accusations of a spiteful provocation. (Newspapers had reported that

Germans also planned to form separate Jewish regiments but the project was dismissed.)

It appears, though, that new Jewish officers still wanted some national organization in the military. In Odessa on August 18, the convention of Jewish officers decided to establish a section which would be responsible for connections between different fronts to report on the situation of Jewish officers in the field. In August, unions of Jewish warriors appeared; by October such unions were present at all fronts and in many garrisons. During the October 10-15, 1917 conference in Kiev, the All-Russian Union of Jewish Warriors was founded. (Although it was a new revolutionary army, some reporters still harbored hostility toward officer corps in general and to officer's epaulettes in particular; for instance, A. Alperovich whipped up emotions against officers in general in *Birzhevye Vedomosti* [Stock Exchange News] as late as May 5.)

Various sources indicate that Jews were not eager to be drafted as common soldiers even in 1917; apparently, there were instances when to avoid the draft, sick individuals were passed off as genuine conscripts at the medical examining boards, and, as a result, some district draft commissions began demanding photo-IDs from Jewish

conscripts, an unusual practice in those simple times. It immediately triggered angry protests that such a requirement went against the revocation of national restrictions, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs forbade asking for such IDs. In the beginning of April the Provisional Government issued an order by telegraph to free without individual investigation all Jews previously exiled as suspects of espionage. Some of them resided in the now-occupied territories, while others could safely return home, and yet many deportees asked for permission to reside in the cities of the European part of Russia. There was a flow of Jews into Petrograd (Jewish population of 50,000 in 1917) and a sharp increase of Jewish population in Moscow (60,000).

Russian Jews received less numerous but highly energetic reinforcement from abroad. Take those two famous trains that crossed hostile Germany without hindrance and brought to Russia nearly 200 prominent individuals, 30 in Lenin's and 160 in Natanson-Martov's train, with Jews comprising an absolute majority (the lists of passengers of the extraterritorial trains were for the first time published by V. Burtsev.) They represented almost all Jewish parties, and virtually all of them would play a substantial role in the future events in Russia.

Hundreds of Jews returned from the United States: former emigrants, revolutionaries, and draft escapees – now they all were the revolutionary fighters and victims of Czarism. By order of Kerensky, the Russian embassy in the USA issued Russian passports to anyone who could provide just two witnesses to testify to identity, literally from the street. The situation around Trotsky's group was peculiar. They were apprehended in Canada on suspicion of connections with Germany. The investigation found that Trotsky travelled not with flimsy Russian papers, but with a

solid American passport, inexplicably granted to him despite his short stay in the USA, and with a substantial sum of money, the source of which remained a mystery.

On June 26 at the exalted Russian rally in New York City (directed by P. Rutenberg, onetime friend and then a murderer of Gapon), Abraham Kagan, the editor of Jewish newspaper *Forwards*, addressed Russian ambassador Bakhmetev on behalf of two million Russian Jews residing in the United States of America: "We have always loved our motherland; we have always sensed the links of brotherhood with the entire Russian nation.... Our hearts are loyal to the red banner of the Russian liberation and to the national tricolor of the free Russia." He had also claimed that the self-sacrifice of the members of *Narodnaya Volya* [The People's Will] a terrorist leftwing revolutionary group in Czarist Russia best known for its assassination of Czar Alexander II who was known as the Czar Liberator for ending serfdom, was "directly connected to the fact of increased persecution of the Jews" and that "people like Zundelevich, Deich, Gershuni, Liber and Abramovich were among the bravest."

And so they had begun coming back, and not just from New York, judging by the official introduction of discounted railroad fare for political emigrants travelling from Vladivostok. At the late July rally in Whitechapel, London, it was found that in London alone 10,000 Jews declared their willingness to return to Russia; the final resolution had expressed pleasure that Jews would go back to struggle for the new social and democratic Russia.

The destinies of many returnees, hurrying to participate in the revolution and jumping headlong into the thick of things, were outstanding. Among the returnees were the famous V. Volodarsky, M. Uritsky, and Yu. Larin, the latter was the author of the War Communism economic

program. It is less known that Yakov Sverdlov's brother, Veniamin, was also among the returnees. Still, he would not manage to rise higher than the deputy Narkom [People's Commissar] of Communications and a member of Board of the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy. Moisei Kharitonov, Lenin's associate in emigration who returned to Russia in the same train with him, quickly gained notoriety by assisting the anarchists in their famous robbery in April; later he was the secretary of Perm, Saratov and Sverdlov gubkoms [guberniya's Party committee], and the secretary of Urals Bureau of the Central Committee.

Semyon Dimanshtein, a member of a Bolshevik group in Paris, would become the head of the Jewish Commissariat at the People's Commissariat of Nationalities, and later the head of YevSek [Jewish Section] at the All-Russian Central Executive Committee; he would in fact supervise the entirety of Jewish life. Amazingly, at the age of 18 he managed to pass the qualification test to become a rabbi and became a member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party – all this in course of one year. Similarly, members of the Trotsky's group had also fared well: the jeweler G. Melnichansky, the accountant Friman, the typographer A. MinkinMenson, and the decorator Gomberg-Zorin had respectively headed Soviet trade unions, *Pravda*, the dispatch office of bank notes and securities, and the Petrograd Revolutionary Tribunal.

Names of other returnees after the February Revolution are now completely forgotten, yet wrongly so, as they played important roles in the revolutionary events. For example, the Doctor of Biology Ivan Zalkind actively participated in the October coup and then in fact ran Trotsky's

People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. Semyon Kogan-Semkov became the political commissar of Izhevsk weapons and steel factories in November 1918. That is, he was in charge of the vindictive actions during the suppression of a major uprising of Izhevsk workers known for its many thousands of victims; in a single incident on the Sobornaya Square in Izhevsk, 400 workers were gunned down.

Robinson-Krasnoshchekov later headed the entire Far East as the secretary of the Far East Bureau and the head of local government. Girshfeld-Stashevsky, under the pseudonym "Verkhovsky" was in command of a squad of German POWs and turncoats, that is, he laid foundation for the Bolshevik international squads; in 1920 he was the head of clandestine intelligence at the Western front; later, in peacetime, on orders of Cheka Presidium, he organized intelligence network in the Western Europe; he was awarded the title of "Honorary Chekist."

Among returnees were many who did not share Bolshevik views (at least at the time of arrival) but they were nevertheless welcomed into the ranks of Lenin and Trotsky's party. For instance, although Yakov Fishman, a member of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the October coup, had deviated from the Bolshevik mainstream by participating in the Left Socialist Revolutionary insurrection in July 1918, he was later accepted into the Russian Communist party of Bolsheviks (RCPB) and entrusted with a post in the Military Intelligence Administration of the Red Army.

Or take Yefim Yarchuk, who had returned as an Anarchist Syndicalist, but was delegated by the Petrograd Soviet to reinforce the Kronstadt Soviet; during the October coup he had brought a squad of sailors to Petrograd to storm the Winter Palace. The returnee Vsevolod VolinEikhenbaum

(the brother of the literary scholar) was a consistent supporter of anarchism and the ideologist of the Makhno Ukrainian separatist-anarchist movement; he was the head of the Revolutionary Military Soviet in the Makhno army. We know that Makno was more of an advantage than a detriment to Bolsheviks and as a result Volin was later merely forced to emigrate together with a dozen of other anarchists.

The expectations of returnees were not unfounded: those were the months marked by a notable rise to prominence for many Jews in Russia. “The Jewish Question exists no longer in Russia.” (Still, in the newspaper essay by D. Aizman, Sura Alperovich, the wife of a merchant who moved from Minsk to Petrograd, had expressed her doubts: “So there is no more slavery and that’s it? So what about the things that Nicholas of yesterday did to us in Kishinev in regard to the

Kishinev pogrom?” In another article David Aizman thus elaborated his thought: “Jews must secure the gains of revolution by any means ... without any qualms. Any necessary sacrifice must be made. Everything is at stake here and all will be lost if we hesitate.... Even the most backward parts of Jewish mass understand this. No one questions what would happen to Jews if the counterrevolution prevails.” He was absolutely confident that if that happened there would be mass executions of Jews. Therefore, “the filthy scum must be crushed even before it has any chance to develop, in embryo. Their very seed must be destroyed.... Jews will be able to defend their freedom.”

Crushed in embryo ... And even their very seed ... It was already pretty much the Bolshevik program, though expressed in the words of Old Testament. Yet whose seed must be destroyed? Monarchists’? But they were already breathless; all their activists could be counted on fingers. So

it could only be those who had taken a stand against the unbridled, running wild Soviets, against all kinds of committees and mad crowds; those, who wished to halt the breakdown of life in the country – prudent ordinary people, former government officials, and first of all officers and very soon the soldier-general Kornilov. There were Jews among those counter-revolutionaries, but overall that movement was the Russian national one.

What about press? In 1917, the influence of print media grew; the number of periodicals and associated journalists and staff was rising. Before the revolution, only a limited number of media workers qualified for draft deferral, and only those who were associated with newspapers and printing offices which were established in the pre-war years. (They were classified as defense enterprises despite their desperate fight against governmental and military censorship.) But now, from April, on the insistence of the publishers, press privileges were expanded with respect to the number of workers exempt from military service; newly founded political newspapers were henceforth also covered by the exemption (sometimes fraudulently as the only thing needed to qualify was maintaining a circulation of 30,000 for at least two weeks).

Draft privileges were introduced on the basis of youth, for the political emigrants and those released from exile – everything that favored employment of new arrivals in the leftist newspapers. At the same time, rightist newspapers were being closed: *Malenkaya Gazeta* [Small Newspaper] and *Narodnaya Gazeta* [People's Newspaper] were shut down for accusing the Bolsheviks of having links with the Germans. When many newspapers published telegrams fraudulently attributed to the Empress and the fake was exposed (it was “an innocent joke of a telegraph operator

lady,” for which, of course, she was never disciplined) and so they had to retract their pieces, *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, for instance, had produced such texts: “It turned out that neither the special archive at the Main Department of Post and Telegraph, where the royal telegrams were stored, nor the head office of telegraph contain any evidence of this correspondence.” See, they presented it as if the telegrams were real but all traces of their existence had been skillfully erased. What a brave free press!

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As early as in the beginning of March the prudent Vinaver had warned the Jewish public:

“Apart from love for freedom, self-control is needed.... It is better for us to avoid highly visible and prominent posts.... Do not hurry to practice our rights.” We know that Vinaver (and also Dan, Liber and Branson) at different times were offered ministerial posts, but all of them refused, believing that Jews should not be present in Russian Government. The attorney Vinaver could not, of course, reject his sensational appointment to the Senate, where he became one of four Jewish Senators (together with G. Blumenfeld, O. Gruzenberg, and I. Gurevich). There were no Jews among the ministers, but four influential Jews occupied posts of deputy ministers: V. Gurevich was a deputy to Avksentiev, the Minister of Internal Affairs; S. Lurie was in the Ministry of Trade and Industry; S. Schwartz and A. Ginzburg-Naumov – in the ministry of Labor; and P. Rutenberg should be mentioned here too. From July, A. Galpern became the chief of the administration of the Provisional Government (after V. Nabokov); the director of 1st Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was A. N. Mandelshtam. The assistant to the head of the Moscow military district was Second Lieutenant Sher (since July 1917); from May, the

head of foreign supply department at General Staff was A. Mikhelson; the commissar of the Provisional Government in the field construction office was Naum Glazberg; several Jews were incorporated by Chernov into the Central Land Committee responsible for everything related to allotting land to peasants.

Of course, most of those were not key posts, having negligibly small influence when compared to the principal role of the Executive Committee, whose ethnic composition would soon become a hotly debated public worry.

At the August Government Conference dedicated to the disturbing situation in the country, apart from the representatives of Soviets, parties, and guilds, a separate representation was granted to the ethnic groups of Russia, with Jews represented by eight delegates, including G. Sliozberg, M. Liber, N. Fridman, G. Landau, and O. Gruzenberg. The favorite slogan of 1917 was “Expand the Revolution!” All socialist parties worked to implement it. I. O. Levin writes: “There is no doubt that Jewish representation in the Bolshevik and other parties which facilitated expanding of revolution” – Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, etc. – “with respect to both general Jewish membership and Jewish presence among the leaders, greatly exceeds the Jewish share in the population of Russia. This is an indisputable fact; while its reasons should be debated, its factual veracity is unchallengeable and its denial is pointless; and a certainly convincing explanation of this phenomenon by Jewish inequality before the March revolution is still not sufficiently exhaustive.”

Members of central committees of the socialist parties are known. Interestingly, Jewish representation in the leadership of Mensheviks, the Right and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Anarchists was much greater than

among the Bolshevik leaders. At the Socialist Revolutionary Congress, which took place in the end of May and beginning of June 1917, 39 out of 318 delegates were Jewish, and out of 20 members of the Central Committee of the party elected during the Congress, 7 were Jewish. A. Gotz was one of the leaders of the right-wing faction and M. Natanson was among the leaders of the left Socialist Revolutionaries. (What a despicable role awaited Natanson, “the wise Mark,” one of the founder of Russian *Narodnichestvo* populism! During the war, living abroad, he was receiving financial aid from Germany. In May 1917, he returned in Russia in one of the extraterritorial trains across Germany; in Russia, he had immediately endorsed Lenin and threw his weight in support of the latter’s goal of dissolving the Constituent Assembly; actually, it was he who had voiced this idea first, though Lenin, of course, needed no such nudge.)

Local government elections took place in the summer. Overall, socialist parties were victorious, and Jews actively participated in the local and municipal work in a number of cities and towns outside of the former Pale of Settlement. For instance, Socialist Revolutionary O. Minor became head of the Moscow City Duma; member of the Central Committee of the Bund, A. Vainshtein (Rakhmiel), of the Minsk Duma; Menshevik I. Polonsky, of the Ekaterinoslav Duma, Bundist D. Chertkov, of the Saratov Duma. G. Shreider had become the mayor of Petrograd, and A. Ginzburg-Naumov was elected a deputy mayor in Kiev. But most of these persons were gone with the October coup, and it was not they who shaped the subsequent developments in Russia. It would become the lot of those who now occupied much lower posts, mostly in the Soviets; they were numerous and spread all over the country. Take, for instance, Khinchuk, head of the Moscow Soviet of Workers’ Deputies,

or Nasimovich and M. Trilisser of the Irkutsk Soviet (the latter would later serve in the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Siberia and become a famous Chekist.)

All over the provinces Jewish socialist parties enjoyed large representation in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. They were also prominently presented at the All-Russian Democratic Conference in September 1917, which annoyed Lenin so much that he had even demanded surrounding the Alexandrinsky Theater with troops and arresting the entire assembly.

(The theater's superintendent, comrade Nashatyr, would have to act on the order, but Trotsky had dissuaded Lenin.) And even after the October coup, the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies had among its members, according to Bukharin, "dentists, pharmacists, etc., – representatives of trades as close to the soldier's profession as to that of the Chinese Emperor."

But above all of that, above all of Russia, from the spring to the autumn of 1917, stood the power of one body – and it was not the Provisional Government. It was the powerful and insular

Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, and later, after June, the successor to its power, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (CEC) – it was they who had in fact ruled over Russia. While appearing solid and determined from outside, in reality they were being torn apart by internal contradictions and inter-factional ideological confusion. Initially, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies unanimously approved the Order No. 1, but later was doubtful about the war – whether to continue destroying army or to strengthen it. Quite unexpectedly, they declared their support for the Freedom Loan; thus, they had incensed the

Bolsheviks but agreed with the public opinion on this issue, including the attitudes of liberal Jews.

The Presidium of the first All-Russian CEC of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (the first governing Soviet body) consisted of nine men. Among them were the Social Revolutionaries (SRs) A. Gots and M. Gendelman, the Menshevik, F. Dan, and the member of Bund, M. Liber. In March at the All-Russian Conference of the Soviets, Gendelman and Steklov had demanded stricter conditions be imposed on the Czar's family, which was under house arrest, and also insisted on the arrest of all crown princes – this is how confident they were in their power. The prominent Bolshevik, Lev Kamenev, was among the members of that Presidium. It also included the Georgian, Chkheidze; the Armenian, Saakjan; one Krushinsky, who was most likely a Pole; and Nikolsky, quite possibly a Russian – quite an impudent ethnic composition for the governing organ of Russia in such a critical time.

Apart from the CEC of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, there was also the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, elected in the end of May. Of its 30 members, there were only three actual peasants – an already habitual sham of the preBolshevik regime. Of those thirty, D. Pasmanik identified seven Jews: “a sad thing it was, especially considering Jewish interests”; and “they had become an eyesore to everybody.” Then this peasant organ put forward a list of its candidates for the future Constituent Assembly. Apart from Kerensky, the list contained several Jews, such as the boisterous Ilya Rubanovich, who had just arrived from Paris, the terrorist Abram Gots, and the little-known Gurevich. In the same article, there was a report on the arrest for desertion of

warrant officer M. Golman, the head of the Mogilev Guberniya, a Peasant Soviet.

Of course, the actions of the executive committees could not be solely explained by their ethnic composition – not at all! Many of those personalities irreversibly distanced themselves from their native communities and had even forgotten the way to their *shtetls*. All of them sincerely believed that because of their talents and revolutionary spirit, they would have no problem arranging workers', soldiers' and peasants' matters in the best way possible. They would manage it better simply because of being more educated and smarter than all this clumsy *hoi polloi*. Yet for many Russians, from commoner to general, this sudden, eye-striking transformation in the appearance among the directors and orators at rallies and meetings, in command and in government, was overwhelming.

V. Stankevich, the only officer-socialist in the Executive Committee, provided an example: “this fact of the abundance of Jews in the Committee alone had enormous influence on the public opinion and sympathies.... Noteworthy, when Kornilov met with the Committee for the first time, he accidentally sat down in the midst of Jews; in front of him sat two insignificant and plain members of the Committee, whom I remember merely because of their grotesquely Jewish facial features. Who knows how that affected Kornilov’s attitudes toward the Russian revolution?” Yet the treatment of all things Russian by the new regime was very tale-telling. Here is an example from the days of Kornilov in the end of August 1918. Russia was visibly dying, losing the war, with its army corrupted and the rear in collapse. General Kornilov, cunningly deceived by Kerensky, artlessly appealed to the people, almost howling with pain: “Russian people! Our great Motherland

is dying. The hour of her death is nigh.... All, whose bosoms harbor a beating Russian heart, go to the temples and pray to God to grant us the greatest miracle of salvation for our beloved country!"

In response to that, the ideologist of the February Revolution and one of the leading members of the Executive Committee, Gimmer-Sukhanov, chuckled in amusement: "What an awkward, silly, clueless, politically illiterate call ... what a lowbrow imitation of *Suzdalshchina*." [Suzdalshchina refers to resistance in Suzdal to the Mongol invaders!]

Yes, it sounded pompous and awkward, without a clear political position. Indeed, Kornilov was not a politician, but his heart ached. And what about Sukhanov's heart – did he feel any pain at all? He did not have any sense of the living land and culture, nor he had any urge to preserve them – he served his ideology only, the International, seeing in Kornilov's words a total lack of ideological content. Yes, his response was caustic. But note that he had not only labeled Kornilov's appeal an "imitation", he had also derogatorily referred to *Suzdalshchina*, to Russian history, ancient art and sanctity. And with such disdain to the entire Russian historical heritage, all that internationalist ilk – Sukhanov and his henchmen from the malicious Executive Committee, steered the February Revolution.

And it was not the ethnic origin of Sukhanov and the rest; it was their anti-national, anti-Russian and anti-conservative attitudes. We have seen similar attitudes on the part of the Provisional Government too, with its task of governing all of Russia and its quite Russian ethnic composition. Yet did it display a Russian worldview or represent Russian interests, if only a little? Not at all! The government's most consistent and patriotic activity was to

guide the already unraveling country (the Kronstadt Republic was not the only place which had seceded from Russia by that time) to the victory in war! To victory at any cost! With loyalty to the Allies!

To be sure, the Allies, their governments, public and financers, put pressure on Russia. For instance, in May, Russian newspapers cited the *Morning Post* from Washington: America made it clear to the Russian government that if Russia makes a separate peace with Germany, the United States would annul all financial agreements with Russia. Prince Georgi Lvov led the Russian Provisional Government during the Russian revolution's initial phase, from March 1917 until he relinquished control to Alexander Kerensky in July 1917 upheld the sentiment: "The country must determinedly send its army to battle." They had no concern about consequences of the ongoing war for Russia. And this mismatch, this loss of sense of national self-preservation, could be observed almost at every meeting of the Provisional Government cabinet, almost in every discussion.

There were simply ridiculous incidents. Throwing millions of rubles left and right and always keenly supporting cultural needs of ethnic minorities, the Provisional Government at its April 6 meeting had rejected the request of the long-established Great Russian Orchestra of V. V.

Andreev to continue getting paid as before, from the funds of the former His Majesty's Personal Chancellery (the funds were confiscated by the Provisional Government itself). The petition was turned down despite the fact that the requested sum, 30 thousand rubles per year, was equivalent to the annual pay of just three minister assistants. "Deny!" (Why not disband your so-called Great Russian orchestra? – What kind of name is that?) Taken aback and believing that it was

just a misunderstanding, Andreev petitioned again. Yet with an unusual for this torpid government determination, he was refused a second time too, at the April 27 meeting.

Milyukov, a Russian historian and minister of the Provisional Government, did not utter a single specifically Russian sentiment during that year. Similarly, the key figure of the revolution, Alexander Kerensky, could not be at any stage accused of possessing an ethnic Russian consciousness. Yet at the same time the government demonstrated constant anxious bias against any conservative circles, and especially – against Russian conservatives. Even during his last speech in the Council of the Russian Republic (Pre-Parliament) on October 24, when Trotsky's troops were already seizing Petrograd building after building, Kerensky emphatically argued that the Bolshevik newspaper *Rabochy Put* (Worker's Way) and the right-wing *Novaya Rus* (New Russia) – both of which Kerensky had just shut down – shared similar political views.

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The darning incognito of the members of the Executive Committee was, of course, noticed by the public. Initially it was the educated society of Petrograd that was obsessed with this question, which several times surfaced in newspapers. For two months, the Committee tried to keep the secret, but by May they had no other choice but reveal themselves and had published the actual names of most of the pseudonym-holders (except for Steklov-Nakhamkis and Boris Osipovich Bogdanov, the energetic permanent chair of the council; they managed to keep their identities secret for a while; the latter's name confused the public by similarity with another personality, Bogdanov-Malinovsky). This odd

secrecy irritated the public, and even ordinary citizens began asking questions. It was already typical in May that if, during a plenary meeting of the Soviet, someone proposed Zinoviev or Kamenev for something, the public shouted from the auditorium demanding their true names.

Concealing true names was incomprehensible to the ordinary man of that time: only thieves hide and change their names. Why is Boris Katz ashamed of his name, and instead calling himself

“Kamkov”? Why does Lurie hide under the alias of “Larin”? Why does Mandelshtam use the pseudonym “Lyadov”? Many of these had aliases that originated out of necessity in their past underground life, but what had compelled the likes of Shotman, the Socialist Revolutionary from Tomsk, (and not him alone) to become “Danilov” in 1917?

Certainly, the goal of a revolutionary, hiding behind a pseudonym, is to outsmart someone, and that may include not only the police and government. In this way, ordinary people as well are unable to figure out who their new leaders are. Intoxicated by the freedom of the first months of the February Revolution, many Jewish activists and orators failed to notice that their constant fussing around presidiums and rallies produced a certain bewilderment and wry glances. By the time of the February Revolution there was no popular anti-Semitism in the internal regions of Russia; it was confined exclusively to the areas of the Pale of Settlement. (For instance, Abraham

Cogan had even stated in 1917: “We loved Russia despite all the oppression from the previous regime because we knew that it was not the Russian people behind it but Czarism.”)

But after just a few months following the February Revolution, resentment against Jews had suddenly flared up among the masses of people and spread over Russia, growing

stronger with each passing month. And even the official newspapers reported, for instance, on the exasperation in the waiting lines in the cities. “Everything has been changed in that twinkle of the eye that created a chasm between the old and the new Russia. But it is queues that have changed the most. Strangely, while everything has moved to the left, the food lines have moved to the right. If you would like to hear Black Hundred propaganda then go and spend some time in a waiting line. Among other things you will find out that there are virtually no Jews in the lines, they don’t need it as they have enough bread hoarded.” The same gossip about Jews who tuck away bread rolls from another end of the line as well; the waiting line is the most dangerous source of counterrevolution.” The author Ivan Nazhivin noted that in the autumn in Moscow anti-Semitic propaganda fell on ready ears in the hungry revolutionary queues: “What rascals! ... They wormed themselves onto the very top! ... See, how proudly they ride in their cars.... Sure, not a single Yid can be found in the lines here.... Just you wait!”

Any revolution releases a flood of obscenity, envy, and anger from the people. The same happened among the Russian people, with their weakened Christian spirituality. And so the Jews – many of whom had ascended to the top, to visibility, and what is more, who had not concealed their revolutionary jubilation, nor waited in the miserable lines – increasingly became a target of popular resentment. Many instances of such resentment were documented in 1917 newspapers. Below are several examples.

When, at the Apraksin market on Sennaya Square, a hoard of goods was discovered in possession of Jewish merchants, people began shout “plunder Jewish shops!” because “Yids are responsible for all the troubles.” And this word *Yid* is on everyone’s lips. A stockpile of flour and bacon

was found in the store of a merchant (likely a Jew) in Poltava. The crowd started plundering his shop and then began calling for a Jewish pogrom.

Later, several members of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, including Drobnis, arrived and attempted to appease the crowd; as a result, Drobnis was beaten. In October in Ekaterinoslav soldiers trashed small shops, shouting "Smash the bourgeois! Smash the Yids!" In Kiev at the Vladimirsky market a boy had hit a woman, who tried to buy flour out her turn on the head Instantly, the crowd started yelling "the Yids are beating the Russians!" and a brawl ensued. (Note that it had happened in the same Kiev where one could already see the streamers "Long live free Ukraine without Yids and Poles!") By that time "Smash the Yids!" could be heard in almost every street brawl, even in Petrograd, and often completely without foundation. For instance, in Petrograd streetcar two women called for disbanding of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, filled, according to them, exclusively by "Germans and Yids." Both were arrested and called to account.

The newspaper *Russkaya Volya* (Russian Freedom) reported: "Right in front of our eyes, anti-Semitism, in its most primitive form re-arises and spreads.... It is enough to hear to conversations in streetcars in Petrograd or in waiting lines to various shops, or in the countless fleeting rallies at every corner and crossroad ... they accuse Jews of political stranglehold, of seizing parties and Soviets, and even of ruining the army, of looting and hoarding goods."

Many Jewish socialists, agitators in the front units, enjoyed unlimited success during the spring months when calls for a democratic peace were tolerated and fighting was not required. Then nobody blamed them for being Jewish. But in June when the policy of the Executive

Committee had changed toward support and even propaganda for the offensive, calls of “smash the Yids!” began appearing and those Jewish persuaders suffered battering by unruly soldier’s time and time again.

Rumors were spreading that the Executive Committee in Petrograd was “seized by Yids.” By June this belief had taken root in the Petrograd garrison and factories; this is exactly what soldiers shouted to the member of the Committee Voitinsky who had visited an infantry regiment to dissuade the troops from the looming demonstration conceived by Bolsheviks on June 10.

V. D. Nabokov, hardly known for anti-Semitism, joked that the meeting of the foremen of the Pre-Parliament in October 1917 “could be safely called a Sanhedrin. Its majority was Jewish; of Russians, there were only Avksentiev, me, Peshekhonov, and Chaikovsky....” His attention was drawn to that fact by Mark Vishnyak who was present there also.

By autumn, the activity of Jews in power had created such an effect that even *Iskry* (Sparks), the illustrated supplement to the surpassingly gentle *Russkoe Slovo* (Russian Word) that would until then never dare defy public opinion in such a way, had published an abrasive anti-Jewish caricature in the October 29 issue, that is, already during fighting of the October coup in Moscow. The Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies actively fought against anti-Semitism. I cannot rule out that the harsh refusal to accept the well-deserved Plekhanov into the CEC in April 1917 was a kind of revenge for his anti-Bund reference to the “tribe of God,” which was mentioned in Lenin’s publications. Indeed, I cannot provide any other explanation. On July 21, the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets had issued a proclamation about a struggle against

anti-Semitism (about the only resolution approved by the Congress unanimously, without any objections or arguments.)

When in the end of June (28th and 29th) the re-elected Bureau of the CEC had assembled, they had heard a report on the rise of anti-Semitic agitation, mainly in the northwestern and southwestern guberniyas; a decision was made immediately to send a delegation of 15 members of the CEC with special powers there, subordinating them to the direction of the Department on the Struggle against Counter-Revolution.

On the other hand, Bolsheviks, who advanced their agenda under the slogan “Down with the minister-capitalists!” not only did nothing to alleviate this problem, they even fanned its flames (along with the anarchists, despite the fact that the latter were headed by one Bleikhman.) They claimed that the Executive Committee was so exceptionally lenient toward the government only because capitalists and Jews control everything. Isn’t that reminiscent of *Narodnaya Volya* [the People’s Will terrorist organization] of 1881? And when the Bolshevik uprising of July 3-4 broke out (it was in fact targeted not against the already impotent Provisional Government but against the Bolshevik’s true competitor – the Executive Committee), the Bolsheviks slyly exploited the anger of soldiers toward Jews by pointing them to that very body – see, there they are!

But when the Bolsheviks had lost their uprising, the CEC had conducted an official investigation and many members of the commission of inquiry were Jews from the presidium of the CEC. And because of their “socialist conscience” they dared not call the Bolshevik uprising a crime and deal with it accordingly. So the commission had yielded no result and was soon liquidated.

During the garrison meeting, arranged by the CEC on October 19, just before the decisive Bolshevik uprising, one of representatives of 176th Infantry Regiment, a Jew, warned that “those people down on the streets scream that Jews are responsible for all the wrongs.” At the CEC meeting during the night of October 25, Gendelman reported that when he was giving a speech in the Peter and Paul Fortress earlier that afternoon he was taunted: “You are Gendelman! That is you are a Yid and a Rightist!” When on October 27 Gotz and his delegation to Kerensky tried to depart to Gatchina from the Baltiysky Rail Terminal, he was nearly killed by sailors who screamed that

“the Soviets are controlled by Yids!” And during the wine pogroms on the eve of the glorious

Bolshevik victory, the calls “Slaughter Yids!” were heard also.

And yet there was not a single Jewish pogrom over the whole year of 1917. The infamous outrageous pogroms in Kalusha and Ternopol were in fact the work of frenzied drunken revolutionary soldiers, retreating in disorder. They smashed everything on their way, all shops and stores; and because most of those were Jewish-owned, the word spread about Jewish pogroms. A similar pogrom took place in Stanislavov, with its much smaller Jewish population, and quite reasonably it was not labeled a Jewish pogrom.

Already by the mid-summer of 1917 the Jews felt threatened by the embittered population (or drunken soldiers), but the ongoing collapse of the state was fraught with incomparably greater dangers. Amazingly, it seems that both the Jewish community and the press, the latter to a large extent identified with the former, learned nothing from the formidable experiences of 1917 in general, but narrowly looked at the isolated manifestations of pogroms. And so

time after time they missed the real danger. The executive power behaved similarly. When the Germans breached the front at Ternopol in the night of July 10, the desperate joint meeting of the CEC of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies had taken place. They had acknowledged that should the revolution perish, the country crumbles down (in that exact order), and then named a Government for Salvation of the Revolution, and noted in their appeal to the people that "dark forces are again prepared to torment our longsuffering

Motherland. They are setting backward masses upon the Jews."

On July 18 at a panel session of the State Duma, in an extremely small circle, Rep. Maslennikov spoke against the Executive Committee and among other things spelled out the real names of its members. On the very same evening at the factional meeting of the CEC they beat an alarm: "This is a case of counterrevolution, it must be dealt with according to the recently issued decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs Tsereteli on suppression of counterrevolution!" (The decree was issued in response to the Bolshevik uprising, though it was never used against Bolsheviks.) In two days Maslennikov made excuses in an article in the newspaper *Rech* [Speech]: indeed, he named Steklov, Kamenev, and Trotsky but never intended to incite anger against the entire Jewish people, and "anyway, attacking them, I had absolutely no wish to make Jewish people responsible for the actions of these individuals."

Then, in mid-September, when the all gains of the February Revolution were already irreversibly ruined, on the eve of the by now imminent Bolshevik coup, Ya. Kantorovich warned in *Rech* about the danger that: "The

dark forces and evil geniuses of Russia will soon emerge from their dens to jubilantly perform Black Masses...." Indeed, it will happen soon. Yet what kind of Black masses? – "...Of bestial patriotism and pogrom-loving 'truly-Russian' national identity." In October in Petrograd I. Trumpeldor had organized Jewish self-defense forces for protection against pogroms, but they were never needed.

Indeed, Russian minds were confused, and so were Jewish ones.

Several years after the revolution, G. Landau, looking back with sadness, wrote: "Jewish participation in the Russian turmoil had astonishingly suicidal overtones in it; I am referring not only to their role in Bolshevism, but to their involvement in the whole thing. And it is not just about the huge number of politically active people, socialists and revolutionaries, who have joined the revolution; I am talking mainly about the broad sympathy of the masses it was met with.... Although many harbored pessimistic expectations, in particular, an anticipation of pogroms, they were still able to reconcile such a foreboding with an acceptance of turmoil which unleashed countless miseries and pogroms. It resembled the fatal attraction of butterflies to fire, to the annihilating fire.... It is certain there were some strong motives pushing the Jews into that direction, and yet those were clearly suicidal.... Granted, Jews were not different in that from the rest of Russian intelligentsia and from the Russian society.... Yet we had to be different ... we, the ancient people of city-dwellers, merchants, artisans, intellectuals ... we had to be different from the people of land and power, from peasants, landowners, officials."

And let's not forget those who were different. We must always remember that Jewry was and is very heterogeneous, that attitudes and actions vary greatly among

the Jews. So it was with the Russian Jewry in 1917: in provinces and even in the capital there were circles with reasonable views and they were growing as October was getting closer.

The Jewish stance toward Russian unity during the months when Russia was pulled apart not only by other nations, but even by Siberians, was remarkable. “All over the course of revolution Jews, together with Great Russians, were among the most ardent champions of the idea of Great Russia.” Now, when Jews had gotten their equal rights, what could they have in common with different peoples on the periphery of the former empire? And yet the disintegration of a united country would fracture Jewry. In July at the Ninth Congress of Constitutional Democrats, Vinaver and Nolde openly argued against territorial partition of peoples and in favor of Russian unity. Also in September, in the national section of the Democratic Conference, the Jewish socialists spoke against any federalization of Russia (in that they had joined the Centralists.) Today they write in an Israeli magazine that Trumpeldor’s Jewish detachments backed the Provisional Government and had even foiled the Kornilov’s mutiny. Perhaps. However, in rigorously studying events of 1917, I did not encounter any such information. But I am aware of opposite instances: in early May 1917 in the thundering patriotic and essentially counter-revolutionary Black Sea Delegation, the most successful orator calling for the defense of Russia was Jewish sailor Batkin.

D. Pasmanik had published the letters of millionaire steamship owner Shulim Bespalov to the Minister of Trade and Industry Shakhovsky dated as early as September 1915: “Excessive profits made by all industrialists and traders lead our Motherland to the imminent wreck.” He had donated half a million rubles to the state and proposed to establish a law

limiting all profits to 15%. Unfortunately, these self-restricting measures were not introduced as “rush to freedom.” Progressives such as Konovalov and Ryabushinsky did not mind making 100% war profits. When Konovalov himself became the Minister of Trade and Industry, Shulim Bespalov wrote to him on July 5, 1917: “Excessive profits of industrialists are ruining our country, now we must take 50 percent of the value of their capital and property,” and added that he is ready to part with 50 percent of his own assets. Konovalov paid no heed.

In August, at the Moscow All-Russian State Conference, O. O. Gruzenberg (a future member of the Constituent Assembly) stated: “These days the Jewish people are united in their allegiance to our Motherland, in unanimous aspiration to defend her integrity and achievements of democracy,” and were prepared to give for her defense “all their material and intellectual assets, to part with everything precious, with the flower of their people, all their young.” These words reflected the realization that the February régime was the best for the Russian Jewry, promising economic progress as well as political and cultural prosperity. And that realization was adequate.

The closer it got to the October coup and the more apparent the Bolshevik threat, the wider this realization spread among Jews, leading them to oppose Bolshevism. It was taking root even among socialist parties and during the October coup many Jewish socialists were actively against it. Yet they were debilitated by their socialist views and their opposition was limited by negotiations and newspaper articles – until the Bolsheviks shut down those newspapers.

It is necessary to state explicitly that the October coup was not carried by Jews, though it was under the general command of Trotsky and with energetic actions of young

Grigory Chudnovsky during the arrest of Provisional Government and the massacre of the defenders of the Winter Palace. Broadly speaking, the common rebuke that the 170 million people could not be pushed into Bolshevism by a small Jewish minority is justified. Indeed, we had ourselves sealed our fate in 1917, through our foolishness from February to October-December. The October coup proved a devastating catastrophe for Russia. Yet the state of affairs even before it promised little good to the people. We had already lost responsible statesmanship and the events of 1917 had proved it in excess. The best Russia could expect was an inept, feeble, and disorderly pseudodemocracy, unable to rely on enough citizens with developed legal consciousness and economic independence.

After the October fighting in Moscow, representatives of the Bund and Poale-Zion had taken part in the peace negotiations – not in alliance with the Junkers or the Bolsheviks — but as a third independent party. There were many Jews among the Junkers of the Engineers School who defended the Winter Palace on October 25: in the memoirs of Sinegub, a palace defender, Jewish names appear regularly; I personally knew one such engineer from my prison experience. And during the Odessa City Duma elections the Jewish bloc had opposed the Bolsheviks and won, though only marginally.

During the Constituent Assembly elections, more than 80% of Jewish population in Russia had voted for Zionist parties. Lenin wrote that 550 thousand voted for Jewish nationalists. Most Jewish parties formed a united national list of candidates; seven deputies were elected from that list, six Zionists and Gruzenberg. The success of Zionists was facilitated by the recently published declaration of British Minister of Foreign Affairs Balfour on the

establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, which was met with enthusiasm by the majority of Russian Jewry (celebratory demonstrations, rallies and worship services took place in Moscow, Petrograd, Odessa, Kiev and many other cities.)

Prior to the October coup, Bolshevism was not very influential among Jews. But just before the uprising, Natanson, Kamkov, and Shteinberg on behalf of the left Socialist Revolutionaries had signed a combat pact with Bolsheviks Trotsky and Kamenev. And some Jews distinguished themselves among the Bolsheviks in their very first victories and some even became famous. The commissar of the famed Latvian regiments of the 12th Army, which did so much for the success of Bolshevik coup, was Semyon Nakhimson. Jewish soldiers played a notable role during preparation and execution of the armed uprising of October 1917 in Petrograd and other cities, and also during suppression of mutinies and armed resurrections against the new Soviet regime.

It is widely known that during the historic session of the Congress of Soviets on October 27 two acts, the Decree on Land and the Decree on Peace, were passed. But it didn't leave a mark in history that after the Decree on Peace but before the Decree on Land another resolution was passed. It declared it "a matter of honor for local soviets to prevent Jewish and any other pogroms by dark forces." (Pogroms by Red forces of light were not anticipated.)

So even here, at the Congress of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the Jewish question was put ahead of the peasant one.

## Chapter XV: The Bolsheviks

[The Russian word *otshchepentsa* is difficult to translate precisely. It means renegade or traitor, but perhaps a more nuanced meaning in the context Solzhenitsyn uses the word would be “cultural and moral renegade” or “traitor to one’s blood and heritage.”]

This is not a new theme: the Jewish role in Bolshevism. Much has already been written on it. Those who try to prove that the revolution was non-Russian indicate the Jewish names and pseudonyms in an attempt to remove from the Russian people the blame of the October Revolution of 1917. But Jews who began by similarly denying the role of Jews in positions Bolshevik authority have now been forced to admit their participation, yet claim that those were not Jews in spirit, but *otshchepentsy*, renegades. Let us agree with this statement and admit that we are unable to judge people’s spirits. Yes, these were *otshchepentsy*. However, by that logic the leading Russian Bolsheviks were also not Russians in spirit, but were frequently both antiRussian and antiOrthodox, and in their minds Russian culture was refracted through the lenses of political doctrines and calculations.

But a question is raised: how much evidence must there be of the participation of random *otshchepentsev* before we acknowledge a pattern that defies random distribution? What fraction of the Jewish nation is required to participate in order to establish such a pattern? We know about the Russian renegades, the depressing number who joined the Bolsheviks. An unpardonable number. But how widely and actively did Jews participate in strengthening Bolshevik authority?

And another question: what was the reaction of each group's people to its *otshchepentsam*? The reactions of people to *otshchepentsev* can be different—they can curse them or praise them, ostracize them or join them. And the manifestations of this—the reactions of the masses of the people, whether Russian, Jewish or Latvian—have been given very little consideration by historians.

The question is one of whether the people renounced their *otshchepentsev*, and whether the renunciation that did occur reflected the sense of the people. Did a people choose to remember or not to remember its *otshchepentsev*? The answer to this question must not be in doubt: the Jews choose to remember. Not just to remember the individual people, but to remember them as Jews, so that their names may never disappear.

There is perhaps no clearer example of *otshchepentsa* than Lenin. One cannot fail to recognize Lenin as Russian. To Lenin Russian antiquity was disgusting and loathsome; in all of Russian history he seems only to have mastered Chernishevsky and Saltykov-Schedrin.

Yes, he frolicked with the liberal views of Turgenev and Tolstoy. But in him there appeared no attachment even to the Volga, where he passed his youth. To the contrary, he pitilessly brought terrifying hunger there in 1921. Everything with him was thus—everything Russian among which he grew generated hatred inside him. That Orthodox faith in which he could have grown he strove instead to weaken and destroy. Even in youth he was *otshchepenets*. But nevertheless, he was Russian, and we Russians must accept criticism for it.

But if we speak of the ethnic origin of Lenin, we must not change our method of judgment when we recognize that he was a cross-breed of the most different bloodlines. His

grandfather according to the father, Nikolai Vasilyevich, was of the blood of a Kalmuk woman, Anna Alekseyevna Smirnova; another grandfather Israel [baptised Aleksandr] Davidovich was a Jew; another grandmother, Anna Iogannovna Grosshopf, the daughter of a German and a Swede. But all of this cross-breeding does not give us the right to reject him as a Russian. We must accept him as a creation completely Russian since his national character, that which infused his spirit, was intertwined with the history of the Russian Empire. But to the creations of Russia, to that country which erected us and its culture, his was a spirit alienated and at times sharply anti-Russian. Nevertheless, we can in no way renounce him. But the Jews call him *otshchepentsa*?

As we saw in 1917, the Jews had not all been drawn to Bolshevism. Instead, they had been drawn to a myriad of revolutionary movements. At the last conference of the RSDRP, the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, held in 1907 in London, of the 302-305 delegates, among the Mensheviks [the faction opposing Lenin] the number of Jews exceeded 160, i.e., more than half. As a result of the April conference of 1917, among nine members of the new Central Committee of the Bolsheviks we see G. Zinoviev, L. Kamenev, and Sverdlov. In the summer of the congress of the RKP(B) (renamed from the RSDRP) to the TSCK there were eleven Jewish members, among them Zinoviev, Sverdlov, Sokolnik, Trotsky, and Uritsky.

Then on October 10, 1917, in the apartment of Gimmler and Flakserman, where the decision was made to launch the Bolshevik Revolution, among the twelve participants were Trotsky, Zinoviev, Sverdlov, Uritsky, Sokolnik and [one other Jewish name the translator won't give us properly]. And who was chosen first for the

Politburo? Of its seven members: Trotsky, Zinoviev, [another Jewish name], Sokolnik. That is in no way a small proportion. There can be no doubt that Jewish *otshchepentsy* were present in the Bolshevik leadership in great disproportion to their numbers in the population, and they comprised too many of the Bolshevik commissars for a relationship to be denied.

It can be certain that the Jewish leadership of Bolshevism was not completely monolithic. Even the Jews in the Politburo did not act as a bloc. Some were against the revolution, believing that it was not the proper moment. Already, at that point Trotsky was the autocratic genius of the October Revolution; he did not exaggerate his role in his writings on the subject. Lenin hid himself in a cowardly manner and played no essential role until after the revolution had been completed. Generally, Lenin was guided by a spirit of internationalism, and even in his dispute with the Bund in 1903 he adhered to the view that nationalism did not exist and must not exist, and that the question of nationalism divided revolutionary from reactionary socialism. (In harmony with this view Stalin declared that the Jews were a nation and thus prophesied their eventual assimilation.) Accordingly, Lenin considered anti-Semitism to be a tactic of capitalism, and saw in it not an organic expression of the will of the people but a convenient method of counterrevolution.

But Lenin also understood what a powerful mobilizing force the Jewish question was in the ideological fight. He saw to it that the special bitterness of the Jews toward the Czar was prepared for use in the Revolution. However, from the first days of the revolution Lenin found it necessary to consider how the Jewish question would eventually be addressed. Like much he did not foresee in

state questions, he did not see how the concentration of Jewish power within the Bolsheviks would lead the Jews, as a result of war scattered throughout Russia, to take control of the apparatus of the Russian state during the decisive months and years—a process that began with the replacements that occurred after the Bolshevik mass strike against Russian clerks. That strike was organized by the Jewish settlers in the Russian frontier and border regions, who did not return to their relatives after the war.

But the liquidation of permanent residency in 1917 particularly resulted in the great dispersion of Jews from the urban centers inside Russia, no longer as refugees and settlers, but as migrants. Soviet information from 1920 states that 10,000 Jews had settled in Samara alone in recent years. In Irkutsk, the Jewish population grew to 15,000. Large Jewish settlements were formed in central Russia and the Urals. This was performed in large part by Jewish social security agencies and philanthropic organizations.

A small pile of Bolsheviks had now come to power and taken authority, but their control was still brittle. Whom could they trust in the government? Whom could they call on for aid? The seeds of the answer lay in the creation in January 1918 of a special People's Commissariat from the members of the Jewish commissariat, the reason for which was expressed in Lenin's opinion that the Bolshevik success in the revolution had been made possible because of the role of the large Jewish intelligentsia in several Russia cities. These Jews engaged in general sabotage, which was directed against Russians after the October Revolution and which proved extremely effective. Jewish elements, though certainly not the entirety of the Jewish people, saved the Bolshevik Revolution through these acts of sabotage. Lenin took this into consideration, he emphasized it in the press,

and he recognized that to master the state apparatus he could succeed only because of this reserve of literate and more or less intelligent, sober new clerks.

Thus the Bolsheviks, from the first days of their authority, called upon the Jews to assume the bureaucratic work of the Soviet apparatus—and many, many Jews answered that call. They in fact responded immediately. The sharp need of the Bolsheviks for bureaucrats to exercise their authority met with great enthusiasm among young Jews, pell-mell with the Slav and international brethren. And this was in no way compulsory for these Jews, who were nonparty members, and who had been previously completely non-revolutionary and apolitical.

This phenomenon was not ideological, but the result of mass calculation on the part of the Jews. And the Jews in the previously forbidden and cherished rural provinces and their capitals gushed out of their ghettos to join the Bolsheviks, seeing in them the most decisive defenders of the revolution and the most reliable internationalists, and these Jews flooded and abounded in the lower layers of the party structure.

To every man who was not a member of the nobility, a priest or a Czarist bureaucrat, the promises of the new clan were extended. And to encourage Jewish participation, the Bolsheviks organized in St. Petersburg the Jewish division of the nationalities commissariat. In 1918 it was converted into a separate commissariat of its own. And in March 1919, in the eighth congress of the RKP(B), with the proclamation of the Communist Union of Soviet Russia, it was made into an organic and special part of the RKP(B), in order to integrate it into the Communist International, and it a special Jewish section was created in the Russian Telegraphic Agency.

The statements made by Shub that Jewish young people joined the Communist party in response to anti-Semitic pogroms conducted in White-controlled areas in 1919 has no basis in reality. The mass inflow of Jews into the Soviet apparatus occurred in 1917 and 1918. There is no doubt that the pogroms of 1919 strengthened the allegiance of Jews to the Communist party, but it in no way created it.

Rarely do authors deny the role of Jews in Bolshevism. While it is true that the appearance of Bolshevism was the result of the special features of Russian history, the organization of Bolshevism was created through the activity of Jewish commissars. The dynamic role of Jews in Bolshevism was estimated by contemporary observers in America. The transfer of the Russian Revolution from the destructive phase into the building phase was seen as an expression of the ability of the Jews to build elaborate systems based on their dissatisfactions. And after the successes of October, how many Jews themselves spoke about their role in Bolshevism with their heads held high!

Let us recall how, before the revolution, revolutionaries and radical-liberals were willing to oppose the restraints placed upon the Jews not out of love for the Jews, but for political purposes. So, in the first months and years after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks made a great effort to hunt down Jews for use in the state and party *apparati*, not out of affinity for the Jewish people, but for the abilities they combined with their alienation and hatred of the Russian population. In this manner, they also approached the Latvians, the Hungarians and the Chinese.

Though the mass of the Jewish population initially viewed the Bolsheviks with alarm, if not hostility, after finding that the revolution granted them complete freedom, and that it welcomed a bloom of Jewish activity in the public,

political and cultural spheres, the Jewish population threw themselves into Bolshevism; and Bolshevik authority particularly attracted those whose character held a surplus of cruelty.

The question then emerges of when Communist authority spread from Russia, and came to engulf world Judaism. The stormy participation of Jews in the Communist revolution drew cautious statements of concerns about world Jewry that were quieted, their evidence concealed, by communist and Jews worldwide, who attempted to silence it by denouncing it as extreme anti-Semitism.

After 70 or 80 years passed, and under the pressure of many facts and discoveries, the view of Jewish involvement in the revolutionary years opened slightly. Already many Jewish voices have discussed this publicly. For example, the poet Naum Korzhavin has noted that as long as it is taboo to speak of the participation of the Jews in Bolshevism, it will be impossible properly to discuss the revolutionary period. There are even times now when Jews are *proud* of their participation—when Jews have said that they did participate in the revolution, and in disproportionately large numbers. M. Argusky has noted that Jews involved in the revolution and the civil war was not limited to the revolutionary period but also continued in their considerable and widespread involvement in running the state apparatus. Israeli socialist S. Tsiryul'nikov has stated that from the beginning of the revolution Jews served as the basis of the new communist regime. But most Jewish authors today still deny the contribution of Jews to Bolshevism, sweeping the evidence aside with anger, or more frequently with reference to the pain such evidence causes them.

But despite their pain there is no doubt that these Jewish *otshchepentsy* for several years after the revolution

dominated Bolshevism, headed the belligerent Red Army (Trotsky), the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (Sverdlov), ran both capitals (Zinoviev), the Comintern (Zinoviev), the Profintern/Red Trade Union International (Dridzo-Lozovskiy) and the Komsomol (Oscar Ryvkin, and after him Lazarus Shatskin.)

True, in the first council of People's Commissars there was only one Jew, Trotsky, but the influence of this one Jew as Lenin's second-in-command exceeded that of all the rest.

And from November 1917 through 1918 the real government was not the Council of Peoples' Commissars but the in the so-called "little" Council: Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Kareljin, Prosh'yan. After October, of no less importance than the Council of People's Commissars was the presidium of VCTscIcK, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. Among its six chairmen: Sverdlov, [unintelligible Jewish name], Volodarsky, and Glass.

M. Agursky correctly notes that in the country, where one was not accustomed to seeing

Jews, the ascension of the Jews to power was particularly striking. The President of the country, a Jew? The War Minister, a Jew? There was something to this, so radical that the population of Russia could not adjust to it—not only because of their Judaism, but because of what they as Jews stood for.

D. Shub justifies all this by claiming that "significant numbers of Jewish youth flocked to the Communist Party" as a result of massacres that occurred in the territory of the Whites (i.e. since 1919). This is simply untrue. The massive influx of Jews into the Soviet apparatus occurred in late 1917 and in 1918. There is no doubt that the events of 1919 (more

about them in Chapter XVI) served to strengthen Jewish ties with the Bolsheviks, but not to create it. When the Bolsheviks were only organized in their offices in St. Petersburg, the Jewish Department of the Commissariat for Nationalities functioned. Soon after, in 1918, it was converted into a separate Jewish Commissariat. And in March 1919, the Eighth Congress prepared a proclamation that the Jewish Communist Union of Soviet Russia was an organic, but also a special part of the Kavbureau. (In order to enable it and the Comintern, and so completely undermine the Bund.) A special propaganda office was created with the Jewish Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA).

Another author, a communist, explains that “our Jewish labor movement played a particularly prominent role” due to the fact that among the Jewish workers there was a “special development of certain psychological traits lifestyle necessary for the role of leaders” which had yet to develop among the Russian workers—energy, civility, solidarity and systematic organizational skills.

Those authors who deny the central organizing role of Jews in Bolshevism are rare. D. S. Pasmanik argued that “the very appearance of Bolshevism was the result of peculiarities of

Russian history, but the Bolshevik organization was created in part through the activities of the Jewish commissars.” The dynamic role of the Jews in Bolshevism was evaluated by contemporary observers from America: they advocated a quick transit from the “destructive phase” of the revolution to an unspecified “constructive phase”, and called the revolution “a significant expression of the genius of the Jewish discontent.” On the October coup, it was observed how American and Western Jews were talking among

themselves about their people's activity in Bolshevism with their heads held high.

Remember that just as before the revolution, both revolutionaries and radical liberals willingly and actively used the Jews, not out of love for them but as a tactic of expediency to attain political goals. In the first months and then years after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks with the greatest cunning used Jews their state and party apparatus, again not because of the affinity with the Jews, but pragmatically to benefit from their undoubted abilities and because of their own alienation from the Russian population. There was a lesser use of Latvians, Hungarians, and Chinese for the same sort of purpose.

The bulk of the Jewish population greeted the October Revolution with caution, if not hostility. But on finding that revolution finally granted them complete freedom from the restrictions of Czardom and for at least a time during the initial phases resulted in a flourishing of Jewish activity, social, political, cultural, and well-organized, the Jewish people as a whole (with some significant exceptions detailed below) generally embraced the Bolsheviks, and either overlooked or participated in those cruel first excesses of Soviet which eventually were codified and systematized under Stalin.

Beginning in the late 1940s, when Communism as an ideology largely fell out with world Jewry, any attempt to discuss the role of the Jewish people in the 1917 revolution and subsequent establishment of Soviet power has been castigated in the West as extreme anti-Semitism, and for that reason such discussion has been largely impermissible in Russia for a long time.

But not altogether. 70 to 80 years on, a more comprehensive scrutiny of those years has slipped through

state control and significantly, Jewish voices have begun to speak about it publicly.

For example, the poet Naum Korzhavin: “If we impose a taboo on the participation of Jews in the revolution, talk about the revolution in general would become impossible.”

There has even been a kind of pride in it. “The Jews participated in the revolution, and in a disproportionate amount.”—M. Agursky. Or: “The participation of Jews in the revolution and the civil war was not limited to this, nor even to ordinary participation in public management. It was much broader.” Or the Israeli socialist S. Barber: “At the beginning of the revolution, the

Jews were the basis of the new régime.”

But quite a few Jewish writers who today deny or downplay the Jewish contribution to Bolshevism dismiss with anger or more likely avoid any mention of facts they perceive as painful. Often this is not difficult, since much of that time is still shrouded in a great deal of obscurity. In addition to the visible official posts, the Leninist structure relied on invisible and silent figures who have never been considered fit to print, including Lenin’s most “beloved rogue” Ganetsky and all the vague shapes in the cloud like Parvus.

Like that Eugene Sumenson, who swam to the surface for only a short time in the summer of 1917. Some of these Jews who we dimly perceive in the shadows were arrested for suspicious financial skullduggery with Germany during the war, and were clearly connected to the Bolshevik upper echelon, but never mentioned in the hardware lists. After the July Days *Russkaya Volya* [Russian Will] soberly published materials about the covert activities of Parvus and his close associates Zurabov, Binshtok, Levin, Perazich and others. Or Samuel Sachs, son of a wealthy industrialist in Petrograd,

who in 1917 gave the Bolsheviks an entire printing press. Or from the same team *parvusovskoy* [literally “Parvus man” but with gang-member connotations] Saul Picker (Alexander Martynov) who had once publicly argued Marxist theory with Lenin, but who adroitly changed sides at the right time.

There was Rosalia Zalkind, underground name Zemlyachka, was also arrested for suspicious financial connections with Germany. She was associated with V. Zagorski, I. V. Zelensky, and Osip Pyatnitsky, who was in the secretariat of the Moscow Committee of the Bolsheviks in 1917-1920, long before Kaganovich. (Pyatnitsky was later murdered by Stalin, as were so many prominent Jews from this period.)

It is hardly surprising that the revolutionary institutions in Odessa were riddled with Jews, because in Odessa, as we have seen, the Jews constituted more than a third of the population. Here it is natural that the chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee, then Odessa Sovnarkom [Soviet People’s Commissar] was V. Yudovsky, while the Provincial Party Committee chairman was J. Gamarnik. Gamarnik then moved on to Kiev, there to become Provincial Committee chairman and of the executive committee; then secretary of the Central Committee of Belarus and a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Belarusian

Military District. He too died in Stalin’s execution cellars.

A rising star was Lazar Kaganovich, son of a kosher butcher. He became Chairman of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of the Nizhny Novgorod in 1918, at the age of 25.

In August-September in the minutes of the Nizhny Novgorod BPK, when the decision was made to conduct the most severe terror in the province, records begin with: “Kaganovich

present.” Later on, he confiscated photographic negatives and broke published photographs of the meeting of the presidium of the Council of the Assembly of Leningrad after the October Revolution. He explained this to Yu. Larin on the grounds that “the vast majority of the presidium at the table were Jews.” *[Ed. note: Lazar Kaganovich also achieved the notable distinction of being the last survivor of this most bloody time and generation of human history, dying alone and forgotten in a shabby state-owned apartment in Moscow on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1991 at the age of 97.]* For illustrative purposes only, we will tell you a little more:

\*Arkady Rozengolts, leader in the October Revolution in Moscow; then a member of the Revolutionary Military Councils of a number of armies and the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, close aide of Trotsky. And another long series of posts: in the People’s Commissariat of RCTs (Rabkrin, control and investigation body.) And finally, he became the People’s Commissar of Foreign Trade, for seven years.

\*Simon Nakhimson, commander of the immortal Latvian riflemen, a fierce military commissar of the Yaroslavl Military District (killed in Yaroslavl uprising.)

\*Samuel Zwilling. Who after defeating chieftain Dutov led the Orenburg Provincial Executive Committee (soon killed.)

\*Zorach Greenberg, Commissioner of Education and Art of the Northern Commune, spoke Hebrew, the right hand of Lunacharsky.

\*Yevgeny Kogan (wife Kuibyshev): in 1917 Secretary of the Samara Provincial Party Committee, in 1918-1919 a member of the Army Revolutionary Tribunal in the Volga region, in

1920 transferred to the Tashkent City Committee, from 1921 in Moscow and Secretary MGK for 30 years.

\*Semyon Zhukovsky; glimpsed in the political departments of different armies, then in the propaganda department of the Central Committee of Turkestan, then head of the Political Department of the Baltic Fleet, then in the Central Committee.

\*Abram Belenky- head bodyguard of Lenin in his last five years of life; on the Krasnaya Presnya District Committee and then on to the head of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Communist International;

\*Yefim - Supreme Economic Council, RCTs Commissariat.

\*Dimanshtein - after the Jewish Commissariat and then Evsektsiia he went further to the Central Committee of Lithuania-Belarus, then Commissar of Education in Turkestan, then head of Ukraine's Central Political Education Department.

\*Samuel Filler, chemistry student of Kherson province, was taken up to the presidium of the IBSC, and then in the RCTs.

\*Anatoly (Isaac) Koltun, who deserted but returned in 1917, gained management experience in the CCC (Central Control Commission) VKPb, then did Party work in Kazakhstan, then he turns up in Yaroslavl and Ivanovo and again in the CCC, and then in a Moscow court. Then he is suddenly the director of the Institute!

Jews held especially prominent roles in the food bodies of the RSFSR, the vital nerve of those years, part and parcel of war communism. Let's see just how many key positions were filled with Jews:

\*Moses Frumkin in 1918-1922, a member of the board of the People's Commissariat of the RSFSR, 1921,

deputy. Commissar of food during the early years of famine, then chairman of Glavproduct.

\*I. Rafailov (Jacob Brandenburg-Goldzinsky) returned from Paris in 1917 immediately appointed to the Petrograd production committee in 1918, then the Commissariat; during the Civil War he was extraordinary commissioner for the Central Executive Committee for the food the surplus in a number of provinces.

\*Isaac Zelensky: 1918-1920 on the Moscow City Council, then a member of the board of the People's Commissariat of the RSFSR. (Later in the secretariat of the Central Committee and secretary of the Central Asian Bureau.)

\*Simon Wax: Arrived from America in 1917, served during the October Revolution in Petrograd: 1918 appointed food commissioner for the vast northern region.

\*Myron Vladimirov-Sheynfinkel: October 1917 led to the Petrograd food council, and then

- a member of the board of the RSFSR People's Commissariat of food; 1921 - People's Commissar of Food of Ukraine, then it the People's Commissariat.

\*Gregory Zusmanovich in 1918 – Commissar of the army in the Ukraine.

\*Moses Kalmanovich—from the end of 1917 Commissioner of Food Western Front in 1919-1920 Byelorussian SSR Commissar of food, then Lithuanian-Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the chairman of the special committee of the Western Front of food. At his peak, Chairman of the State Bank of the USSR.

Recently published details have revealed how the West Siberian peasant uprising in 1921 or “Ishim rebellion” began. The Latvian member of *gubprodkoma* Lauris Matthew used his power for personal gain and lust. He settled

with armed detachments in the villages and demanded the production of women for himself and his gang.

Tyumen Gubierna production commissar Indenbaum, after severe grain procurement in 1920, when the area to 1 January 1921 fulfilled 102 percent of the surplus target, with even an extra week announced the end of the surplus—from 1 to 7 January, that is, just before Christmas week. The other county commissars including Ishim received a directive that “the surplus should be attained *regardless of the consequences*, including the confiscation of all the bread in the village.” (italics mine. - AS), leaving only a starvation ration for the hungry producer. In a personal telegram, Indenbaum required “the most ruthless violence to increase the quantity of confiscated bread in the villages.” In the formation of food detachments Indenbaum knowingly accepted former criminals and *lumpen* who readily beat the peasants in order to compel them to reveal where their grain was hidden. At the Tenth Congress, the Kavbureau’s Tyumen delegation reported that those peasants who did not want to surrender their grain to the surplus appropriation system put their grain into pits and filled them with water.

And what happened to him? We learn only after many years, just from obituaries in *Izvestia*: He died of tuberculosis, comrade. Isaac Samoylovich Kizelshteyn, delegate VI Party Congress, a member of the “five” in Moscow which prepared the October uprising there. With the move of the government in Moscow he acquired the great job of head of the Cheka. He was a member of the Revolutionary Military Council first of the Fifth and then the Fourteenth Army,

“always a faithful soldier of the party and the working class”

In addition to the mandatory revolutionary nicknames, the Bolshevik-Jews always had a jumble of

additional aliases, or anyway names. That's his obituary in 1928: he officially died as old Bolshevik Lev Mikhailov. Since 1906, he was known as Party Politicus. But his nickname and last name of Elinson were carried away in the grave. What motivated Aron Rufelevicha to take the Ukrainian name Taratuta? Were they ashamed when his name was Joseph Aronovich Tarschys? or would he like to strengthen himself? Take Piatnitski? The same motives for any Jews Goncharova? Vasilenko? And were they considered traitors in their families? Or cowards?

And how many of these unknown workers, but of different nationalities, were crushed by the Russian Strangler?

J.F. Nazhivin writes in his impressions of the early Soviet régime: "In the Kremlin, in the management of the CPC, everywhere there was incredible sloppiness and confusion. Throughout there were Latvians, Latvians, Latvians and Jews, Jews, Jews. I was never an anti-Semite, but the number of them literally hurt my eyes, and all of the youthful age."

Even freedom-loving Korolenko, along with sympathy for the Jews suffering from pogroms, writes in his diary in the spring of 1919: "Among the Bolsheviks are many Jews and Jewish women. And they feature an extreme lack of tact and self-confidence, obvious and annoying ... Bolshevism in the Ukraine has already outlived its usefulness. The Commune meets with hatred throughout. Jewish faces flicker among the Bolshevik leaders (especially in Cheka), re-kindling traditional and very tenacious anti-Semitic instincts."

In the early years of Bolshevik power, the entire Jewish population suffered from overrepresentation not only in the heads of the party and the government, but more

strikingly and more sensitively to the population, in the vast expanses in the provinces and districts, in the middle and lower strata of the middle. There's something odd about the nameless mass of "scabs" who rushed to the aid of the fragile Bolshevik government, and reinforced it, and saved it. In the *Book of Russian Jewry*, we read: "Not to mention the numerous activities of Jewish Bolsheviks, working on the ground as secondary agents of the dictatorship and caused untold misery to the population of the country", adding: "including Jewish."

### **The Murder of the Czar and His Family**

From such a ubiquitous presence of Jews in the Bolshevik ranks in those terrible days and months could not fail to follow the most severe consequences. The most searing event of that time, to this day a fresh and bloody wound in the mind and soul of Russia, was the murder of the royal family. Honesty compels us to admit that Jewish participation on that atrocity was not entirely as decisive and overwhelming as the popular imagination has it, but it was sufficiently bad to leave a permanent stain on the Jewish people for all time. The participation of Russian Jews has always been exaggerated with glee. And this is always so: the dynamics of Jewish involvement (and there are many) cannot be provided on the main lines of action and at crucial points. The actual murder of the royal family was committed with the complicity of the protective detail (and assassins) of Latvians and Russian Magyars, but two of the prominent fatal roles were played by Shai-Philippe Goloshchekin and Yakov Yurovsky.

Let us be clear: the decision to kill was in the hands of Lenin. He dared to commit this murder, correctly

calculating and anticipating the indifference of the Allied powers (in the spring of 1917 the English king had refused Nicholas asylum.) Their weakness not only doomed the Czar, the prince, and the women to immediate death, but also doomed the conservative elements of the Russian people to seven decades of tyranny.

Goloshchekin was exiled to Tobolsk province in 1912 for four years, then in 1917 to the Urals along with Sverdlov. (By the way, in 1918 they were on a “thou” basis, as revealed in their Ekaterinburg telegraph negotiations with Moscow.) Since 1912 Goloshchekin (together with Sverdlov) had been a Party member and was a member of the Central Committee after the October Revolution.

The Secretary of the Perm and Ekaterinburg Gubernia, and the voluminous Ural Regional Committee of the party was the supreme master of all the Urals. The idea of murdering the royal family and the choice of options matured at the top, among Lenin and his entourage, but the deed’s execution was covertly prepared in the Urals by Goloshchekin and Beloborodova (Chairman of the Ural Soviet).

As it turns out, at the beginning of July 1918 Goloshchekin went with the idea to the Kremlin, convinced them of the disadvantages of the “flight of the royal family” option which would cause them simply to disappear, and frankly and directly advocated shooting them and publicly declaring that fact. He came prepared to convince Lenin, but found he did not need to. The only obstacle was that Lenin feared the reaction of the population of Russia and the West. But there were already signs that everything would go smoothly, that the Western powers had quietly written the Romanovs off, and that the murders could proceed without overmuch political risk.

One would think that Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Bukharin would have been consulted on such a decision, but not all of them were then in Moscow owing to their many duties, except for Kamenev, and from what we know of these men there is no reason to assume that any of them would have minded. We know that Trotsky reacted indifferently or with approval. In 1935, he wrote in his diary that after he returned to Moscow he casually asked Sverdlov “Yes, and where is the king?”

‘It’s over,’ he [Sverdlov] said. ‘Shot.’

‘And his family is where?’

‘The family with him.’

‘Is that all?’ I asked, apparently with a touch of surprise.

‘That’s it!’ said Sverdlov ‘But what?’ He waited for my reaction. I said nothing. ‘Who decided?’ I asked.

‘We decided here.’ I asked no more questions in fact, the decision was not only appropriate, but necessary. The execution of the royal family was needed not simply in order to confuse, terrify, and to deprive the enemy of hope, but also to shake up our own ranks, to show that there was no retreat. Ahead lay complete victory, or else complete destruction.”

M. Heifetz has analyzed just who could be on this last Leninist Council, in an attempt to determine whose hands were bloody. Of course, there was Sverdlov himself, the Polish mass murderer Feliks Dzerzhinsky and Vladimir Petrovsky (Cheka), Stuchka (People’s Commissariat) and W. Schmidt. V. I. Lenin, of course, was the king of the Tribunal.

On July 12, 1918 Goloshchekin returned to Yekaterinburg, waiting for the final order from Moscow,

which he presumed would come from Lenin. And Yakov Yurovsky, the watchmaker, the son of a criminal convict at the time exiled to Siberia where he was born, in July 1918 was appointed commandant of the Ipatiev house, where he immediately began planning the operation and organizing the murder technique among Hungarians and Russians, including Pavel Medvedev and Peter Ermakov, and the concealment of the corpses. He laid in the barrels of gasoline and sulfuric acid for the destruction of the carcasses with the help of obkomissar of supply P. L. Voikov.

It is necessary to pursue those shots in the basement meat grinder of the Ipatiev House, and whose shots proved decisive. This could help us to understand the executioners themselves. In the future, Yurovsky with undeniable glee claimed the major credit: "Nikolai was killed on the spot by a bullet my Colt." But the honor was also claimed by Ermakov, "Comrade Mauser." Goloshchekin not looking for fame, but in the next 20 years all knew what he was—a major killer of the king. Even in 1936, touring in Rostov-on-Don at some party conference, he still boasted that from the podium. (A year before he himself was shot.) Yurovsky, who left after the murder for Moscow and then spent a year "working" in the immediate vicinity of Dzerzhinsky as an expert on wet matters, died a natural death.

As throughout the whole revolution, the question of the nationality of the players is a major one. So, the complicity and eclectic participation of diverse nationalities in [former Czarist prime minister] Stolypin's assassination, of course, affected Russian feelings. But the murder of the king's brother, Mikhail Alexandrovich? Who was the killer? Candidates include Andrei Markov, Gavriil Myasnikov Nicholas Zhuzhgov, Ivan Kolpashchikov. Probably all Russian.

## The Jewish Executioners

This is the Revolution of the executioners. And that of the victim? The Bolsheviks shot and drowned whole barges of people, hostages and prisoners: the officers were Russian noblemen. Most of the priests were Russian, most of the men of the Zemstvos (local councils under the Czar) were Russian, the peasants caught hiding in the woods trying to evade the press gangs who were trying to conscript them into the Red Army—Russian. And among the highly spiritual, anti-Semitic Russian intelligentsia, men and women alike descended into the cellars of death. And if you could assemble today a comprehensive list of those who were shot and drowned and hanged from September 1918 on into the first years of Soviet power, and bring arrange them into statistical tables by nationality, we would be amazed how in these tables the Revolution did not show to its international character, but anti-Slav. (As dreamed of by Marx and Engels.)

We would see in cold print the cruel face of the revolution in that which most clearly defines it, in who it destroyed. We would see the long list of names, page after page of the irrevocably and irretrievably dead, a large part of a whole Russian generation taken away from our Motherland by this dirty revolution, the loss of whom doomed our land and whose blood lies on history like a stain which we can never wash out, even did we wish to. Instead we have always sought to forget.

In these months Lenin never lost sight of the Jewish question. Already in April 1918, the Council of People's Commissars region published in *Izvestia* a circular to the

Soviets on the issue of anti- Semitic pogrom agitation with accounts of alleged anti-Jewish pogroms in some unnamed towns of the Moscow region. We also have records of special meetings of the Council devoted to the Jewish question and anti-Semitism, and lectures and meetings within the campaign. However, who is the main culprit to be destroyed? Well, of course—Orthodox priests! Paragraph One stated: “Pay attention to the most serious anti-Semitic propaganda of the Black-Hundred clergy, and take the most decisive measures against these counter-revolutionary activities and against the propaganda of the clergy.” The exact nature of these “decisive measures” is not stated, but we may take a good guess. Along with this we have Paragraph 2: “To recognize the need not to create a special battle unit of the Jewish organizations.” (That is a previously discussed Jewish guard.) And in paragraph Four the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs together with the Military Commissariat are assigned the duty of “preventive measures against Jewish pogroms.”

In the midst of this very 1918, Lenin made a gramophone-recorded special speech about anti-Semitism and the Jews. The upshot of it is: This is a “damned czarist monarchical darkness” which possesses workers and peasants and incites them against the Jews. Czarist police arranged the pogroms, in alliance with the landowners and the capitalists. Hostility towards Jews is firmly held only where the bondage of the landowners and capitalists has created hopeless darkness in the minds of the workers and peasants. “The majority of the Jews are workers. They our brothers in the oppression of capital, our comrades in the struggle for socialism. Shame on accursed Czarism! Shame on those who sow hatred towards the Jews!” Copies of this gramophone record along with printing plates for the text of

that speech were then transported by train to the front, and to towns and villages across the land. There gramophones played the speech in clubs, at meetings and gatherings. The soldiers, workers and peasants listened to the words of their leader and began to realize what was going on, or so the story went, but the speech was not officially printed and acknowledged by the party until 1926, in the book by Agursky senior.

On July 27, 1918, immediately after the execution of the royal family, the CPC issued a special law on anti-Semitism: “The Council of People’s Commissars of the anti-Semitic movement announces a danger to the cause of workers’ and peasant’s revolution.” And at the end “People’s Commissars Council of Deputies requires all to take decisive measures to curb the root of the anti-Semitic movement. Rioters and leading pogrom agitation are prescribed as outlaws.

Signed: V. I. Ulyanov (Lenin).”

These two words are outlawed if someone were not clear in the months of the Red Terror.

Ten years later a communist activist, himself a one-time People’s Commissar and the creator of War Communism, the same Larin, explains to us that the goal was “to put the active anti-Semites outside the law.” That is shoot.

And there’s that famous answer to Dimanshtein Lenin made in 1919. Dimanshtein wanted Lenin to delay the spread of Gorky leaflets containing such fulsome praise of the Jews that they could “create the impression that the revolution rests on the Jews.” Lenin replied, as we have read, that “Immediately after the October Revolution the Jews thwarted sabotage by government officials and rescued the revolution,” and therefore “Gorky’s opinion of the importance of these elements are absolutely correct.” Do not

doubt the *Jewish Encyclopedia*: “Lenin refused to confiscate the mass circulation of Gorky leaflets issued during the Civil War as too philo-Semitic. despite fears that they might become a trump card in the hands of the anti-Semitic enemies of the revolution.”

So, they did, to the White side. Those leaflets were a significant boost to the viewpoint that tended to merge Jewry and Bolshevism. This episode is an example of a pervasive dull, amazing short-sightedness on the part of the leaders of the revolution, and a contemptuous disregard for the growing impressions and feelings among the people who were affected by the participation of Jews.

It was especially manifest in the destruction of the Orthodox clergy. During the summer of 1918 there was a major Bolshevik assault on Orthodox churches in Central Russia, especially in the Moscow region (which was then an area comprising several provinces), and massive waves of parochial riots occurred.

Already in December 1917, construction workers in the Kronstadt fortress could not stand it, and protested. They published a resolution in *Kronstadt Izvestia*: “We, the workers and artisans at our general meeting on this date [December 28], discussed the issue of the arrest and persecution of Orthodox priests. No Jewish rabbi, Mohammedan mullah, Roman Catholic priest and or German pastor but Orthodox priests only are being targeted.” (Note that even on this serf island in the “prison of nations” there were acting churches of all denominations.)

In Arkhangelsk, there was published under the sarcastic headline “Kill the Jews!” the complaint from “conscious Russian workers and peasants” that everywhere churches were being desecrated, defiled, and pillaged.

“Only the Russian Orthodox Church, not the Jewish synagogues ... Death from starvation and disease takes hundreds of thousands of innocent Russian lives. But Jews do not die of hunger and disease.” (In the summer of 1918 there was also a “judicial” matter of anti-Semitism in the St. Basil’s Cathedral.)

Jewish Bolshevik activists poured a persistent rage into the persecution of Orthodoxy (in comparison with other religions) in a most unreasonable way—in the pursuit of priests, in printed mockery of Christ. On August 9, 1920 Patriarch Tikhon wrote to the chairman of the CPC Ulyanov-Lenin (with a copy to the chairman of the Central Executive Committee, Kalinin), demanding the removal of the People’s Commissariat investigator of Spitsbergen, a former divorce lawyer, who was now entrusted by the People’s Commissariat with revision of the power of the Russian Orthodox Church, and who was desecrating crypts and tombs containing the remains of the saints recognized by the Church. Referring to the Constitution of the RSFSR, the Patriarch insisted on challenging the proceedings on grounds that the investigator Svalbard was conducting investigations and interrogations “with prejudice which clearly appears from the previous church processes, and finally as a man publicly insulting religious beliefs and openly sneering at religion in print, in the preface to the book *Religious Plague* (1919) in which he called Jesus Christ terrible names.”

The complaint was sent to the Commissars and considered at a meeting of 2 September 1920 by the very person complained of—Svalbard himself. Resolved: “Dismiss the complaint without action” (unanimously). But Kalinin recalls secretly and stealthily writing to the People’s Commissar of Justice Krasikov that he thinks that for practical political reasons it is necessary to replace Comrade

Svalbard with someone else, because the audience at the trial is likely to be majority Orthodox. This should be done to “deprive the spiritual circles of their main argument about the possibility of national revenge [on the part of the Jews] and so on.”

An autopsy performed on relics? What could explain this mass abuse, so vivid, defiant? How would the Russian populace react? “It’s all rigged by Jews. The Jews crucified Christ himself!” Would not such a spectacle be irresponsible on the part of those who’s newly acquired power was not as yet secure? Practical objections, not moral ones.

Bulgakov followed the fate of Orthodoxy under the Bolsheviks especially closely. He wrote in 1941 that the Soviet persecution of Christianity, “surpassed in ferocity and size of all the previous ones that history has ever known. Of course, it can not be entirely attributed to Jews, but its impact cannot be denied or and belittled. The most apparent strength of Bolshevism is the volition and energy of the Jews. The Jewish stake in Russian Bolshevism alas is prohibitively large and disproportionate. And it is, above all, a sin against the Holy One of Israel whom the Jews claim to revere. Not the Holy One of Israel but strong Jewish will manifest itself as power, Bolshevism, strangling the Russian people. The persecution of Christianity stems from the ideological and practical program of Bolshevism in general, without distinction of nationality, but it has been exercised to the greatest extent by Jewish commissars in the name of atheism, as spearheaded by the Gubelmanom-Yaroslavl Union of Militant Atheists, in the face of the entire Russian Orthodox people as an act of religious insolence.”

And too, there was the visual chutzpah of renaming the cities and places. To be sure, this custom was not Jewish in essence, but common Soviet practice. But can we say that

to the inhabitants of Gatchina which was turned into Trotsky was conveyed no national flavor? Pavlovsk became Slutsk. Palace Square in Uritskogo became Volodarsky. Vladimir Square became Nakhimson, Admiralty Embankment became Roshal, the beautiful St. Michael was renamed after the mediocre artist Isaac Brodsky. Not the “Holy One of Israel” but strong Jewish will be manifesting itself as power, Bolshevism strangling the Russian people. Forgotten. Dizzy. Elizavetgrad is Zinovievgrad and then gone. The city where the king was killed is re-named in honor of the murderer Sverdlov. Obviously, the idea of national revenge on the part of Jewish Bolsheviks was developed in the Russian consciousness already by 1920, since even Kalinin warned against it in the documents of the Soviet government.

Of course, Pasmanik's was the best refutation: “For evil or stupid people everything is explained very simply: the Jewish Kahal decided to take over Russia, and wreak Jewish vengeance over the past persecution to which Jews were subjected to in this country.” Of course, you cannot explain the victory and domination of the Bolsheviks in this way. However, if the 1905 massacre lived in the memory of your family and if in 1915 your countrymen were expelled from the western provinces with whips, then after some 3-4 years you could be avenged with a sweep of the whip and a bullet from a revolver. We will not speculate on the extent to which Jewish communists consciously avenged themselves on Russia, destroying, crushing everything Russian; but that the feeling existed cannot be denied, nor can the question of the connection of the king to previous Jewish inequality be disregarded as part of the motivation for his murder and the death of the royal family.

But I. M. Bickerman, confronting the fact of such exorbitant participation of Jews in barbaric destruction, and

apparently responding to those who reckoned the Jews had a right to revenge for past persecution, denied this right. “Persecution undoubtedly pushed many Jews onto the path of revolution, but the responsibility for the destructive zeal of our fellows who used the state for blood vengeance differs from person to person and one team to the other.” Surveying the historical destiny of the Jews in 1939, under the ominous cloud of a new era, he said that the

Jewish people were ultimately doomed, because “Jews could only be an anvil and never hammer.”

I am not going to delve into the historical fate of the world, and will not undertake to argue in this volume, but the history of the world demonstrates, not just in the eighteenth year of the 20th century in Russia, that where communism is concerned Jews were not just also the hammer, but a fair amount of its mass.

And then echoing all this comes Pasternak.

Pasternak and I were of different generations, but we lived through the same Twenties and Thirties. It was the same country before our eyes, at different ages, but we lived there the same span of time. A contemporary of those years must be bewildered: Pasternak did not notice what was happening? How could that be? His parents, his artist father, a pianist mother, belonged to the circle of highly cultured and largely assimilated Jews who lived life within the Russian intelligentsia and who had grown into a great tradition of Russian culture that had given us the brothers Rubinstein, shrill Levitan, Gershenzon, Frank. Perhaps the events going on all around him just did not fall into the retina of his eye, the ugliness and the deviation from civilized norms. But these things were noted and were printed by thousands of others. Here, witnessing the same year, again Bickerman: “The too conspicuous participation of Jews in the Bolshevik

madness makes us fear to look the Russian people and the world in the eye."

No, the Jews were the main driving force behind the October Revolution. Moreover, that revolution was not necessary to the Russian Jews, who had already gained their freedom in its fullness during the initial revolution in February. But when change finally occurred, active young secularized Jews quickly and easily committed themselves to a shining knight on a horse, and with no less confidence hurtled into the Bolshevik abyss.

Looking for motives of this dynamic jump of the new Jewish youth to the winners, Mr. Landau calls: "They acted out of anger against the old world and alienation, but they acted with that peculiar rationalism so often inherent to the Jews," and "willfully destroyed their own souls." And there was the extenuating explanation: "The material conditions after the Bolshevik revolution created an environment that made the Jews go to the Bolsheviks."

This explanation is quite common: that 42 percent of the Jewish population of Russia were engaged in trade, and now they lost it, so in their hopelessness, where do they go? In order, not to starve to death, they were forced to work for the government, for they were not able to disdain any work. Despite the overbearing administration, they had to go to the Soviet apparatus where the number of Jewish employees from the beginning of the October Revolution was great.

There was no exit? Meanwhile tens of thousands of Russian officials refused to serve Bolshevism. Where did they go? To die of hunger? And what of the Jews of the towns? Yes, even after all aid from the Joint, ORT and the like from the generosity of the Jews from the West? Going into service in the KGB is never the only way out. There is at least one more. Not to flee, but to stand. And it happened,

thought Pasmanik, that “Bolshevism brought hunger. In Jewish towns there had always been the same professions, tailoring, brokerage and so on. These trades now no longer existed. Given that fact, it is possible to say with a good conscience, and 70 years later, that for those who did not want to emigrate to the United States to become Americans, and did not want to emigrate to Palestine, to remain Jews, the only way out was Communism.” Again the “only way out.” Here it is, a renunciation of historical responsibility.

The people who endured such persecution in all its historical extent could not help but be a large part of the carriers of the revolutionary internationalist doctrine of socialism, because it gave its Jewish followers hope to end their ancient status as outcasts, and on this earth, not in the ghostly Palestine of their forefathers. And then in the course of the civil war and immediately after it, they were often more competitive than the nominees of the root bottom, filled with a social void created by the revolution. But as part of this process they predominantly broke with their folk and spiritual tradition, and they were followed by assimilated Jews, especially during the first Bolshevik generation.

Yet, ask: how come the age-old traditions of this ancient culture were so powerless against the barbaric passions and the revolutionary slogans of Bolshevism? When the greater Russia tried to shake off socialism and the revolution, only the Jews with all their strength and energy turned out to have “no way out.” The Jews found themselves without engaging ideas, with a puzzled sympathy for what is happening and a perplexed helplessness in relation to its results. How came it that large segments of Jewry enthusiastically (and unforgivably for a people with a millennial history of persecution) took to the revolution?

How did rationalistic and sober Jewish people become so intoxicated by revolutionary phraseology?

Pasmanik mentions “There were those Jews who loudly declared the genetic connection between Bolshevism and Judaism, who loudly boasted of the broad sympathies of the Jewish masses to the rule of the commissars.” However, Pasmanik himself singled out “those aspects that at first glance seemed created for a rapprochement between Judaism and Bolshevism, such as earthly happiness and social justice. Was it not Judaism that first put forward these two great principles?”

Substantive discussion of this issue is found in the Anglo-Jewish newspaper *Jewish Chronicle* in the same year of 1919. The paper appears more enthusiastic and revolutionary even than the previous year. A columnist calling himself Mentor wrote that “The Jews be unwise to pretend that they do not have any connection with Bolshevism.” In America, Rabbi Dr. Judah Magnes supported the Bolsheviks, clearly not considering the phenomenon of Bolshevism to be incompatible with Judaism. And he’s just one: the attitude seems to have been that Bolshevism was great evil, yes, but paradoxically the hope of humanity. Magnes went beyond the promises of the Bolsheviks. “The French Revolution was also bloody, but justified by history. A Jew is by nature an idealist. It is significant that so many Jews are Bolsheviks; that the ideals of Bolshevism at many points are consistent with the highest ideals of Judaism, partly form the basis for the teaching of the founder of Christianity. All thinking Jews must consider this carefully, and avoid the recklessness of seeing only Bolshevism’s repulsive aspects.”

However, should not Judaism above all recall the one great God? Even if only for the reason that He is incompatible with godless Bolshevism?

All the thinking, all the looking for the motives of so many Jewish participants in the Bolshevik enterprise. I.M. Bickerman writes: "It would be possible in the face of such facts to despair for the future of our people if we did not know that of all epidemics, the worst is verbal infection. To speak of why the Jewish consciousness was so receptive to this kind of infection would be take too long. The reasons lie not only in the circumstances of yesterday, but also in the what was inherited by us from an antiquity of submission, a Jewish predisposition to subversive ideology."

Join us and Bulgakov, "The presence of Jews in Russian Bolshevism is by no means a legitimate face of Israel. It has created in the soul of Israel a terrifying spiritual crisis, accompanied by brutality."

As for the argument about the harassment experienced in the past as the root cause of this jump from Russian Jews to Bolsheviks, we should further consider the two communist coups elsewhere in Europe which occurred almost simultaneously with that of Lenin, in Bavaria and Hungary. We read in I. Levin: "The number of Jews who are members of the Bolshevik régime in both countries is enormous. In Bavaria, we find among the commissars the Jews Levin and

Axelrod, the anarchist ideologist Landauer, the playwright Ernst Toller."

The leadership of the Bolshevik movement in Hungary reached 95 percent. In the meantime, the legal status of Jews in Hungary was fine. There were no restrictions on the rights of the Jews, and legal discrimination no longer existed there. On the contrary, the Jews in Hungary

occupied cultural and economic positions which legitimately allowed the anti-Semites to speak of Jewish domination. Here you can add a note from a contemporary prominent Jewish journalist in America, to the effect that German Jews “have flourished and achieved a high position in Germany.” So here there is no persecution that forced the Jewish people to become revolutionaries. No pogroms.

The Bolshevik-backed coups in Hungary and Bavaria were instigated significantly by propagandized “returning prisoners.” Those two revolutions we even touch on in Chapter XVI. All those insurgents and those beyond the ocean united and erupted in an outburst of unbridled revolutionary internationalism, the rush to a permanent world revolution. But the success of Jews in the Bolshevik administration was rather clearly seen in Europe and in the United States, and by and large met with the support of their co-religionists. The American Jewish community in particular met the turn from February to October with almost completely unanimous approval and joy.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks did not doze in their overseas transactions, mainly through Stockholm. From the April 1917 return to Russia of Lenin and his cohorts in the infamous sealed train, the party received hidden help from German sources through the Swedish “Nya Banken” Olof Aschberg. But some Russian bankers also hastened the revolution by become voluntary Bolsheviks. American researcher Anthony Sutton, managed, albeit with a delay of half a century, to locate important archival documents. He informs us that according to a report in 1918, directed from the American ambassador in Stockholm to the State Department, one of these Bolshevik bankers was the infamous Dmitry Rubinstein, freed from prison by the February Revolution. He was moved to Stockholm and

became the financial agent of the Bolsheviks. Another Bolshevik banker was Abram Zhivotovsky, a relative of Trotsky and Lev Kamenev. The syndicate included, with Zhivotovsky, Denisov from the former Siberian Bank, Kamenka from the Azov-Don Bank and David of the Bank for Foreign Trade. Other Bolshevik bankers were Gregory Lessin, Stifter, Jacob Berlin and the agent Isidore Cohn.

Meanwhile, thousands of Jews sailed from America to return to Russia. These were partly returning exiles and partly latter-day revolutionaries who dreamed of building a new happy world. Some of these we have already discussed in Chapter XIV. They sailed and sailed across the oceans, month after month, from the New York Harbor to the east, from San Francisco in the west, some of them past Russian subjects, and some just American enthusiasts who did not know a word of the Russian language.

In 1919 A.V. Tyrkova-Williams wrote in a book published in England: "Among the Bolshevik leadership there are very few Russians. A few people have embraced all-Russian culture and the interests of the Russian people, but along with obvious foreigners Bolshevism has attracted many followers, including a number of immigrants who have lived many years abroad. Some had never been to Russia. Among them are a great many Jews. They speak Russian badly. The people over whom they have seized power are alien to them, and they behave like the victors in a conquered country. And if in Czarist Russia Jews were not allowed to hold public posts and schools and public services were closed to them, in the Soviet Republic all the committees and offices are filled with Jews. They often change their Jewish names to Russian ones, but this masquerade fools nobody."

Also in 1919, at the Senate hearings on the commission Overmena, we hear from R. B.

Dennis, a university professor in Illinois, who arrived in Russia in November 1917: "I think differently from the views of other Americans, British and French. These people developed in Russia the greatest cruelty and rigor on the question of violence against the bourgeoisie. Another indication: of those who lead the murderous propaganda and fight in the trenches, and in the rear, some lived in New York, a year or two ago." (i.e., 1917-1918).

In February 1920 in the London *Sunday Herald* (in the article *Zionism versus Bolshevism: The Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People*),

Winston Churchill wrote: "Now the gang of notable personalities hiding in the big cities of Europe and America have grabbed the Russian people by the hair and throat, and became undisputed masters of the vast Russian empire."

Among those who came from across the ocean there are many famous names, even more is unknown. There was M. M. Gruzenberg. He has been in England (where he met Sun Yat-sen), long lived in the United States, where he organized the Chicago school for immigrants, in July 1918 he returned to Moscow. In 1919, he was Consul General of the Russian Federation in Mexico. In the same year, he was prominent in the central organs of the Comintern. He worked in Scandinavia, Switzerland, was arrested in Scotland, and in 1923, using the name Borodin, he was in China as the chief political adviser to the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee, during which time he promoted Mao Tse-tung and Chou Enlai. However, Chiang Kai-shek saw through subversion of Gruzenberg-Borodin and in 1927 expelled him from China. But Gruzenberg survived all the dangers in the USSR in 1937. In the Soviet-German war he was (at

Dridze-Lozovsky) editor in chief of our domestic News. And in 1951, shot. (On Jewish Bolsheviks shot in the 30s see Chapter XIX.)

There was Agursky, who became one of the leaders of Belarus, then was arrested in 1938 and sent into exile. His father who predeceased him was the journalist M. Agursky; the son took a path far to the left of his father's.

There was Solomon Slepak, a prominent member of the Comintern, who returned in 1919 via Vladivostok to participate there in bloody deeds, then traveled to China in 1921 to lure Sun Yat-sen into an alliance with the communists. (His son Vladimir gained renown as a "refusenik" who spent most of his life trying to escape from the trap his father spent much of his life building.) The members of the Jewish Commissariat, S.R. Dobkovsky, the same Agursky, Cantor, Shapiro and more were former anarchists, immigrants who arrived from London and New York, alienated from the Russian Jewry over whom they were given authority. The task of the Commissariat was to serve as the center of the Jewish communist movement. In August 1918, the neo-communist Yiddish newspaper *Der Emes* [Truth] announced "the beginning of the proletarian dictatorship in the Jewish street" and openly opposed the rabbis and denounced the Talmud-Torah. In June 1919 Agursky and Stalin dissolved the Central Bureau of Jewish Communities, representing the conservative part of the Jewish population who did not accept the Bolshevik party.

It remains a true observation that the thrust of most Jewish socialists was mostly not toward the Bolsheviks. But what and where were the other parties? Strengthening their positions in the Yevsektsiya [Jewish Section] which contributed to the collapse of a number of old Jewish political parties such as the Bund, the Zionists and Socialist Poalei, all

eventually split, and a significant portion of their leaders defected to the camp of the winners and repudiated ideas of democratic socialism, leaders such as Rafes, M. Esther Frumkin, A. Weinstein, M. Litvakov.

How? And the Bund, whose militancy in the revolution of 1905 was so implacable even to the Leninist line, especially about a fundamental cultural-national autonomy for the Jews? After the establishment of Soviet power in Russia, the Bund leadership split into right and left (1920). A significant part of the right elected to emigrate, and the left dissolved the Bund (1921) and partially accepted the Communist Party, and served it. This included former Bundists such as

\*David Zaslavsky, who for decades was a star of Stalin's sarcastic journalism. He was the one in charge of castigating Mandelstam and Pasternak.

\*The Leplevsky brothers, Israel and Gregory. Israel defected to the Bolsheviks in 1918 and went on to a lifelong plunge into Chekism. In 1920 Gregory took a prominent position in the NKVD, going on to become Deputy Commissar, then the chairman of People's Commissars of the RSFSR, then the Attorney General of the USSR. Arrested in 1939.

\*Solomon Kotlyar immediately strode to the become first secretary of Orenburg, Vologda, the Provincial Committee of the Terek, and the Orlovsky District Committees of the Communist Party.

\*Abraham Heifetz: returned to Russia after February 1917, entered the presidium of the main committee of the Bund in the Ukraine and became a member of the Central Committee of the Bund, but in October 1917 flipped to become the head of the Comintern .

In the 1926 census two and a half thousand former Bundists are registered as members of the RCP. Of course, some of them later fell under the wheels, and under Stalin most of them were subjected to severe persecution.

Bickerman exclaims: "The Bund played the role of a representative of the Jewish working masses, but took more and more active part in Bolshevism." And David Azbel in his memoir partly explains the reasons for the transition of his uncle, Aaron Isaakovich Weinstein, a big Bundist: "He grasped earlier than others that his party, as well as other socialist parties, was doomed. He understood that he and others could only survive and protect the interests of the

Jews if they adhered to the Bolsheviks."

For how many was there also a motive in the communist transition to: 1) survive; 2) to protect the interests of the Jews? At the time, they managed to do both. After October the other socialist parties, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, in which as we know the Jews had leaders in abundance, did nothing effectively to stop Bolshevism; they even submitted to the fact that the Bolsheviks dispersed the Constituent Assembly. They hesitated, hesitated, temporized, they were too split, they declared neutrality in the Civil War while the Bolsheviks opened a section of the Eastern Front and took the decomposing white rear.

But to be sure, among the leaders of the working resistance to the Bolsheviks in 1918 we can find Jewish names; among the 26 signatories to the Taganka prison "Open Letter to the Prisoners in the Case of a Labor Congress" Hebrew names, apparently, a quarter. And to these Mensheviks the Bolsheviks were merciless. In February 1921 in Petrograd the Mensheviks supported the dissatisfaction of angry and deceived workers, while pushing

them to protests and strikes, but hesitantly. They did not have the courage to lead the way at the time of the Kronstadt uprising. And still they were punished.

Many Mensheviks defected to the Bolsheviks; in the early days, the change of party label was attainable with relative ease.

\*Boris Magidov became political commissar of the Tenth Army, then the whole of the Donbas, the secretary of the Poltava and Samara Gubernia, the instructor of the Central Committee. \*Abram Deborin was promoted over all the Red Professors, and gave us lessons in dialectical and historical materialism);

\*Alexander Goyhbarg, Sibrevkom, the prosecutor at the trial of Kolchak's ministers, board chairman of the People's Commissariat and the Small Sovnarkom).

\*I. Lyakhovetsky-May one of many others crushed by allegations of a "Menshevik Union Bureau" in 1931, along with Himmer and Sukhanov, the theorist tactics of the Executive Committee in March 1917. When the Father of the Peoples decided there was a large roundup of them throughout the Union.

From the ranks of the SRs [Socialist Revolutionaries] who went over to Lenin may be noted Yakov Livshits, from 1919 deputy chairman of the Chernigov Gubierna Cheka, then on to Kharkov, then the chairman of the Kiev Cheka from which position he quickly moved up to deputy chairman of the Ukrainian GPU.

Of the defectors from the anarcho-communists Lazar Kogan stands out. After a more than usually bloody career in the Cheka, in 1930 Kogan became the head of GULAG and as well wore the extra hat of the White Sea Canal

NKVD. He was shot in 1939 after writing cringeing letters to Yezhov from his cell, begging for mercy.

There is the altogether meandering biography of Ilya Keith Viytenko, a lieutenant in the Austrian army, who came to Russia as a prisoner of war. He joined with the Bolsheviks and went on to junior command positions in the Cheka-GPU, then the army, and in 30 years he became one of the reformers of the Red Army.

And what of the Zionists? We remember that in 1906, they agreed and proclaimed that they cannot stay away from the all-Russian struggle against the autocratic oppression and are actively involved in it. Contrary to this, in May 1918, when the all-Russian oppression is by no means less, they announce that in matters of domestic policy they will now be neutral, apparently hoping to prevent the Bolsheviks from charging them as counterrevolutionaries.

At first it worked. All through 1918 and half of 1919 the Bolsheviks let them slide. In the summer of 1918 Zionist still held positions in the Moscow All-Russian Congress of Jewish Communities, and in hundreds of communities “Palestinian Week” was celebrated without obstacle. Their newspaper *Hechalutz* [Youth] was allowed. Then in the spring of 1919 there some local authorities began to close down the Zionist press. In the fall of 1919 other Zionists were taken into custody (“spying for Britain.”) In the spring of 1920 the Zionists staged a Russian conference in Moscow, but all its participants (90 people) were planted in the Butyrka, and got some time. The Presidium of the Cheka announced that the Zionist ideal was counterrevolutionary, and Zionist activity was banned in Soviet Russia. After that the Zionists fled Russia or else began to go underground.

The thoughtful M. Heifetz appropriately reminds us that the October Revolution coincided exactly with the

Balfour Declaration, the first real step towards the creation of an independent Jewish state. And what? “Part of the Jewish generation of that time followed Herzl and Jabotinsky. The other part [and he added a lot of great Jews] could not stand the temptation and filled the gang of Lenin and Trotsky and Stalin.” The very thing that Churchill was afraid of. The way of Herzl then seemed distant and almost unreal. The way of Trotsky and Bagritsky allowed Jews immediately to become not just an equal nation in Russia, but a privileged élite.

The most prominent defector from Zionism to Bolshevism, of course, was Lev Mehklis of Poalei Zion. His career is well known: he was a member of Stalin’s secretariat and served on the editorial board of *Pravda*, he was Chief of the Political Administration of the Red Army, the first deputy People’s Commissar of Defense, People’s Commissar of State Control, and the destroyer of our Crimean troops in 1942. And afterward came membership Orgburo and burial in the Kremlin wall.

Of course, there was a significant layer of Russian Jewry which did not accept Bolshevism. Rabbis, lecturers and famous doctors did not rush into the arms of the Bolsheviks, nor did the mass of ordinary people. Tyrkova writes in the same place of the book: “This Jewish predominance among the Soviet authorities was the despair of those Russian Jews who, despite the cruel injustice of the Czarist regime in Russia sought to live a common life in a common homeland with the Russian intelligentsia, and refused in any way to cooperate with the Bolsheviks.” But they were not allowed a public voice. These pages are not occupied by their names, because the winners control events.

Towering separately over the epoch are two famous terrorist acts, both committed by Jewish hands against the

Bolsheviks in 1918: the murder of Cheka commissar Moisei Uritsky by Leonid Kannegisser, and the unsuccessful attempt with a pistol on the life of Lenin by Fanya Kaplan. In this as well, it was Jewish destiny to be among the first.

When Kaplan fired at Lenin it appeared that the Socialist Revolutionaries were clearly behind it, and this is now the accepted version of events. But in the case of Kannegisser, who was a hereditary nobleman who inherited a title from his grandfather, who joined the Cadets in the summer of 1917 and who by the way was a friend of the poet Sergei Yesenin, I fully accept the explanation of Brand Aldanova: he was motivated by a desire to vindicate and clear the name of the Jewish people who were being accused, with such clear reason, of responsibility for Bolshevism and its horrors. Kannegisser wanted to provide to himself, to the Russian people, and to history a counterweight to oppose against names like Uritsky and Zinoviev—a Jewish name. In this spirit, before he left home with his gun in his pocket, he passed a note to his sister that he was committing the act to avenge the disgraceful Brest-Litovsk peace, and from feelings of humiliation at Jewish participation in the establishment of the Bolsheviks and the Cheka.

Recent research has raised a number of questions regarding the precise nature and genesis of both of these attacks. Suggestive theories have been advanced as to why Fanny Kaplan was not shot by the bodyguards, but on direct order from Lenin himself, shouted to his men even as he leaned against his car bleeding from his wounds, she was wrestled down and captured for the purpose of closing the investigation, a handy random victim. There are arguments that supposedly, in the case of Kannegisser, the authorities deliberately created the conditions for him to be shot down on the street as he fled from the British Embassy in

Petrograd, where he had briefly taken shelter but which for some reason he left.

In the second case, I frankly doubt the conspiratorial version of events very much. I find it hard to believe that the pragmatic Bolsheviks would sacrifice a ruthless and efficient secret policeman like Uritzky, whose chilling attributes were badly needed to keep the fledgling régime alive, purely for the sake of making some obscure and esoteric propaganda point. Nor in those early days did Bolsheviks settle their own internal intrigues with blood; that would come years later.

I do find it peculiar, though, that in the time of the Red Terror, when countless thousands of people were being shot down like rabbits all over the country, almost all of them absolutely innocent hostages, in this case where there was in fact a bloody act of counterrevolution committed and the entire family of the assassin arrested by the Cheka as per custom, then after the mildest of questioning and without even so much as a love tap with a truncheon or a detached table leg, the whole Kannegisser family was *released from prison*, and so far as anyone knows never molested further. Some were allowed to go abroad and the rest continued to live in the area of Petrograd. How in the name of the devil did that happen? How did this miraculous deliverance come about? It must have come down from the loftiest of Bolshevik summits. From recent publications, I learn further that relatives and friends developed plans for an armed raid on the Petrograd Cheka to release Leonid, before they learned that he lay dead in the street outside the British Embassy. The theory which has been offered for this extraordinary leniency is that in those perilous early times, when the uncertain régime was dependent for its very survival on an army of youthful Jewish clerks and bureaucrats, never mind homicidal Jewish commissars of

whom Trotsky was the monarch and exemplar, they did not want to quarrel with the influential Jewish circles in Petrograd.

The Kannegisser family preserved and practiced the Jewish faith, and his mother Rosalia Eduardovna during one of her interrogations said that Leonid killed Moisei Uritsky because he “went from the Jews,” i.e. abandoned his religion. And such bold and open people were *released*? Strange days indeed!

Another Jewish name which is still little-known, undeservedly so, rather than glorified as should be as the name of a hero of the underground anti-Bolshevik movement, is that of Alexander A. Vilenkin. At age 17 years he volunteered for the war in 1914 and served as an officer in the Hussars; he received four decorations including the George Cross, and by the time of the revolution was a staff captain. In 1918, he became involved in the underground “Union for the Protection of the Motherland and Freedom”; the Cheka arrested him because of the failure of the organization to destroy documents. Organized, intelligent, energetic, and uncompromising to the Bolsheviks, he spent his time in hiding and in prison and inspired many others to resist until he was shot. Data about him comes from his partner in the underground in 1918, and then a cellmate in a Soviet prison in 1919, Vasily Fedorovich Klementev, a captain of the old Russian army.

These fighters against Bolshevism, whatever their motives, we remember as heroes and Jews. Like all White forces in the Civil War, they tried and failed to halt the oncoming cataclysm. Sadly, they were not enough.

## **The Bolshevik High Life**

Jews who occupied Bolshevik positions acquired all the advantages of life, especially in the capitals, with “orphan” apartments from fleeing “former” people. Almost all of the former Pale of Settlement flowed into the cities. Of this great “exodus” G.A. Landau wrote: “The Jews are closer to the power and occupied various government heights. Having taken this place, of course, like every social stratum they are in a purely domestic way dragging behind them their relatives, friends, childhood friends, young girlfriends, it is a natural process to grant positions to people you know and trust.” This process extraordinarily multiplied the number of Jews in the Soviet apparatus. Not to mention how many relatives come in large numbers thanks to the legendary generous hand of Zinoviev and his wife, Lili. Odessa masses moved to Moscow. Why, Trotsky gave his state farm near Moscow to his beloved father.

These movements can be tracked and biographies assembled. Here is an account by David (not to be confused with Mark) Azbel. In 1919, when he was a kid, he moved from his native Chernigov to Moscow. Already he had two aunts living there, the first one in Gagarin Lane, the already mentioned Aunt Ida, a prosperous merchant’s wife of the first guild, and her husband Misha. They had returned from America. Then there was another aunt, Lele, in the First House of Soviets (National), where she lived in a large apartment. One of their neighbors was V. V. Ulrikh, later famed for his role as the judge in the show trials of the 1930s. Ulrikh made a joke: “It is strange why the National does not open a synagogue. The people living here are almost exclusively Jews.” There was a restaurant for the inhabitants of the house, and from a closed distributor it received abundant rations. Eggs, cheese, butter, and filets did not

vanish from the table even in the cruel starvation year of 1920.

Everything was special, especially for the new élite: kindergartens, schools, clubs and libraries. In 1921/22, in the Volga region, amid mass death from hunger, in their experimental model school canteens provided by the ARA Foundation there was American breakfast: a sweet rice porridge, cocoa, white bread and scrambled eggs. And no one remembered how the cadres had just bawled in the classroom that all the bourgeois need to be hanged from lamp posts.

The boys from the neighboring houses hated the children from the National and at every opportunity they were mercilessly beaten. On the arrival of the NEP, *[New Economic Program, Lenin's brief return to limited free enterprise when even he was forced to concede that communism wasn't working]* the inhabitants of the National began to move into comfortable apartments, mansions formerly owned by the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie.

In 1921 there was a sweltering summer in Moscow. David Azbel recalls: "So I was invited to the country near Moscow, on a confiscated estate. Everything remained from the time of the former owners; we just added more fencing and set guards on the gate. *Komissarshi* children started to go to the best foreign resorts. At that time, there was devastation throughout the land, lack of shelter and goods for profitable resale and speculation. The merchants and owners of huge numbers of factories had fled abroad. Aunt Ida and Uncle Misha secretly bought and sold and trafficked in every type of contraband, and became probably the richest people in Moscow. But in 1926 Misha was imprisoned for five years for economic counter-revolution. At the end of the NEP, he was given an added 10 more years in the camps."

When the Bolsheviks became the government all the members of the Jewish *lumpenproletariat* saw an opportunity to get for the first time a piece of the pie. When open trade a private enterprise was officially banned, in many Jewish families there was a revolution in family life. “For the most part mature people are degraded, and the boys and teens, devoid of spiritual and social ballast, making a career [in government work] and proving better breadwinners than their seniors ...” Note: The author does not justify this process as the only way, and bitterly sees that this destructive process was not properly met with resistance among the Jews, but found eager participants and sympathetic soil.

So many Jews became engaged in the Soviet ruling class. So many. And so many doors were at the same time quietly but firmly closed in the faces of the Russian lower classes. How did the man in the street respond to this? With rhymes: “Rose of the Economic Council, the husband of Heikki Cheka.”

Or anecdotes: “Moscow has already sown in the eighteenth year Vysotsky tea, Brodsky sugar, Russian Trotsky.”

And from the Ukraine: “Hope, my Grechanik!”

*[These lose quite a bit in the translation.]*

And there grew a widespread yet defiant unofficial slogan: “We want Soviets, not Jews!”

The co-authors of the book *Russia and the Jews* wrote anxiously in 1924: “It is clear that not all Jews served the Bolsheviks and the Bolsheviks were not all Jews.” But it is not necessary for a long time now to prove excessively zealous Jewish involvement in the torture of half-dead Russians. What must be decided is how Jewish involvement in the disastrous facts should be reflected in the minds of the Russian people.

The Russian had never seen a Jew in power, yet now he saw it at every turn: Jews wielding a power which was brutal and unlimited. When discussing the issue of Jewish responsibility for the Bolsheviks, we must take into account the psychology of the Gentiles, all those Russian people who were directly affected by the misdeeds of the Jewish communists. Those Jewish public figures who want to prevent bloody tragedy in the future and rescue Jews from Russian pogroms need to take this into account. It is necessary to understand the psychology of the Russian people, when they suddenly found themselves ruled over by Jews who considered them filthy scum, arrogant and rude and impudent. They must take the feelings of the victimized nation into consideration not just out of a duty to remember history, nor for purposes of recrimination, but to explain clearly and openly how and why this happened, this inordinate Jewish participation in the revolution from 1918 on. To ignore the issue is not only insensitive to the Russian people's still-remembered pain, not just at odds with Russian historical truth, but excuses and shrugs off the worst terror one group of human beings have ever inflicted upon others.

The issue of Jewish participation in the Bolshevik madness is not a question of power. When we talk about the abundance of Jewish names in the management of the revolutionary

Russia, this is not a new picture. How many names of Baltic Germans were in control of Czarist

Russia? Question: in which direction for the country and the people has this government has acted?

But think about the Jewish Bolsheviks. This period of the history of the Jews affects much on the world in one way or another to this day. Is it in the spirit of sober historical perspective to ignore the massive participation of Jews in the

Bolshevik administration and Bolshevik atrocities with the dismissive response “They were scum, detached from Judaism, so why do we have to answer for them?”

DM Navigator rightly reminds me of my words regarding all the Communist leaders of any nation, “They went back on their nationality, surrendering to inhumanity.” Right. But true to the words of Pasmanik in the 20s: “Let all thoughtful Russian people respond to one question: could the Bolsheviks, even with Lenin at its head, have won if Russia were well-fed, and had provided land and culture to the peasantry? Could all the Elders of Zion together, even headed by Trotsky, have wrought such great havoc in Russia by themselves?” He’s right, of course. They could not.

Right. But true to the words of Pasmanik in the 20s: “We cannot limit ourselves to the statement that the Jewish people are not responsible for these or any other actions of its individual members. We are responsible for Trotsky, as we dissociated ourselves from him.” This topic must not be fenced off. At the very least the present day Jewish people need to renounce their actions and learn from this lesson.

Carefully working on a biography of Trotsky, I agree with the opinion that he did not have a specific strong Jewish attachment, but was a sincere ardent internationalist. So, this would be a Tribesman easy to condemn? But with the rising star of Trotsky, in the autumn of 1917, he became the pride of too many, almost an idol of the radical left-wing circles of American Jewry.

50 years ago, there was sitting with me in the camp a young man, Vladimir Gershuni - a passionate socialist and internationalist. In the 60s, we met on the outside, and on some occasion he gave me his notes. And in them he asserts that Trotsky was a Prometheus in October, “He was a Prometheus, not because he was such a freak, but because he

was a child of the people, a Prometheus who even when he was chained to a rock, his anger blunted with chains of secret and open hostility, did so much for humanity.”

All researchers who do not approve the participation of Jews in the revolution tend not to recognize these Jews by their nationality. Those who interpret the Jewish hegemony in early Bolshevism as a victory of the Jewish spirit, among them many Israeli historians, have enthusiastically praised their Jewish identity.

Already in the 20s, just after the Civil War, there were sounded *otrechnye* arguments. In the book, *Russian Jews* I.O. Levin analyzes: Jews among the Bolsheviks were not many, and there is no reason to hold all the people responsible for its individual members; Czarist Russia persecuted Jews and in the Civil War the Bolsheviks sought protection from pogroms and that is why there is no criminal responsibility for, all is personal moral responsibility.

Yet Pasmanik did not think that such a moral responsibility can be cleansed. But even he sought consolation: “Why should the Jewish masses be held responsible for the abomination of individual Jewish commissars? This is undoubtedly deeply unfair. But the imposition of liability on the Jews only proves that we recognize the presence of a special Jewish nation. At the time when the Jews are no longer a nationality, when they become Russian, German, British of the Jewish faith, they are freed from the burdens of collective responsibility.”

However, the 20th century recognized a Jewish nation, with an anchor in Israel. The willingness to accept responsibility for it past, for both Jews and Russians, is inseparable from ability of any people or nation to build a decent life. Yes, there were a lot of reasons why the Jews

went to the Bolsheviks and why some still see new good the Civil War. However, if Russian Jews commemorate this period by primarily justifying and excusing their participation, they are lost, reduced to the level of solely Jewish self-understanding with the rest of humanity shut out, another version of their age-old delusion of being God's Chosen People.

Germans will sometimes make excuses for Hitler's time. "They were not real Germans, and scum." But every nation is morally responsible for all of its past, including that which shameful. How do we Russians respond to the historical horror of Bolshevism we inflicted on ourselves and on the world? With endless attempts to understand why this was allowed to happen that never really go anywhere, because certain names may not be named, certain things may not be said, and certain facts never openly acknowledged? And with never any actual conclusions as to blame? No culprits ever actually named? The question never asked, "Is it possible that the same people might do the same thing again?"

That's the spirit of the Jewish people, and they should be held responsible for their revolutionary thugs and for the readiness of the endless ranks who went into Bolshevik service to commit mass murder. Their intentions and behavior today must be scrutinized in full knowledge of what they have done to others in the past and with an eye to what they might do in the future; there is justification for that. We must not conceal the truth in the eyes of other nations, or from ourselves, or from our consciences before God. How do we Russians take responsibility for the pogroms, for those merciless peasant's arsonists, for the mad revolutionary soldiers and sailorbeasts, and yet the Jews get to spread their hands in blameless innocence over the countless Yiddish

names among the commissar-butchers who commanded the whole wretched business?

About them [the Russian Bolsheviks] I think I said enough in *The Red Wheel*. Well, I might add here one example: here is the Red Guard Basov, truth-seeker and people's advocate, who took his sister Shingareva money for tea in the Mariinsky Hospital, and a few hours later the same night that led the sailors to the hospital to shoot Kokoshkin.

We must answer as responsible for the actions of our nation which is our larger family, for if responsibility is removed then the whole concept of the national identity is lost.

## Chapter XVI: During the Civil War

Trotsky once boasted that during the Civil War, even traveling in his special Revvoyensovet's [Revolutionary Military Council] railroad coach, he was able to find time to acquaint himself with the latest works of French literature. Not that he realized exactly *what* he said. He acknowledged that he was able to find not just time, but room in his heart between appeals to the revolutionary sailors, forcibly mobilized units of Red Army, and a thrown order to execute every tenth soldier in a unit that wavered in battle. Well, he usually did not stay around to supervise *carrying out* such orders. Orchestrating a bloody war on the vast plains of Russia, he was absolutely untouched by the unprecedented sufferings of her inhabitants, by her pain. He soared aloft, above it all, on the wings of the international intoxication of the Revolution.

The February Revolution was a *Russian* revolution. No matter how headlong, erroneous and pernicious it was, it did not aspire to *burn down* the entire pre-existing life, to

annihilate the whole pre-revolutionary Russia. Yet immediately after October 1917, the Revolution spilled abroad and became an *international* and devastating plague, feeding itself by devouring and destroying social order wherever it spread — everything built was to be annihilated; everything cultivated to be confiscated; whoever resisted to be shot. The Reds were exclusively preoccupied with their grand social experiment, predestined to be repeated, expanded and implemented all over the world.

From an easy, quick blow, the October coup snowballed into a fierce three-year-long Civil War, which brought countless bloody calamities to all the peoples of Russia. The multinationality of the former Empire and the cannon recoil from the Great War complicated both the inhumane Bolshevik plot and its implementation. Unlike the French Revolution, which unfolded on the territory of mono-national France and did not see much foreign intervention apart from a short incursion of hostile troops, and with all its horrors being a national affair from beginning to end, the Russian Revolution was horribly aggravated by its multinational madness. It saw the strong participation of Red Latvians (then Russian subjects), former German and Austrian prisoners of war (organized into full-blown regiments like the Hungarians), and even large numbers of Chinese. No doubt the brunt of the fighting for the Reds was carried out by Russians; some of them were drafted on pain of death while others volunteered in a mad belief they would be fighting for a happy future for themselves. Yet the Russian Jews were not lost in all that diversity.

The politically active part of Russian Jewry, which backed the Bolshevik civic regime in 1917, now just as boldly stepped into the military structures of Bolsheviks. During the first years after the October Revolution in the

midst of the internationalist frenzy, the power over this enormous land was effortlessly slipping into the hands of those clinging to the Bolsheviks. And they were overwhelmed by the newfound immensity of that power. They immediately began using it without a backward glance or any fear of control — some, without doubt, in the name of higher ideals, while others — in the name of lower ones, obstinacy of fanaticism in some and ability to adapt in others. At that time, nobody could imagine that the Civil War would ignite enormous Jewish pogroms, unprecedented in their atrocity and bloodshed, all over the South of Russia.

We can judge the true nature of the multi-ethnic war from the Red pogrom during the suppression of the Kronstadt Uprising in March 1921. A well-known socialist-revolutionary and sociologist Pitirim Sorokin writes: “For three days Latvian, Bashkir, Hungarian, Tatar, Russian, Jewish and international rabble, crazed by alcohol and the smell of blood, raped and killed without restraint.”

Or here is another recollection from ordinary witnesses. During the feast of the Epiphany in 1918, an Orthodox Sacred Procession stirred forth from the gates of the Kremlin in Tula — and an “international squad” gunned it down.

Even with the ruthless international squads, the force of the Red Guard alone was no longer sufficient. The Bolshevik regime needed a regular army. In 1918, Lev Trotsky, with the help of Sklyansky and Jacob Sverdlov, created the Red Army. Many Jews were fighting in its ranks. Some units were entirely Jewish, like, for example, the brigade of Josef Furman. The Jewish share in the command corps the Red Army became large and influential and this trend continued for many years even after the end of the Civil

War. This Jewish involvement has been researched by several Jewish authors and encyclopedias.

In the 1980s, Israeli scholar Aaron Abramovich used many Soviet sources (including *The Fifty-Year Anniversary of the Soviet Armed Forces*, *The Soviet Historical Encyclopedia*, volumes of *Directives of the Front Command of the Red Army*) to compile detailed nominal rosters of highly ranked Jewish commanders (exclusively Jewish ones) in the Red Army during the period from the Civil War up to the aftermath of Second World War.

Let's skim through the pages allocated to the Civil War. This is a very extensive roster; it begins with the Revvoyensoviet, where Abramovich lists L. Trotsky, E. Sklyansky, A. Rosengoltz, and Y. Drabkin-Gusev. Trotsky ordered the establishment of fronts with headquarters, and formation of new armies, and Jews were present in almost all the Revvoyensoviets of the fronts and armies. (Abramovich lists the most prominent individuals: D. Vayman, E. Pyatnitsky, L. Glezarov, L. Pechyorsky, I. Slavin, M. Lisovsky, G. Bitker, Bela Kun, Brilliant-Sokolnikov, I. Khodorovsky).

Earlier, at the onset of the Civil War, the Extraordinary Command Staff of the Petrograd Military District was headed by Uritsky, and among the members of the Petrograd Committee of

Revolutionary Defense were Sverdlov (the chairman), Volodarsky, Drabkin-Gusev, Ya. Fishman (a leftist Socialist Revolutionary) and G. Chudnovsky. In May 1918, there were two Jews among the eleven commissars of military districts: E. Yaroslavsky-Gubelman (Moscow District) and S. Nakhimson (Yaroslavsky District).

During the war, several Jews were in charge of armies: M. Lashevich was in charge of the

3rd — and later, of the 7th Army of Eastern Front; V. Lazarevich was in charge of the 3rd Army of the Western Front, G. Sokolnikov led the 8th Army of the Southern Front, N. Sorkin — the 9th, and I. Yakir — the 14th Army. Abramovich painstakingly lists numerous Jewish heads of staff and members of the Revvoyensoviets in each of the twenty armies; then the commanders, heads of staff and military commissars of divisions (the list of the latter, i.e., those in charge of the ideological branch of command, was three-times longer than the list of Jewish commanders of divisions). In this manner Abramovich describes brigades, regiments and separate detachments. He lists Jewish heads of political administrations and revolutionary military tribunals at all levels, noting that “an especially large percentage of Jews can be found among political officers at all levels of the Red Army.”

Jews played an important role in the provision and supply services. Let’s name some of them. Jews occupied important positions in military medicine as well: heads of sanitary administrations of the fronts and armies, senior doctors of units and bodies of troopa. Many Jews — commanders of large units and detachments — were distinguished for their courage, heroism and generalship but due to the synoptic character of this chapter we cannot provide detailed descriptions of the accomplishments of Jewish Red Army soldiers, commanders and political officers. (Meticulously listing the commanders of armies, the researcher misses another Jew, Tikhon Khvesin, who happened to be in charge of the 4th Army of the Eastern Front, then — of the 8th Army of the Southern Front, and later of the 1st Army of the Turkestan Front.)

The *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia* provides additional information about some commanders. [Here I

would like to commend this encyclopedia (1994), for in our new free times its authors performed an honest choice — writing frankly about everything, including less than honorable things.]

Drabkin-Gusev became the Head of Political Administration of the Red Army and the Chief of the entire Red Army in 1921. Later he was the head of IstPart (Commission on the History of October Revolution and Bolshevik Party) and a big figure in the Comintern, and was buried in the Kremlin wall in Moscow.

Mikhail Gaskovich-Lashkevich was a member of many revvoyensoviets, and later he was in charge of the Siberian Military District, and even later — the First Deputy Chairman of the Revvoyensoviet of the USSR (yet he was buried merely on the Field of Mars in St. Petersburg). Israel Razgon was the military commissar of the Headquarters of Petrograd Military District and participated in the suppression of the Kronstadt Uprising; later, he was in charge of the Red Army of Bukhara, suppressing the uprising in Central Asia; still later he worked in the Headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet. Boris Goldberg was Military Commissar of the Tomskaya Guberniya, later of the Permskaya Guberniya, still later of the Privolzhskiy Military District, and even later he was in charge of the Reserve Army and was acknowledged as one of the founders of Soviet Civil Aviation.

Modest Rubenstein was Deputy Head of the Revvoyensoviet of the Special Army, and later he was head of political administration of an army group. Boris Hippo was the Head of Political Administration of the Black Sea Fleet. (Later he worked in the political administrations of the Baltic Sea Fleet, the Turkestan Front, was the Head of Political Administration of the Central-

Asian Military District, and later of the Caucasian Army.)

Michail Landa was a head of the political division of an army, later — Deputy Head of Political Administration of the entire Red Army, and still later Head of Political Administration of the Byelorussian and then of the Siberian Military Districts. Lev Berlin was Commissar of the Volga Military Flotilla and later worked in the Political Administration of the Crimean Army and still later in that of the Baltic Fleet.

Yet how many outstanding characters acted at lower levels?

Boris Skundin, previously a lowly apprentice of clockmaker Sverdlov, Sr., successively evolved into the military commissar of a division, commissar of army headquarters, political inspector of front, and, finally, into Deputy Head of Political Administration of the 1st Cavalry Army.

Avenir Khanukaev was commander of a guerilla band who later was tried before the revolutionary tribunal for crimes during the capture of Ashgabat and acquitted, and in the same year of 1919 was made into political plenipotentiary of the TurkCommission of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviet of People's Commissars on Kashgar, Bukhara and Khiva.

Moses Vinnitsky ("Mishka-Yaponchik") was a member of the Jewish militia squad in Odessa 1905, and later a gang-leader; he was freed from a hard labor camp by the February Revolution and became a commander of a Jewish fighting brigade in Odessa, simultaneously managing the entire criminal underworld of Odessa. In 1919, he was a commander of a special battalion and later he was in charge of an infantry regiment in the Red Army. His unit was

composed of anarchists and criminals. In the end, he was shot by his own side.

Military commissar Isaiah Tzalkovich was in command of a composite company of the Red cadets during the suppression of the Kronstadt Uprising.

We can see extraordinary Jewish women in the higher Bolshevik ranks as well. Nadezda Ostrovskaya rose from the Head of Gubkom [Party Committee of a Guberniya, the highest executive authority in a guberniya] of Vladimir Guberniya to the post of the Head of Political Administration of the entire 10th Army. Revekka Plastinina headed Gubrevkom and later the Gubkom of Archangel Guberniya.

Is it proper to mention here Cecilia Zelikson-Bobrovskaya, who was a seamstress in her youth, and became the Head of the *Military* Department of the Moscow Committee of the AllRussian Communist Party of Bolsheviks? Or take one of the Furies of the Revolution Eugenia Bosh (or her sister Elena Rozmirovich)?

Or another thing — the Soviets used the phrase “Corps of Red Cossacks.” Yet those were not Cossacks who embraced communist ideology but plain bandits (who occasionally disguised themselves as Whites for deception.) Those “Cossack Corps” were made of all nationalities from Romanians to Chinese with a full-blown Latvian cavalry regiment. A Russian, Vitaly Primakov, was in command and its Political Department was headed by I. I. Minz (by Isaac Greenberg in the Second Division) and S. Turovskiy was head of the Headquarters. A. Shilman was the head of operative section of the staff, S. Davidson managed the division newspaper, and Ya. Rubinov was in charge of the administrative section of the staff.

Since we have begun particularizing, let's look at the famous leaders of the Red Army, at those never-fading

names: Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko, Vasily Blucher, Semyon Budyonny, Klim Voroshilov, Boris Dumenko, Pavel Dybenko, Alekса Dundich, Dmitry Zhloba, Vasily Kikvidze, Epifan Kovtukh, Grigory Kotovsky, Philip Mironov, Mikhail Muravyov, Vitaly Primakov, Ivan Sorokin, Semyon Timoshenko, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, Ieronim Uborevich, Mikhail Frunze, Vasily Chapaev, Yefim Shchadenko, Nikolay Shchors. Why, couldn't they pull it off without Jews?

Or take hundreds and thousands of *Russian* generals and officers of the former Imperial Army, who served in the Red Army, though not in the political sections (they were not invited there), but in other significant posts. True, they had a commissar with a gun behind them, and many served on pain of execution of their hostage families especially in case of military failures. Yet they gave an invaluable advantage to the Reds, which actually might have been crucial for the eventual victory of Bolsheviks. Why, just about half of the officers of the General Staff worked for the Bolsheviks.

And we should not forget that initial and fatal susceptibility of many Russian peasants (by no means all of them, of course) to Bolshevik propaganda. Shulgin flatly noted: "Death to the Bourgeois was so successful in Russia because the smell of blood inebriates, alas, so many Russians; and they get into a frenzy like wild beasts."

Yet let's avoid going into another unreasonable extreme, such as the following: "The most zealous executioners in Cheka were not at all the notorious Jews, but the recent minions of the throne, generals and officers." As though they would be tolerated in there, in the Cheka! They were invited there with the only one purpose — to be executed. Yet why such a quick temper? Those Jews, who worked in the Cheka, were, of course, not the "notorious

Jews,” but quite young and committed ones, with revolutionary garbage filling their heads. And I deem that they served not as *executioners* but mostly as interrogators.

The Cheka (“Extraordinary Commission,” *Che-Ka*) was established in December 1917. It instantly gained strength and by the beginning of 1918 it was already filling the entire populace with mortal fear. In fact, it was the Cheka that started the Red Terror long before its beginning was officially announced on September 5, 1918. The Cheka practiced terror from the moment of its inception and continued it long after the end of the Civil War. By January of 1918, the Cheka was enforcing the death penalty *on the spot* without investigation and trial. Then the country saw the snatching of hundreds and later thousands of absolutely innocent hostages, their mass executions at night or mass drowning in whole barges. Historian S. P. Melgunov, who himself happened to experience perilous incarceration in Cheka prisons, unforgettably reflected upon the whole epic story of the Red Terror in his famous book *Red Terror in Russia 1918-1923*. There was not a single town or a district without an office of the omnipotent All-Russian Extraordinary Commission [that is, the Cheka], which from now on becomes the main nerve of state governance and absorbs the last vestiges of law; there was not a single place in the RSFSR [Russian Federation] without ongoing executions; a single verbal order of one man (Dzerzhinsky) doomed to immediate death many thousand people.

And even when investigation took place, the Chekists [members of the Cheka] followed their official instructions: “Do not look for evidence incriminating a suspect in hostile speech or action against Soviet power. The very first question you should ask him is about the social class he belongs to, and what is his descent, upbringing, education and

profession. It is these questions that should determine the suspect's fate." (The words of M. Latsis in the bulletin *Red Terror* on November 1, 1918 and in *Pravda* on December 25, 1918). Melgunov notes: "Latsis was not original here, he simply rephrased the words of Robespierre in Convent about the mass terror: 'To execute the enemies of the Fatherland, it is sufficient to establish their identities. Not punishment but elimination is required'." Directives from the center are picked up and distributed all over Russia by the *Cheka Weekly* and Melgunov cites the periodical profusely: "*Red Sword* is published in Kiev ... in an editorial by Lev Krainy we read: 'Old foundations of morality and humanity invented by the bourgeoisie do not and cannot exist for us.' A certain Schwartz follows: "The proclaimed Red Terror should be implemented in a proletarian way. If physical extermination of all servants of Czarism and capitalism is the prerequisite for the establishment of the worldwide dictatorship of proletariat, then it wouldn't stop us."

It was a *targeted*, pre-designed and long-term Terror. Melgunov also provides estimates of the body count of that "unheard-of swing of murders." (precise numbers were practically not available then). Yet I suppose these horrors pale into insignificance with respect to the number of victims if compared to what happened in the South after the end of the Civil War. Denikin's [the general of the White army in command of the South Russian front] rule was crumbling. New power was ascending, accompanied by a bloody reign of vengeful terror, of mere retaliation. At this point it was not a civil war, it was physical liquidation of a former adversary. There were waves and waves of raids, searches, new raids and arrests. Entire wards of prisoners are escorted out and every last man is executed. Because of the large number of

victims, a machine-gun is used; they execute 15-16-year-old children and 60-year-old elders.

The following is a quote from a Cheka announcement in the Kuban region: “Cossack villages and settlements, which give shelter to Whites and Greens [Ukrainian nationalists], will be destroyed, the entire adult population — executed, and all property — confiscated.” After Wrangel [another White general] left, Crimea was dubbed the ‘All-Russian Cemetery’. Different estimates suggest the number of murdered as between 120,000 and 150,000. In Sevastopol people were not just shot but hanged, hanged by dozens and even by hundreds. Nakhimov Prospect [a major street] was lined with the corpses of the hanged. People were arrested on the streets and hastily executed without trial. Terror in the Crimea continued through 1921.

But no matter how deep we dig into the history of Cheka, special departments, special squads, too many deeds and names will remain unknown, covered by the decomposed remnants of witnesses and the ash of incinerated Bolshevik documents. Yet even the remaining documents are overly eloquent. Here is a copy of a secret extract from the protocol of a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated April 18, 1919. It was obtained from the Trotsky archive at Columbia University. “Attended cc.[comrades] Lenin, Krestinsky, Stalin, Trotsky.

“Heard: Statement of Comrade Trotsky that Jews and Latvians constitute a huge percentage of officials in the front-line Chekas, front-line and rear area executive commissions and central Soviet agencies, and that their percentage in the front-line troops is relatively small, and that because of this, strong chauvinist agitation is being conducted among the Red Army soldiers with a certain success, and that according to

Comrade Trotsky's opinion, it is necessary to redistribute the Party personnel to achieve a more uniform representation of officials of all nationalities between front-line and rear areas.

"Decided: To propose cc. Trotsky and Smilga to draft an appropriate Directive of the Central Committee to the commissions responsible for the allotment of cadres between the central and local Soviet organizations and the front."

Yet it is hard to believe that the meeting produced the intended effect. A contemporary researcher, the first who approached the problem of the role and place of Jews (and other ethnic minorities) in Soviet machinery, studied declassified archive documents and concluded that at the initial stage of activity of the punitive agencies, during the Red Terror, national minorities constituted approximately 50 percent of the central Cheka apparatus, with their representation on the major posts reaching 70 percent. On September 25, 1918 the author provides statistical data: among the ethnic minorities — numerous Latvians and fairly numerous Poles — the Jews are quite noticeable, especially among major and active Cheka officials, i.e., commissars and investigators. For instance, among the investigators of the Department of Counter-Revolutionary Activities — the most important Cheka department — half were Jews.

Below are the service records of several Chekists of the very first order (from the *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia*).

\*Veniamin Gerson was in the Cheka from 1918, and from 1920 he was a personal adjutant to Dzerzhinsky.

\*Israel Leplevsky, a former member of Bund, joined the Bolsheviks in 1917 and worked in the Cheka from 1918; he was the head of the State Political Directorate [formed from the Cheka in 1922] of the Podolsk Guberniya and later of the Special Department of Odessa. And he climbed all the way up to the post of head of the OGPU [Joint State Political

DIRECTORATE, the successor to the Cheka] of USSR! Later he occupied posts of Narkom of Internal Affairs of Byelorussia and Uzbekistan.

\*Zinovy Katznelson became a Chekist immediately after the October Revolution; later he was a head of special departments in several armies, and then of the entire Southern Front. Still later we can see him in the highest ranks in the Cheka headquarters, and even later at different times he was in charge of the Cheka of the Archangel Guberniya, the Transcaucasian Cheka, the North Caucasus GPU, the Kharkov GPU [another Cheka-successor secret police organization]; he also was deputy to the Narkom of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and deputy head of the entire GULAG [that is, the government agency that administered the main Soviet penal labor camp systems].

\*Solomon Mogilevsky was chair of the Ivano-Voznesensk tribunal in 1917, then in charge of Cheka in Saratov. Later we find him again in an army tribunal; and after that he was in succession: deputy head of the Bureau of Investigations of the Moscow Cheka, head of Foreign Affairs Department of Cheka headquarters, and head of the Cheka of Transcaucasia.

Did Ignaty Vizner contemplate the scale of his actions when he investigated the case of Nicolay Gumilev? Not likely – he was too busy. He served in the Special Section at the Presidium of Cheka headquarters, he was the founder of the Bryansk Cheka, and later he was an investigator in the case of the Kronstadt Uprising and a special plenipotentiary of the Presidium of the ChekaGPU on cases of special importance.

Lev Levin-Velsky, former member of the Bund [a Jewish socialist labor organization] was in charge of the Cheka of the Simbirsk Guberniya in 1918-1919, later of the

Special Department of the 8th Army, still later of the Cheka of the Astrakhan Guberniya. Beginning in 1921, he was an envoy plenipotentiary of the central Cheka in the Far East, and later, from 1923, an envoy plenipotentiary of the OGPU in Central Asia. Still later, from the beginning of 1930, he worked in the Moscow OGPU. And even later in his career he was deputy Narkom of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

\*Or consider Nahum (Leonid) Etington: active in the Cheka beginning in 1919, later head of the Cheka of the Smolensk Guberniya; still later he worked in the GPU of Bashkiria; it was he who orchestrated the assassination of Trotsky.

\*Isaak (Semyon) Schwartz: in 1918-1919 he was the very first chair of the All-Ukrainian Cheka. He was succeeded by Yakov Lifshitz who beginning in 1919 was the head of the Secret

Operations Division and simultaneously a deputy head of the Cheka of the Kiev Guberniya; later he was deputy head of the Cheka of the Chernigov Guberniya, and still later — of the Kharkov Guberniya; and even later he was in charge of the Operative Headquarters of the All-Ukrainian Cheka; still later, in 1921-1922, he ran the Cheka of the Kiev Guberniya.

Let's look at the famous Matvei Berman. He began his career in a district Cheka in the North Urals; in 1919, he was assigned as deputy head of the Cheka of the Yekaterinburg

Guberniya, from 1920 — head of Cheka of Tomsk Guberniya, from 1923 — of the BuryatMongolian Guberniya, from 1924 — Deputy Head of the OGPU of all of Central Asia, from 1928 — head of the OGPU of Vladivostok, from 1932 — head of the entire GULAG and simultaneously a deputy Narkom of the NKVD [a successor organization to the Cheka, GPU and OGPU] from 1936. His brother Boris was in the State

Intelligence Organs since 1920; in 1936, he served as deputy head of foreign intelligence section in the NKVD.

Boris Pozern, a commissar of the Petrograd Commune, substantially contributed to matching images of a Jew and that of a Chekist in people's minds; on September 2, 1918, he cosigned the proclamation on Red Terror with Zinoviev and Dzerzhinsky. The *Encyclopedia* missed one Aleksandr Ioselevich, secretary of the Petrograd Cheka, who had co-signed the Red Terror execution lists with Gleb Bokiy in September 1918.

Yet there were others, even more famous individuals. For instance, Yakov Agranov, a Chekist, phenomenally successful in conducting repressions; he invented Tagantzev's Conspiracy (through which he killed Gumilev); he directed cruel interrogations of participants of the Kronstadt Uprising. Or take the notorious Yakov Blumkin, who participated in the assassination of the German ambassador in 1918; he was arrested and later amnestied, and then served in Trotsky's secretariat, and later – in Mongolia, Transcaucasia, the Middle East, and was shot in 1929. And there were numerous personnel behind every Cheka organizer. Hundreds and thousands of innocents met them during interrogations, in basements and during the executions.

There were Jews among the victims too. Those who suffered from the massive communist onslaught on the "bourgeoisie" were mostly merchants. In the Maloarkhangelsk District, a merchant (Yushkevich) was placed on a red-hot cast-iron stove by members of a communist squad for failure to pay taxes. From the same source: some peasants, who defaulted on the surplus appropriation system, were lowered on ropes into water wells to simulate drowning; or, during the winter, they froze people

into ice pillars for failure to pay revolutionary taxes. The particular sort of punishment depended on the imagination of the executioners. Similarly, Korolenko described how two millers, named Aronov and Mirkin, were extrajudicially shot for not complying with absurd communist-mandated prices on flour.

Or here is another example: in 1913, former Kiev Governor Sukovkin advocated innocence of Mendel Beilis during Beilis' trial. When the Reds came, he was arrested. Thousands of Jews in Kiev signed a petition on his behalf, yet the Cheka shot him nevertheless. How then can we explain that the Russian populace generally regarded the new terror as

Jewish terror? Look how many innocent Jews were accused of that. Why was the perception that Chekists and Jews were all but the same so widespread among both the Reds and the Whites alike and among the people in general? Who is responsible for that? Many. And the White Army is also responsible as we discuss below. Yet not the least among these reasons is because of the Chekists themselves, who facilitated this identification by their ardent service on the highest posts in Cheka.

Today we hear bitter complaints that it was not only Jews who clung to power, and why should any particular clemency should be expected from the Jewish Chekists? True. These objections, however, cannot alter the harsh certitude that incredibly enormous power on an unimaginable scale had come into the hands of those Jewish Chekists, who at that time were *supreme*, by status and rank, representatives of Russian Jewry (no matter how horrible it sounds). And those representatives (again, *not elected* by their own people) were not capable of finding enough self-restraint and self-scrutinizing sobriety to come around, check

themselves, and opt out. It is like the Russian cautionary proverb: “Do not hurry to grab, first blow on your fingers.” And the Jewish people (who did not elect those Chekists as their representatives), that already numerous and active city-dwelling community (weren’t there prudent elders among them?) also failed to stop them: be careful, we are a small minority in this country! (Yet who listened to elders at that age?) G. Landau writes: “Loss of affiliation with a social class overthrew the fine structure of Jewish society and destroyed the inner forces of resistance and even that of stability, sending even them under the chariot of triumphant Bolshevism.” He finds that apart from the ideas of socialism, separatist nationalism, and permanent revolution, “we were astonished to find among the Jews what we never expected from them — cruelty, sadism, unbridled violence — everything that seemed so alien to a people so detached from physical activity; those who yesterday couldn’t handle a rifle, today were among the vicious cutthroats.”

Here is more about the aforementioned Revekka Plastinina-Maizel from the Archangel Guberniya Cheka: “Infamous for her cruelty all over the north of Russia, she voluntarily perforated napes and foreheads and personally shot more than one hundred men.” Or about one Baka who was nicknamed “a bloody boy” for his youth and cruelty — first in Tomsk and then as the head of the Cheka of the Irkutsk Guberniya. (Plastinina’s career carried her up right to a seat in the Supreme Court of RSFSR which she occupied in 1940s.) Some may recall the punitive squad of Mandelbaum in Archangel in the north of Russia, others the squad of Mishka Yaponchik in Ukraine.

What would you expect from peasants in the Tambov Guberniya if, during the heat of the suppression of the great peasant uprising in this Central-Russian black-earth region,

the dismal den of the Tambov Gubcom was inhabited by masterminds of grain allotments, secretaries of Gubcom P. Raivid and Pinson and by the head of the propaganda department, Eidman? A. G. Shlikhter, whom we remember from Kiev in 1905, was there as well, this time as the chairman of the Executive Committee of the guberniya. Y. Goldin was the Foodstuffs Commissar of the Tambov Guberniya; it was he who triggered the uprising by exorbitant confiscations of grain, whereas one N. Margolin, commander of a grain confiscation squad, was famous for *whipping* the peasants who failed to provide grain. (And he murdered them too.) According to Kakurin, who was the chief of staff to Tukhachevsky, a plenipotentiary representative of the Cheka headquarters in the Tambov Guberniya during that period was Lev Levin. Of course, not only Jews were in it! However, when Moscow took the suppression of the uprising into her own hands in February 1921, the supreme command of the operation was assigned to Efraim Sklyansky, the head of "Interdepartmental AntiBanditry Commission," — and so the peasants, notified about that with leaflets, were able to draw their own conclusions.

And what should we say about the genocide on the river Don, when hundreds of thousands of the flower of Don Cossacks were murdered? What should we expect from the Cossack memories when we take into consideration all those unsettled accounts between a revolutionary Jew and a Don Cossack?

In August 1919, the Volunteer Army took Kiev and opened several Chekas and found the bodies of those recently executed; Shulgin composed nominal lists of victims using funeral announcements published in the reopened *Kievlyanin*; one can't help noticing that almost all names were Slavic ... it was the "chosen Russians" who were shot.

Materials produced by the Special Investigative Commission in the South of Russia provide insights into the Kiev Cheka and its command personnel based on the testimony of a captured Cheka interrogator. The headcount of the Cheka staff varied between 150 and 300 ... percentage-wise, there was 75 percent Jews and 25 percent others, and those in charge were almost exclusively Jews.

Out of twenty members of the Commission, i.e., the top brass who determined people's destinies, fourteen were Jews. All detained were kept either in the Cheka building or in the Lukyanov prison. A special shed was fitted for executions in the building on Institutskaya St. 40, on the corner with Levashovskaya St., where the main Cheka office of the guberniya had moved from Ekaterininskaya St. An executioner (and sometimes amateur Chekists) escorted a completely naked victim into a shed and ordered the victim to fall face down on the ground. Then he finished the victim with a shot in the back of the head. Executions were performed using revolvers (typically Colts.) Usually because of the short distance, the skull of the executed person exploded into fragments. The next victim was similarly escorted inside and laid down nearby. When number of victims exceeded the capacity of the shed, new victims were laid down right upon the dead or were shot at the entrance of the shed. Usually the victims went to their execution without resistance.

This is what "the people were whispering about." Or take another incident, witnessed by Remizov (whom it is hard to suspect of anti-Semitism given his revolutionary-democratic past): "Recently there was a military training exercise nearby at the Academy, and one Red Army soldier said: 'Comrades, let's not go to the front, it is all because of Yids that we fight!' And someone with a brief-case asked

him: ‘Which regiment are you from? ’ And the soldier again: ‘Comrades, let’s not go to the front, it is all because of Yids!’ And that one with a briefcase ordered: ‘Shoot him!’ Then two other Red Army soldiers came out and the first one tried to flee. But he didn’t make it to the corner as others got him and shot him – his brain spilled over and there was a pool of blood.”

The Kronstadt Uprising had distinctly anti-Jewish character, and so all the more was it doomed. They destroyed portraits of Trotsky and Zinoviev, both Jewish, but not those of Lenin.

And Zinoviev didn’t have guts to go to negotiate with the rebels – he would have been torn into pieces. So, they sent the Russian Kalinin.

There were labor strikes in Moscow in February 1921 that had the slogan: “Down with Communists and Jews!”

We have already mentioned that during the Civil War the majority of Russian socialists (and there were numerous Jews among them) were, of course, on Lenin’s side, not on Admiral Kolchak’s and some of them actually fought for the Bolsheviks. (For example, consider Bund member Solomon Schwartz: during the period of the provisional government, he was a director of a department in a ministry; during the Civil War, he volunteered to the Red Army though he did not indicate his rank; later he emigrated abroad where he published two books about the Jewish situation in the USSR; we will cite him below.)

Thus, it *looked* as though not only Bolshevik Jews, but all of Jewry had decided to take the Red side in the Civil War. Could we claim that their choice was completely

deliberate? No. Could we claim that they didn't have any other choice? Again, no.

Shulgin describes the enormous exodus from Kiev on October 1, 1919 as the city was to be surrendered to Bolsheviks. It was an entirely Russian exodus. People were leaving on foot with knapsacks, across the bridges over Dnepr river; he estimated their numbers at around 60,000. "There were no Jews in this exodus: they were not noticeable among those many thousands of Russians (men, women and children), with bundles in their hands streaming across the beautiful

Chain Bridge under a sorrowful net of rain." There were more than 100,000 Jews in Kiev at that time, Shulgin writes. And all of those rich and very rich Jews — they didn't leave, they chose to stay and wait for arrival of Bolsheviks. "The Jews decided not to share their fate with us. And with that they carved a new and possibly the deepest divide between us."

So, it was in many other places. According to the testimony of socialist-revolutionary S. Maslov: "It is a fact that in towns and cities of southern Russia, especially in cities to the west of the Dnepr that changed hands repeatedly, the arrival of Soviets was most celebrated and the lowest of sympathy was expressed in the Jewish quarters, and not infrequently only in those alone."

A contemporary American historian, Bruce Lincoln, author of a big treatise about our Civil War, said that the Ukrainian Cheka was composed of 80 percent Jews. This can be explained by the fact that, prior to arrival of the Reds, cruel pogroms went on non-stop; indeed those were the bloodiest pogroms since the times of Bogdan Khmelnytsky, leader of the Cossack rebellion in Ukraine in 1648-1657. We will discuss the pogroms soon, though it should be noted that

the time sequence was actually the opposite: those 80 percent [Jews] were already staffing the Cheka in 1918, whereas the pogroms of Petliura, the Ukrainian publicist, writer, and journalist was was head of state during the Ukrainian independence of 1918-1920, only gathered momentum during 1919. The pogroms carried out by White Army troops began in the fall of 1919.

Yet it is impossible to answer the eternal question who is the guilty party, who pushed who into abyss. Of course, it is incorrect to say that the Kiev Cheka did what it did because it was threequarters Jewish. Still, this is something that Jewish people should remember and reflect upon.

And yes, there were Jews then who appealed to their compatriots looking back on the tragedy that had befallen both Russia and Russian Jewry. In their proclamation *To the Jews of All Countries!* this group wrote in 1923 that “overly zealous participation of Jewish Bolsheviks in the oppression and destruction of Russia is blamed upon all of us the Soviet rule is identified with Jewish rule, and fierce hatred of Bolsheviks turns into the equally fierce hatred of Jews. We firmly believe that Bolshevism is *the worst* of all evils possible for the Jews and all other peoples of Russia, and that to fight tooth and nail against the rule of that international rabble over Russia is our sacred duty before humankind, culture, before our Motherland and the Jewish people.” Yet the Jewish community reacted to these declarations with great indignation. (We will discuss this again in the next chapter.)

## **The International Revolution**

The Civil War spilled over Russia's borders. Let's review that briefly (though the events in Europe are outside of the scope of this book.)

The Bolsheviks invaded Poland in 1920. (At this point they had recalled and adroitly used the Russian "national longing and national enthusiasm" — as Nahamkis-Steklov put it in an *Izvestia* editorial.)

And it appears that Polish Jews met the Red Army very warmly. According to a Soviet source, whole battalions of Jewish workers participated in the fighting at Minsk. Reading from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*: "on numerous occasions, Poles accused Jews of supporting the enemy, of anti-Polish, pro-Bolshevist and even pro-Ukrainian attitudes." During the Soviet-Polish war many Jews were killed by Polish Army on charges of spying for the Red Army.

However, we should be wary of possible exaggerations here as we remember similar accusations in espionage made by Russian military authorities during the war, in 1915. The Soviets quickly formed a revolutionary government for Poland headed by F. Dzerzhinsky. In it were Y.

Markhlevsky and F. Kon. Of course, they were surrounded by "blood work" specialists and ardent propagandists. (Among the latter we see a former pharmacist from Mogilev, A. I. Rotenberg. Soon after the aborted Red revolution in Poland, he, together with Bela Kun and Zalkind-Zemlyachka, went on to conduct the deadly "cleansing" of the Crimea. In 1921, he participated in that glorious work again — this time "purging" Georgia, again under the direct command of Dzerzhinsky. At the end of 1920s Rotenberg was in charge of the Moscow NKVD.) Not only Poland but

Hungary and Germany as well were affected by the Red Revolution. An American researcher writes: “the intensity and tenacity of anti-Semitic prejudice in both the east and the center of Europe was significantly influenced by Jewish participation in the revolutionary movement.” In the beginning of 1919, the Soviets, under predominantly Jewish leadership, started revolutions in Berlin and Munich. The share of activist Jews was disproportionately high in the German Communist Party of that period, though that party’s support in the Jewish community at large was not significant. Four out of eleven members of the Central Committee were Jews with a university education. In

December 1918, one of them, Rosa Luxemburg, wrote: “In the name of the greatest aspirations of humankind, our motto when we deal with our enemies is: ‘Finger into the eye, knee on the chest!’” Rebellion in Munich was led by a theater critic, Kurt Eisner, a Jew of “bohemian appearance.” Eisner was killed by a German nobleman who infiltrated his security cordon and shot him, but the power in conservative and Catholic Bavaria was then seized by a new government made up of leftist intellectual Jews, who proclaimed the Bavarian Soviet Republic (G. Landauer, E. Toller, E. Muhsam, O. Neurath) After one week the republic was overthrown by an even more radical group” which declared the Second Bavarian Soviet Republi” with Eugen Levine at the helm. Let’s read an article about him in the *Encyclopedia*: “Born into a mercantile Jewish family, he used to be a socialist-revolutionary; he participated in the Russian revolution of 1905, later became a German national, joined the Spartacist movement of R. Luxemburg and K. Liebknecht, and now he became the head of the Communist government in Bavaria, which also included the abovementioned E. Muhsam, E. Toller and a native of Russia, M. Levin.” The uprising was

defeated in May 1919 by the *Freikorps* of German veterans returning from the Great War, the only loyal troops available to Germany at the time. The fact that the leaders of the suppressed Communist revolts were Jews was one of the most important reasons for the resurrection of political anti-Semitism in contemporary Germany.

While Jews played a quite conspicuous role in the Russian and German communist revolutions, their role in Hungary became central. Out of 49 People's Commissars there were many Jews, Bela Kun being the most prominent of them; the foreign minister and de-facto head of government, he would orchestrate a bloodbath in the Crimea half a year later. Here we find Matyas Rakosi, Tibor Szamuely, Gyorgy Lukacs. Granted, the prime-minister was a gentile, Sandor

Garbai, but Rakosi later joked that Garbai was elected because someone had to sign execution orders on Sabbath days. Statues of Hungarian kings and heroes were knocked off their pedestals, the national anthem outlawed, and wearing the national colors criminalized. Hanged bodies dangling from trees, lamp posts and telegraph poles through Hungary became known as

“Szamuely fruit.”

The tragedy of the situation was escalated by the fact that historically Hungarian Jews were much wealthier than their Eastern-European countrymen and were much more successful in Hungarian society; Hungary was free of pogroms and freer of anti-Semitism than almost anywhere else in Europe, and yet still the bodies swayed in the breeze. The direct relation between the Hungarian Soviet Republic and our Civil War becomes clearer by the virtue of the fact that a special Red Army Corps were being prepared to go to the rescue of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, but they

couldn't manage it in time. Bela Kun, who seems to have been insane, invaded both Czechoslovakia and Romania. They were defeated, and the Republic fell in August 1919 when Romanian troops entered Budapest. It had lasted four and a half months.

### In Ukraine

The breakdown of the universally hated Russian Empire cost all involved dearly, including the Jews. G. Landau writes: "In general, revolution is gruesome, risky and dangerous business. It is especially gruesome and dangerous for a minority, which in many ways is alien to the bulk of population. To secure their wellbeing, such minority should unwaveringly cling to law and rely on unshakable continuity of social order and on the inertia of statutory power. Forces of revolutionary misalignment and permissiveness hit such a minority particularly hard."

It was looming — straight forward, into the so promising future! Yet in the near future, during the Civil War, there was no law and Jewry was hit by pillaging and pogroms on the scale not even close to anything they experienced in days of the Czar. And those pogroms were not launched by the White side. Because of the density of the Jewish population in Ukraine, it was inevitable that a third force, apart from the Reds and Whites, would interfere in the Jewish destinies — that of Ukrainian separatism.

In April 1917, when the Ukrainian Rada [upper house of Parliament] assembled for the first time, Jewry did not yet believe in the victory of Ukrainian Nationalism, and that was manifested in the character of their voting during municipal summer elections. Jews did not have any reason to vote for Ukrainian separatists. But already in June, when something

resembling real independent Ukrainian governance was taking shape — under which apparently the Jews would have to live from now on — the Jewish representatives entered the Lesser [lower] Rada, and a Vice-Secretariat on Jewish nationality (“Jewish Ministry”) was established.

The latter worked on the long-cherished project of Jewish national autonomy, according to which every nationality and now the Jewish one creates its own national union, which can legislate according to the needs and interests of their nation and for that it receives financial support from the treasury, and a representative of the union becomes a member of the cabinet. Initially, the formative Ukrainian government was generally benevolent toward Jews, but by the end of 1917 the mood changed, and the bill on autonomy was met in the Rada with laughter and contempt. Nevertheless, in January 1918 it was passed, though with difficulties. For their part, the Jews reluctantly accepted the Third Universal (November 9, 1917, the declaration of Ukrainian independence from Russia) as now they feared anarchy, traditionally dangerous for Jewish populations, and were afraid of a split within Russian Jewry. Still, Jewish philistines were making fun of the Ukrainian language and shop-signs. They were afraid of Ukrainian nationalism, and believed in the Russian state and Russian culture. Lenin wrote: “Jews, like Great Russians, ignore the significance of the national question in Ukraine.”

However, everything pointed toward secession and the Jewish delegates in the Rada did not dare to vote against the Fourth Universal (January 11, 1918, declaring complete secession of Ukraine). Immediately thereafter, the Bolsheviks began an offensive against Ukraine. The first “Ukrainian” Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party of Bolsheviks was formed in Moscow and later moved

to Kharkov; it was headed by Georgiy Pyatakov and among its members were Semyon Schwartz and Serafima Gopner. When by the end of January 1918, they moved to Kiev, Grigory Chudnovsky took the post of the Commissar of Kiev, Kreitzberg became a commissar of finances, D. Raikhstein, press commissar, Shapiro — commissar of the army. There was no shortage of Jewish names among the top Bolsheviks in such centers as Odessa and Ekaterinoslav. That was sufficient to fuel talks about Bolshevik Jews and Jewish Bolsheviks among the troops loyal to the Rada. Verbal cursing about traitorous Jews became almost commonplace; in the very midst of street fighting for Kiev, the Zionist faction produced an official inquiry on the matter of “anti-Jewish excesses.” The question turned into a verbal skirmish between Ukrainian delegates and representatives of national minorities.

Thus, enmity split apart the Jews and the Ukrainian separatists. The Ukrainian government and the leaders of Ukrainian parties were evacuated to Zhitomir, but the Jewish representatives did not follow them, they remained under the Bolsheviks. And in addition, the Bolsheviks in Kiev were supported by a sizable group of Jewish workers, who returned from England after the February, Kerensky revolution and who now wholly siding with the Soviet regime took up the posts of commissars and officials, and created a special Jewish squad of Red Guards.

Yet soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk [in which the Soviets ceded Ukraine to the Central Powers] as the government of independent Ukraine returned to Kiev under the aegis of Austrian and German bayonets in the beginning of February of 1918, the *haidamakas*, spontaneous popular uprisings against Polish rule that took place in Ukraine in the 18th century and free Cossacks began

snatching and shooting any former Jewish commissars, they could find. Yet those were not actual Jewish pogroms, and very soon Petliura's government was replaced by the Hetman government of Cossack leader Skoropadsky for the next seven months. The command of the units of the German Army that had occupied Kiev in the spring, treated the needs of Jewish population with understanding. (And that population was not unsubstantial: in 1919, 21 percent of Kiev's inhabitants were Jewish.)

A Jewish Kadet [a member of Russian Constitutional Democrat Party] Sergei Gutnik became the Minister of Trade and Industry in the Hetman government.

Under the Hetmanate, Zionists acted without hindrance, and an independent Jewish Provisional National Assembly and a Jewish National Secretariat were elected.

When the Hetmanate fell and in December 1918 Kiev came under the control of the Directorate of Ukraine led by Petliura and Vynnychenko. The Bund and Poale-Zion [a movement of Marxist Jewish workers] did their best to help their fellow socialists of the Directorate and Jewish Secretariat and also made conciliatory moves. But Petliura saw it differently. His mouthpiece, the newspaper *Vidrodzhennya* wrote: "The birth of the Ukrainian State was not expected by the Jews. The Jews did not anticipate it despite having an extraordinary ability of getting the wind of any news. They emphasize their knowledge of the Russian language and ignore the fact of Ukrainian statehood. Jewry again has joined the side of our enemy."

Jews were blamed for all the Bolshevik victories in Ukraine. In Kiev, the Sich Riflemen plundered apartments of wealthy people who *en masse* came over to the capital while the military and atamans [originally Cossack commanders, then used by the Ukrainian National Army] robbed smaller

towns and *shtetls*. That year, a regiment named after Petliura inaugurated mass pogroms by pillaging the town of Sarny.

A Jewish deputy from the Lesser Rada attempted to ward off the growing tendency toward pogroms among Petliura's troops: "We need to warn Ukrainians that you cannot found your state on anti-Semitism. Leaders of the Directorate should remember that they are dealing with the world's oldest people, who have outlived many of our enemies," and threatened to start a struggle against such government. Jewish parties quickly began to radicalize toward the Left, thus inevitably turning their sympathies to Bolshevism.

Arnold Margolin, then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, said that the situation in Ukraine was reminiscent of the worst times of Khmelnytsky and Gonta [A Cossack resistance leader against the Polish occupation of Ukraine].

D. Pasmanik bitterly noted that Zionists and Jewish nationalists supported the Directorate's government for a while even when anti-Jewish pogroms raged across Ukraine: "How could Jewish socialists forget about the pogromist attitudes of Petliura and other heroes of the Ukrainian Revolution? How could they forget about the Jewish blood shed by the descendants and disciples of Khmelnytsky, Gonta and Zalizniak?" Between December 1918 and August 1919, Petliura's troops carried out dozens of pogroms, according to the Commission of International Red Cross killing around 50,000 Jews. The largest pogrom happened on February 15, 1919, in Proskurov after a failed Bolshevik coup attempt. Jewish pogroms that went on nonstop from the very moment of Ukrainian independence became particularly ferocious during the period of the so-called Directorate and kept going until the Ukrainian armed forces existed.

S. Maslov writes: "True, in the Czar's times Jews were killed during pogroms, but they have never had been killed in such numbers as now and with such callous indifference." Sometimes during anti-Jewish pogroms by rebellious peasant bands entire *shtetls* were exterminated with indiscriminate slaughter of children, women and elders. After the pogromists finished with their business, peasants from surrounding villages usually arrived on wagons to join in looting the commercial goods which were often stored in large amounts in the towns because of the unsettled times. All over Ukraine rebels attacked passenger trains and often commanded communists and Jews to get out of the coach and those who did were shot right on the spot; or in checking papers of passengers, suspected Jews were ordered to pronounce *kukuruza*, corn) and those who spoke with an accent were escorted out and executed.

American scholar Muller thinks that "the mass extermination of Jews in Ukraine and Byelorussia during the Civil War was by no means a result of articulated policy but rather a common peasant reaction."

Independent rebellious bands of Grigoriev, Zelyony, Sokolovsky, Struk, Angel, Tyutyunik, Yatzeiko, Volynetz and Kozyr-Zirka were particularly uncontrolled and because of this acted with extreme atrocity. However, Nestor Makhno was different.

The raging Civil War provided fertile soil for the self-realization of Makhno's criminal and rebellious personality. We are not going to recount his villainous and clinically-mad deeds in this work, yet it should be noted that he did not harbor anti-Jewish attitudes and that his anarchistcommunist followers loudly proclaimed their "implacable hostility toward any form of anti-Semitism." At different times, a certain Aaron Baron was his Chief of Staff, Lev

ZadovZenkovsky was his head of counter-intelligence, Volin-Eikhenbaum was head of Makhno's agitprop, Arshinov was his close adviser, and one Kogan headed Administration of Huliaipole [his "capital"].

There was even a 300-strong separate Jewish company among his troops, led by one Taranovsky, and though at one point they betrayed Makhno, nevertheless Taranovsky was later pardoned and even made the Makhno's Chief of Staff." The Jewish poor joined Makhno's army in masses and allegedly Makhno trapped and executed ataman Grigoriev for the latter's anti-Semitism. In March 1919 Makhno executed peasants from Uspenovka village for a pogrom in the Jewish agricultural colony Gorkoye. However, despite his indisputable pro-Jewish stance (later in emigration in Paris he was always in a Jewish milieu until his death), his often-uncontrollable troops carried out several Jewish pogroms, for instance, in 1918 near Ekaterinoslav or in the summer of 1919 in Aleksandrovsk, though Makhno and his officers rigorously protected Jewish populations and punished pogromists with death.

To examine the anti-Jewish pogroms during the Russian Civil War, we consult a large volume *Jewish Pogroms: 1918-1921* compiled by Jewish Public Committee for Aid to Victims of Pogroms in 1923 and published later in 1926. The year of publication explains why we find nothing about pogroms by the Reds — the book "aims to examine the roles of Petliura's troops, the Volunteer [White] Army, and Poles in the carnage of pogroms in the described period."

Regular troops participated in pogroms in larger cities and towns as they marched, whereas independent bands acted in the hinterlands, thus effectively denying the Jews safety anywhere. Pogroms by Petliura's troops were

particularly atrocious and systematic and sometimes even without looting, such as, for example, pogroms in Proskurov, Felsztyń and Zhytomir in February of 1919, Ovruch in March, Trostyanets, Uman and Novomirgorod in May 1919. The worst pogroms by bands were in Smila (March 1919), Elisavetgrad, Radomyshl, Vapniarka and Slovechno in May 1919, in Dubovka (June 1919); by Denikin's troops – in Fastov (September 1919) and Kiev (October 1919). In Byelorussia, there were pogroms by Polish troops, for example, in Borisov and in the Bobruisk District, and by Polish-supported troops of BulakBalachowicz in Mazyr, Turov, Petrakov, Kapatkevitchy, Kovchitsy and Gorodyatitchy (in 1919, 1920, and 1921).

Ukrainian Jewry was horrified by the murderous wave of pogroms. During brief periods of respite, the Jewish population fled *en masse* from already pillaged or threatened places. There was indeed a mass exodus of Jews from *shtetls* and small towns into larger cities nearby or toward the border with Romania in a foolish hope to find aid there, or they simply aimlessly fled in panic as they did from Tetiiv and Radomyshl. The most populous and flourishing communities were turned into deserts. Jewish towns and *shtetls* looked like gloomy cemeteries — homes burnt and streets dead and desolated. Several Jewish townships were completely wrecked and turned into ashes — Volodarka, Boguslav, Borshchagovka, Znamenka, Fastov, Tefiapol, Kutuzovka and other places.

### **Jews and White Guards**

Let us now examine the White side. At first glance, it may appear counter-intuitive that Jews did not support the anti-Bolshevik movement. After all, the White forces were

substantially more pro-democratic than Bolsheviks (as it was with [White generals] Denikin and Wrangel) and included not only monarchists and all kinds of nationalists but also many liberal groups and all varieties of anti-Bolshevik socialists. So why didn't we see Jews who shared the same political views and sympathies there?

Fateful events irredeemably separated the Jews from the White movement.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* informs us that “initially many Jews of Rostov supported the White movement. On December 13, 1917 a merchant prince, A. Alperin, gave 800,000 rubles collected by the Jews of Rostov to A. Kaledin, the leader of Don Cossacks, to organize antiBolshevik Cossack troops. Yet when General Alekseev [another White commander] was mustering his first squadron in December 1917 in the same city of Rostov and needed funds and asked (note — asked and did not impress) the Rostov-Nakhichevan bourgeoisie (mainly Jewish and Armenian) for money, they refused and he collected just a dab of money and was forced to march out into the winter with unequipped troops – into his Ice March. And later all appeals by the Volunteer Army were mostly ignored, yet whenever the Bolsheviks showed up and demanded money and valuables, the population obediently handed over millions of rubles and whole stores of goods.

When former Russian prime minister (of the Provisional Government) prince G. E. Lvov, begging for aid abroad, visited New York and Washington in 1918, he met a delegation of American Jews who heard him out but offered no aid.

However, Pasmanik quotes a letter saying that by the end of 1918 “more than three and half million rubles were being collected in the exclusive Jewish circle” with

accompanying promises and reassurances of goodwill toward Jews from the White authorities. Despite that, Jews were officially prohibited to buy land in the Chernomorskaya Guberniya because of “vicious speculations by several Jews,” though the order was revoked soon afterwards.

Here is another example from my own sources: again, in Rostov in February 1918 when the White movement was merely nascent and seemed almost hopeless, an elderly Jewish engineer and manufacturer A. I. Arkhangorodsky, who sincerely considered himself a Russian patriot, literally pushed his reluctant student son into joining the White youth marching out into the night [February 22], embarking on their Ice March. (However, his sister didn’t let him go.) The *Jewish Encyclopedia* also tells us that “the Jews of Rostov were joining Cossack guerilla squadrons and the student’s battalion of [White] general L. Kornilov’s army.”

In Paris in 1975, Col. Levitin, the last surviving commander of the Kornilov Regiment, told me that quite a few Jewish warrant officers, who were commissioned in Kerensky’s times, were loyal to Kornilov during the so-called Days of Kornilov in August 1917. He recalled one Katzman, a holder of the Order of St. George from the First Kutepov Division.

Yet we know that many Whites rejected sympathetic or neutral Jews — because of the prominent involvement of *other* Jews on the Red side, mistrust and anger was bred among the White forces. A modern study suggests that during the first year of its existence, the White movement was virtually free of anti-Semitism at least in terms of major incidents and Jews were actually serving in the Volunteer Army. However, the situation dramatically changed by 1919. First, after the Allied victory in WWI, the widespread conviction among the Whites that Germans helped

Bolsheviks was displaced by a mythos about Jews being the backbone of Bolshevism. On the other hand, after the White troops occupied Ukraine, they came under influence of obsessive local anti-Semitism that facilitated their espousal of anti-Jewish actions.

The White Army was hypnotized by Trotsky and Nakhamkis [an agent of the Bolshevik Central Committee] and that caused the identification of Bolshevism with Jewry and led to pogroms. The Whites perceived Russia as occupied by Jewish commissars – and they marched to liberate her. And given considerable unaccountability of separate units of that nascent and poorly organized army strewn over the vast Russian territories and the general lack of central authority in that war, it is not surprising that, unfortunately, some White troops carried out pogroms. A. I. Denikin like some other leaders of the South Army (e.g., V. Z. Mai-Mayevsky), endorsed Kadet and Socialist Revolutionary views and sought to stop the outrages perpetrated by his troops. Yet those efforts were not effective.

Naturally, many Jews were driven by survival instinct and even if they initially expected goodwill on the part of the Volunteer Army, after pogroms by Denikin's troops they lost any inclination to support the White movement.

Pasmanik provides a lively case. "Aleksandrovsk was taken by the Volunteers from the Bolsheviks. They were met by unanimous sincere joy of the citizenry. Overnight half of the town was sacked and filled by the screaming and moaning of distressed Jews. Wives were raped, men beaten and murdered, Jewish homes were totally ransacked. The pogrom continued for three days and three nights. Post-executive Cossack cornet Sliva dismissed complaints of the Public

Administration saying ‘it is always like that: we take a city and it belongs to the troops for three days. ’”

It is impossible to explain all this plunder and violence by soldiers of the Volunteer Army by actions of Jewish commissars. A top White general, A. von Lampe, claims that rumors about *Jewish* pogroms by the Whites are tendentiously exaggerated, that these pillaging “requisitions” were unavoidable actions of an army without quartermaster services or regular supplies from the rear areas. He says that Jews were not targeted deliberately but that all citizens suffered and that Jews suffered more because they were numerous and rich. “I am absolutely confident that in the operational theaters of the White armies there were no Jewish *pogroms*, i.e., no organized extermination and pillaging of Jews. There were robberies and even murders which were purposefully overblown and misrepresented as anti-Jewish pogroms by special press. Because of these accidents, the Second Kuban Infantry Brigade and the Ossetian Cavalry Regiment were disbanded. All the people, be they Christian or Jewish, suffered in disorderly areas.” There were executions (on tip offs by locals) of those unfortunate commissars and Chekists who did not manage to escape and there were quite a few Jews among them.

Events in Fastov in September 1919 appear differently. According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Cossacks “behaved outrageously … they killed, raped and flouted Jewish religious feelings. They had broken into a synagogue during Yom Kippur, beat up the whole congregation, raped the women and tore apart the Torah scrolls. About one thousand were killed.” A methodical quarter-by-quarter pillaging of Jews in Kiev after a brief return of the White troops in the end of October 1919 was dubbed the “quiet pogrom.” Shulgin writes: “The commanders strictly

prohibited pogroms. Yet the Yids were really an annoyance and, secondly, the heroes were hungry.... In general, the Volunteers in large cities were starving." There were nights of plunder but without murder and rape. It was "the end of Denikin's period ... and the beginning of the agony of the Volunteer Army."

By the route of its offensive and, particularly, its retreat, during its last brutal retreat in

November-December of 1919, the White Army carried out a large number of Jewish pogroms (acknowledged by Denikin), apparently not only for plunder but also for revenge. However,

Bikerman says that "murders, pillage and rape of women were not faithful companions of the White Army, unlike what is claimed by our [Jewish] National Socialists who exaggerate the horrible events to advance their own agenda."

Shulgin agrees: "For a true White, a massacre of unarmed civilians, the murder of women and children, and robbing someone's property are absolutely impossible things to do." Thus, the "true Whites" in this case are guilty of *negligence*. They were not sufficiently rigorous in checking the scum adhering to the White movement.

Pasmanik concurred that "everybody understands that General Denikin did not want pogroms but when I was in Novorossiysk and Ekaterinodar in April-May 1919, i.e., before the march to the north, I could sense a thickened and pervasive atmosphere of anti-Semitism everywhere." Whatever it was — negligence or revenge — it served well to ignite the White pogroms of 1919. Still, by unanimous testimony of those unlucky enough to experience both types of pogroms

[those by Petliura's troops and those by White Army], it was predominantly Petliura's troops who went for Jewish life and soul — they did the most killing.

It was not the Volunteer Army that initiated Jewish pogroms in the new Russia. They began in the reborn Poland the day after she became a free and independent state. While in Russia itself they were started by the Ukrainian troops of the Democrat Petliura and the Socialist Vynnychenko. The Ukrainians turned pogroms into an everyday event.

The Volunteer Army did not start the pogroms but it carried on with them, being fueled by a false conviction that *all* Jews were for Bolsheviks. The name of Leon Trotsky was particularly hated among the Whites and Petliura's soldiers and almost every pogrom went under a slogan "This is what you get for Trotsky." And even the Kadets who in the past always denounced any expression of anti-Semitism, and all the more so the pogroms during their November 1919 conference in

Kharkov demanded that Jews "declare relentless war against those elements of Jewry who actively participate in the Bolshevik movement."

At the same time, the Kadets emphasized that the White authorities do everything possible to stop pogroms, namely that since the beginning of October 1919 the leadership of the Volunteer Army began punishing pogromists with many measures including execution and as a result pogroms stopped for a while. Yet during the December 1919-March 1920 retreat of the Volunteer Army from Ukraine the pogroms became particularly violent and the Jews were accused of shooting the retreating Whites in the back. (Importantly, there were no pogroms in Siberia by A. Kolchak's troops, as Kolchak did not tolerate pogroms.)

D.O. Linsky, himself a former White Guard, emphatically writes: "Jewry was possibly given a unique chance to fight so hard for the Russian land, that the slanderous claim, that for Jews Russia is just geography and not Fatherland, would disappear once and for all." Actually, "there was and is no alternative: the victory of anti-Bolshevik forces will lead from suffering to revival of the whole country and of the Jewish people in particular.... Jewry should devote itself to the

Russian Cause entirely, to sacrifice their lives and wealth.... Through the dark stains on the White chasubles one should perceive the pure soul of the White Movement.... In an army where many Jewish youths were enlisted, in an army relying on extensive material support from Jewish population, anti-Semitism would suffocate and any pogromist movement would be countered and checked by internal forces. Jewry should have supported the Russian Army which went on in an immortal struggle for the Russian land.... Jewry was pushed from the Russian Cause, yet Jewry had to push away the pushers."

He writes all this after having painful personal experience of participation in the White movement. Despite all those dark and serious problems that surfaced in the White movement, we delightfully and with great reverence bow our uncovered heads before this one and only commendable fact of the struggle against the ignominy of Russian history, the so-called Russian Revolution. It was a great movement for the unfading values of upholding the human spirit.

Yet the White Army did not support even those Jews who volunteered for service in it. What a humiliation people like doctor Pasmanik had to go through (many Jews were outraged after finding him among the pogromists!) The Volunteer Army persistently refused to accept Jewish petty

officers and cadets, even those who in October 1917 bravely fought against Bolsheviks. It was a huge moral blow to Russian Jewry. “I will never forget,” he writes, “how eleven Jewish petty officers came to me in Simferopol complaining that they were expelled from fighting units and posted as cooks in the rear.”

Shulgin writes: “If only as many Jews participated in the White Movement as did in the revolutionary democracy or in constitutional democracy before that....” Yet only a tiny part of Jewry joined the White Guards. Only very few individuals, whose dedication could not be overvalued as the anti-Semitism [among the Whites] was already clearly obvious by that time. Meanwhile, there were many Jews among the Reds. There, most importantly, they often occupied the top command positions. Aren’t we really aware of the bitter tragedy of those few Jews who joined the Volunteer Army. The lives of those Jewish Volunteers were as endangered by the enemy’s bullets as they were by the heroes of the rear who tried to solve the Jewish question in their own manner.”

Yet it was not all about the “heroes of the rear.” And anti-Semitic feelings had burst into flames among the young White officers from the intellectual families — despite all their education, tradition, and upbringing.

And this all the more doomed the White Army to isolation and perdition.

Linsky tells us that on the territories controlled by the Volunteer Army, the Jews were not employable in the government services or in the OsvAg (“Information-Propaganda Agency,” an intelligence and counter-intelligence agency, established in the White Army by General A.M. Dragomirov). Yet he refutes the claim that publications of OsvAg contained anti-Semitic propaganda

and that pogromists were not punished. No, the command did not want Jewish pogroms, yet it could not act against the pogromist attitudes of their troops. It psychologically couldn't use severe measures. The army was not as it used to be, and requirements of the regular wartime or peacetime military charters could not be fully applied to it, as the minds of all soldiers were already battle-scarred by the Civil War.

Although they didn't want pogroms, Denikin's government didn't dare to denounce anti-Semitic propaganda loudly, despite the fact that the pogroms inflicted great harm on Denikin's army. Pasmanik concludes: The Volunteer Army generally assumed a hostile attitude toward the entire Russian Jewry. But I. Levin disagrees, saying that "the views of only one part of the movement, those of the active pogromists, are now attributed to the whole movement," while in reality "the White Movement was quite complex, it was composed of different factions ... with often opposite views."

Yet to bet on Bolsheviks, to walk in their shadows because of fear of pogroms, is obvious and evident madness. A Jew says: either the Bolsheviks or the pogroms, whereas he should have been saying: the longer the Bolsheviks hold power, the closer we are to certain death. Yet the "Judæo-Communists" were, in the parlance of the Whites, agitators as well.

All this was resolutely stopped by Wrangel in Crimea, where there was nothing like what was described above. (Wrangel even personally ordered Rev. Vladimir Vostokov to stop his public anti-Jewish sermons.)

In July 1920, Shulim Bezpalov, the aforementioned Jewish millionaire, wrote from Paris to Wrangel in the Crimea: "We must save our Motherland. She will be saved by the children of the soil and industrialists. We must give

away 75 percent of our revenue until the value of ruble has recovered and normal life has been rebuilt.” Yet it was already too late.

Still, a part of the Jewish population of the Crimea chose to evacuate with Wrangel’s army.

True, the White Movement was in desperate need of the support by the Western public opinion, which in turn largely depended on the fate of Russian Jewry. It needed that support, yet, as we saw, it had fatally and unavoidably developed a hostility toward the Jews and later it was not able to prevent pogroms. As Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill was the major advocate of the Allied intervention in Russia and military aid to the White armies. Because of the pogroms, Churchill appealed directly to Denikin: “My goal of securing the support in the Parliament for the Russian national movement will be incomparably more difficult,” if the pogroms are not stopped. “Churchill also feared the reaction of powerful Jewish circles among the British elite.” Jewish circles in the USA held similar opinions on the situation in Russia.

However, the pogroms were not stopped, which largely explains the extremely weak and reluctant assistance given by the Western powers to the White armies. And calculations by Wall Street naturally led it to support Bolsheviks as the more likely future rulers over Russia’s riches. Moreover, the climate in the US and Europe was permeated by sympathy toward those who claimed to be builders of a New World, with their grandiose plans and great social objective.

And yet, the behavior of the former Entente of Western nations during the entire Civil War is striking by its greed and blind indifference toward the White Movement — the successor of their wartime ally, Imperial Russia. They

even demanded that the Whites join the Bolshevik delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference; then there was that delirious idea of peace negotiations with the Bolsheviks on the Princes' Islands. The Entente, which did not recognize any of the White governments officially, was hastily recognizing all those new national states emerging on the periphery of Russia — thus unambiguously betraying the desire for its dismemberment.

The British hurried to occupy the oil-rich region of Baku; the Japanese claimed parts of the Far East and the Kamchatka Peninsula. The American troops in Siberia were more of hindrance than a help and actually facilitated the capture of Primorye by the Bolsheviks. The Allies even extorted payments for any aid they provided — in gold from Kolchak; in the South of Russia, in the form of Black Sea vessels, concessions and future obligations. (There were truly shameful episodes: when the British were leaving the Archangel region in the Russian north, they took with them some of the Czar's military equipment and ammunition. They gave some of what they couldn't take to the Reds and sunk the rest in the sea — to prevent it from getting into the hands of the Whites!) In the spring of 1920, the Entente put forward an ultimatum to the White Generals Denikin and Wrangel demanding an end to their struggle against the Bolsheviks. (In the summer of 1920 France provided some material aid to Wrangel so that he could help Poland. Yet only six months later they were parsimoniously deducting Wrangel's military equipment as payment for feeding of those Russian soldiers who retreated to Gallipoli.)

We can judge about the actions of the few occupational forces actually sent by the Entente from a testimonial by Prince Grigory Trubetskoy, a serious diplomat, who observed the French Army during its

occupation of Odessa in 1919: “French policies in the South of Russia in general and their treatment of issues of Russian statehood in particular were strikingly confused, revealing their gross misunderstanding of the situation.”

### **Jewish Pogroms in Ukraine**

The black streak of Jewish pogroms in Ukraine ran through the whole of 1919 and the beginning of 1920. By their scope, scale and atrocity, these pogroms immeasurably exceeded all the previous historical instances discussed in this book — the pogroms of 1881-1882, 1903, and 1905. Yu. Larin, a high-placed Soviet functionary, wrote in the 1920s that during the Civil War Ukraine saw “a very large number of massive Jewish pogroms far exceeding anything from the past with respect to the number of victims and *number of perpetrators*.” Vynnychenko allegedly said that “the pogroms would stop only when the Jews would stop being communists.”

There is no precise estimate of the number of victims of those pogroms. Of course, no reliable count could be performed in that situation, neither during the events, nor immediately afterwards. In the book, *Jewish Pogroms*, we read: “The number of murdered in Ukraine and Byelorussia between 1917 and 1921 is approximately 180,000-200,000.... The number of orphans alone, 300,000, bespeaks of the enormous scale of the catastrophe.” The present-day *Jewish Encyclopedia* tells us that “by different estimates, from 70,000 to 180,000-200,000 Jews were killed.”

Compiling data from different Jewish sources, a modern historian comes up with 900 *mass* pogroms, of which: 40 percent by Petliura’s Ukrainian Directorate troops; 25 percent by the squads of the various Ukrainian atamans;

17 per cent by Denikin's White Army troops; and 8.5 per cent by the First Cavalry Army of Budyonny and other Red Army troops.

Yet how many butchered lives are behind these figures!

Already during the Civil War, national and socialist Jewish parties began merging with the Reds. The *Fareynikte*, the United Jewish Socialist Worker's Party, turned into the "ComFareynikte" [Communist Jewish Socialist Worker's Party] and adopted the communist program and together with the communist wing of the Bund formed the All-Russian "ComBund" in June 1920; in Ukraine, associates and members of the *Fareynikte* together with the Ukrainian ComBund formed the ComFarband [the Jewish Communist Union] which later joined the AllRussian Communist Party of Bolsheviks. In 1919 in Kiev, the official Soviet press provided texts in three languages — Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish.

The Bolsheviks used these pogroms in Ukraine to their enormous advantage, they extremely skillfully exploited the pogroms in order to influence public opinion in Russia and abroad in many Jewish and non-Jewish circles in Europe and America. Yet the Reds had the finger in the pie as well — and they were actually the first ones to slaughter Jews. In the spring of 1918, units of the Red Army, retreating from Ukraine, perpetrated pogroms using the slogan "Strike the

Yids and the bourgeoisie." The most atrocious pogroms were carried out by the First Cavalry Army during its retreat from Poland in the end of August 1920.

Yet historical awareness of the pogroms carried out by the Red Army during the Civil War has been rather glossed over. Only a few condemning voices have spoken on

the topic. Pasmanik wrote: “During the first winter of Bolshevik rule, the Red troops fighting under the red banner carried out several bloody pogroms, most notable of which were pogroms in Glukhov and Novgorod-Siverskiy. By number of victims, deliberate brutality, torture and abuse, those two had eclipsed even the Kalush massacre. Retreating before the advancing Germans, the Red troops were destroying Jewish settlements on their route.”

S. Maslov is also quite clear: “The march of the Budyonny’s Cavalry Army during its relocation from the Polish to the Crimean Front was marked by thousands of murdered Jews, thousands of raped women and dozens of utterly razed and looted Jewish settlements. In Zhytomyr, each new authority inaugurated its rule with a pogrom, and often repeatedly after each time the city changed hands again. The feature of all those pogroms — by Petliura’s troops, the Poles, or the Soviets — was the large number of killed.” The Bogunskiy and Taraschanskiy regiments stood out in particular (though those two having come over to Budyonny from the Directorate); allegedly, those regiments were disarmed because of the pogroms and the instigators were hanged.

The above-cited socialist S. Schwartz concludes from his historical standpoint (1952): “During the revolutionary period, particularly during the Civil War, anti-Semitism has grown extraordinarily and, especially in the South, spread extensively in the broad masses of the urban and rural population.”

Alas, the resistance of the Russian population to the Bolsheviks (without which we wouldn’t have a right to call ourselves a people) had faltered and took wrong turns in many ways, including on the Jewish issue. Meanwhile the Bolshevik regime was touting the Jews and they were joining

it, and the Civil War was more and more broadening that chasm between Reds and Whites. If the revolution in general has cleared Jewry of suspicion in counter-revolutionary attitude, the counter-revolution has suspected all Jewry of being pro-revolutionary. And thus, the Civil War became an unbearable torment for Jewry, further consolidating them on the wrong revolutionary positions, and so they failed to recognize the genuine redemptive essence of the White armies. Let's not overlook the general situation during the Civil War. It was literally a chaos which released unbridled anarchy across Russia. Anybody who wanted and was able to rob and kill was robbing and killing whoever he wanted. Officers of the Russian Army were massacred in the hundreds and thousands by bands of mutinous rabble. Entire families of landowners were murdered, estates were burned; valuable pieces of art were pilfered and destroyed in some places in manors all living things including livestock were exterminated. Mob rule spread terror on the streets of cities. Owners of plants and factories were driven out of their enterprises and dwellings. Tens of thousands of people all over Russia were shot for the glory of the proletarian revolution others rotted in stinking and vermin-infested prisons as hostages.

It was not a crime or personal actions that put a man under the axe but his affiliation with a certain social stratum or class. It would be an absolute miracle if, under conditions when whole human groups were designated for extermination, the group named "Jews" remained exempt. The curse of the time was that it was possible to declare an entire class or a tribe evil. So, condemning an entire social class to destruction is called revolution, yet to kill and rob Jews is called a pogrom?

The Jewish pogrom in the South of Russia was a component of the All-Russian pogrom.

Such was the woeful acquisition of all the peoples of Russia, including the Jews, after the successful attainment of equal rights, after the splendid Revolution of March 1917, that both the general sympathy of Russian Jews toward the Bolsheviks and the developed attitude of the White forces toward Jews eclipsed and erased the most important benefit of a possible White victory — the sane evolution of the Russian state.

## **Chapter XVII: Emigration Between the Two World Wars**

As a result of the October coup and the subsequent Civil War, hundreds of thousands Russian citizens emigrated abroad, some retreating in battles, others simply fleeing. Among those emigrants were the entire surviving combat personnel of the White Army, and many Cossacks. They were joined by the old nobility who were so strikingly passive during the fateful revolutionary years, although their wealth was precisely in land or estates. Many former landowners, who failed to take their valuables with them, upon arrival in Europe had to become taxi drivers or waiters. There were merchants, industrialists, financiers, quite a few of whom had money safely deposited abroad, and ordinary citizens too, of whom not all were well-educated, but who could not bear to stay under Bolshevism.

Many emigrants were Russian Jews. Of more than 2 million emigrants from the Soviet republics in 1918-1922 more than 200,000 were Jews. Most of them crossed the Polish and Romanian borders, and later emigrated to the USA, Canada, and the countries of South America and Western Europe. Many emigrated to Palestine. The newly formed independent Poland played an important role. It had a large Jewish population of its own before the revolution, and now a part of those who left Poland during the war were returning there too. Poles estimate that after the Bolshevik revolution 200-300 thousand Jews arrived in Poland from Russia. (This figure could be explained not only by increased emigration, but also by the re-arrangement of the Russian-Polish border). However, the majority of the Jews who left Russia in the first years after the revolution settled in Western

Europe. For example, around 100,000 Russian Jews had gathered in Germany by the end of World War I.

While Paris was, from the beginning, the political centre and unofficial capital of Russia-in-Exile, the second so to say cultural capital of Russian emigration in Europe from the end of 1920 until the beginning of 1924, was Berlin. There was also an intense cultural life in the 1920s in the Russian quarters of Prague, which became Russia-in-Exile's main university city. It was easier to settle in Berlin because of inflation. On the streets of Berlin, you could see former major industrialists and merchants, bankers and manufacturers, and many émigrés had capital there. Compared to other emigrants from Russia, Jewish emigrants had fewer problems with integration into the Diaspora life, and felt more confident there. Jewish emigrants were more active than Russians and generally avoided humiliating jobs. Mihkail Levitov, the commander of the Kornilov Regiment who had experienced all sorts of unskilled labour after emigration, told me: "Who paid us decently in Paris? Jews. Russian multi-millionaires treated their own miserably."

Both in Berlin and in Paris the Jewish intelligentsia was prominent – lawyers, book publishers, social and political activists, scholars, writers and journalists, many of whom were deeply assimilated, while Russian emigrants from the capitals Moscow and St. Petersburg mostly had liberal opinions which facilitated mutual amity between the two groups (unlike the feeling between Jews and the Russian monarchist emigrants.)

The influence of Russian Jews in the entire cultural atmosphere of Russia-in-Exile between the two world wars was more than palpable. Here it is proper to mention a very interesting series of collections, *Jews in the Culture of Russia-in-Exile*, published in Israel in 1990s and still

continuing. Some Jewish families with a comfortable income opened Russian artistic salons, clearly demonstrating Jewish attachment to and immersion in Russian culture. There was the famously generous house of the Tsetlins in Paris. Many others, I. V. Gessen's in

Berlin, I. I. Fondaminsky-Bunakov (tireless in his endless, selfless cares for Russian culture abroad), Sofia Pregel, Sonya Delone, Alexander and Salomeia Galpern, were constantly engaged in the burdensome business of providing assistance for impoverished writers and artists. They helped many, and not just the famous, such as Bunin, Remizov, Balmont, Teffi, but also unknown young poets and painters. (However, this help did not extend to White and monarchist emigrants, with whom there was mutual antagonism). Overall, among all the emigrants, Russian Jews proved themselves the most active in all forms of cultural and social enterprise. This was so striking that it was reflected in Mihail Osorgin's article, *Russian Loneliness*, printed in the Russian Zionist magazine *Rassvet* [Dawn], re-established abroad by V. Jabotinsky.

Osorgin wrote: "In Russia, there was not this 'Russian loneliness' neither in the social nor the revolutionary movement (I mean the depths and not just the surface); the most prominent figures who gave specific flavour to the whole movement were Slavic Russians." But after emigration "where there is a refined spirituality, where there is deep interest in thought and art, where the calibre of man is higher, there a Russian feels national loneliness; on the other hand, where there are more of his kin, he feels cultural solitude. I call this tragedy the Russian loneliness. I am not at all an anti-Semite, but I am primarily a Russian Slav. My people, Russians, are much closer to me in spirit, in language and speech, in their specific national strengths and

weaknesses. For me, it is precious to have them as my fellow thinkers and peers, or perhaps it is just more comfortable and pleasant. Although I can respect the Jew, the Tatar, the Pole in the multi-ethnic and not at all “Russian” Russia, and recognise each as possessing the same right to Russia, our collective mother, as I have; yet I myself belong to the Russian group, to that spiritually influential group which has shaped the Russian culture.” But now “Russians abroad have faded and given up and surrendered the positions of power to another tribe’s energy. Jews adapt easier – and good for them! I am not envious, I am happy for them. I am equally willing to step aside and grant them the honour of leadership in various social movements and enterprises abroad. But there is one area where this ‘Jewish empowerment’ strikes me at the heart – charity. I do not know who has more money and diamonds, rich Jews or rich Russians. But I know for certain that all large charitable organizations in Paris and Berlin can help poor Russian emigrants only because they collect the money needed from generous Jewry. My experience of organizing soireés, concerts, meetings with authors has proven that appealing to rich Russians is a pointless and humiliating waste of time. Just to soften the tone of such an ‘antiSemitic’ article, I will add that, in my opinion, the nationally sensitive Jew can often mistake national sensitivity of a Slav for a spectre of anti-Semitism.” Osorgin’s article was accompanied by the editorial (most likely written by the editor-in-chief

Jabotinsky based on the ideas expressed and with a similar style) to the effect that M.A. Osorgin “has no reason to fear that the reader of *Rassvet* would find anti-Semitic tendencies in his article.

There was once a generation that shuddered at the word ‘Jew’ on the lips of a nonJew. One of the foreign leaders of that

generation said: ‘The best favour the major press can give us is to not mention us.’ He was listened to, and for a long time in progressive circles in Russia and Europe the word ‘Jew’ was regarded as an unprintable obscenity. Thank God, that time is over. We can assure Osorgin of our understanding and sympathy.... However, we disagree with him on one point. He gives too much importance to the role of Jews in charity among refugees. First, this prominent role is natural. Unlike Russians, we were learning the art of living in Diaspora for a long time. But there is a deeper explanation. We have received much that is precious from the Russian culture; we will use it even in our future independent national art. We Russian Jews are in debt to Russian culture; we have not come close to repaying that debt. Those of us that do what they can to help it survive during these hard times are doing what is right and, we hope, will continue doing so.”

However, let us return to the years immediately after the revolution. Political passions were still running high among Russian emigrants, and there was a desire to comprehend what had happened in Russia. Newspapers, magazines, book publishers sprung up. Some rich men, usually Jews, financed this new liberal and more left-of-center Russian emigrant press. There were many Jews among journalists, newspaper and magazine editors, book publishers. A detailed record of their contribution can be found in *The Book of Russian Jewry* (now also in *Jews in the Culture of Russia-in-Exile*).

Of significant historical value among these are the twenty-two volumes of I. V. Gessen’s Archive of the Russian Revolution. Gessen himself, along with A. I. Kaminkov and V. D. Nabokov (and G. A. Landau after the latter’s death), published a prominent Berlin newspaper *Rul* [Steering

Wheel], a kind of emigrant version of *Rech* [Speech], but unlike Milyukov's brainchild, Josef

Gessen's position was consistently patriotic. *Rul* often published articles by G. A. Landau and I. O. Levin, whom I have amply cited, and also articles by the famous literary critic U. I. Aikhenvald. The political spectrum of Berlin papers ranged from *Rul* on the right to the socialists on the left. A. F. Kerensky published *Dni* [Days], which provided a platform for such personalities as A. M.

Kulisher-Yunius (author of a number of sociological works and a Zionist from Jabotinsky's circle),

S. M. Soloveichik, the famous former Socialist Revolutionary O. C. Minor (he also wrote for the Prague *Volya Rossii* [Russia's Will], and the former secretary of the Constituent Assembly M. V. Vishnyak. In 1921 U. O. Martov and R. A. Abramovich founded the *Socialist Herald* in Berlin (it later moved to Paris and then New York). F. I. Dan, D. U. Dalin, P. A. Garvi, and G. Y. Aranson worked on it among others.

V. E. Jabotinsky, whose arrival in Berlin (after three years in Jerusalem) coincided with the first wave of emigration, re-established *Rassvet*, first in Berlin and then in Paris, and also published his own novels. In addition many Russian Jewish journalists lived in Berlin in 1920-1923, working in the local and international emigrant press. There we could find I. M. Trotsky from the defunct *Russkoe Slovo* [Russian Word], N. M. Volkovysky, P. I. Zvezdich (who died at the hands of Nazis during the World War II), the Menshevik S. O. Portugeis from the St. Petersburg *Den* [Day] where he wrote under the pseudonym S. Ivanovich, the playwright Osip Dymov-Perelman, and the novelist V. Y. Iretsky.

Berlin also became the capital of Russian book publishing: In 1922, all these Russian publishers released more Russian books and publications than there were German books published in the whole of Germany. Most of these publishers and booksellers were Jewish. Most notable were the publishing houses of I. P. Ladyzhnikov, owned since the war by B. N. Rubinstein (classical, modern and popular scientific literature), of Z. I. Grzhebin (which had links to the Soviets, and so sold some of his works in the USSR), the publishing house Word, established as early as 1919 and run by I. V. Gessen and A. I. Kaminka (collections of Russian classics, emigrant writers and philosophers, valuable historical and biographical works), and the artistically superb issues of Zhar-Ptitsa run by A. E. Kogan. Also there was *Edges* of A. Tsatskis, Petropolis of Y. N. Blokh, Obelisk of A. S. Kagan, Helicon of A.G. Vishnyak, and Scythians of I. Shtenberg. S. Dubnov's World History of the Jewish People was also published in Berlin in ten German volumes, and during the 1930s in Russian in Riga.

Riga and other cities in the once again independent Baltic countries (with their substantial Jewish populations) became major destinations of Jewish emigration. Moreover, the only common language that Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians shared was Russian, and so the Riga newspaper *Sevodnya* [Today] (publishers Ya. I. Brams and B. Yu. Polyak) became highly influential. A large number of Russian-Jewish journalists worked there: the editor M. I. Ganfman, and after his death M. S. Milrud; *Segodnya Vecherom* [This Evening] was edited by B. I. Khariton. The latter two were arrested by the NKVD in 1940 and died in Soviet camps. V. Ziv, an economist, and M. K. Aizenshtadt (under the pen names of first Zhelezov, then Argus) wrote for the newspaper. Gershon Svet wrote from Berlin. Andrei

Sedykh (Y. M. Tsvibak) was its Paris correspondent, Volkovyssky reported from Berlin, and L. M. Nemanov from Geneva. From the late 1920s, Berlin started to lose its position as the centre of emigrant culture because of the economic instability and the rise of Nazism. *Rul* had to close in 1931. Emigrants had dispersed with the main wave going to France, especially to Paris which was already a major centre of emigration. In Paris the main emigrant newspaper was *Poslednie Novosti* [Breaking News], founded at the beginning of 1920 by the St. Petersburg barrister M. L. Goldstein. It was financed by M. S. Zalshupin, and in a year the newspaper was bought by P. N. Milyukov. While it was in a precarious position, the paper was significantly financially supported by M. M. Vinaver. Milyukov's right hand was A. A. Polyakov. Editorials and political articles were written by Kulisher-Yunius, who was arrested in 1942 in France and died in a concentration camp. The international news section was run by M. Yu.

Berkhin-Benedictov, an acquaintance of Jabotinsky. The staff included the acerbic publicist S. L. Polyakov-Litovtsev (who had only learnt to speak and write Russian at fifteen), B. S. MirkinGetsevich (who wrote as Boris Mirsky), the noted Kadet publicist Pyotr Ryss and others. *Poslednie Novosti* published the satirical articles of I. V. Dioneo-Shklovsky and the popular science of Yu. Delevsky (Ya. L. Yudelevsky). The best humorists were V. Azov (V. A. Ashkenazi), Sasha Cherny (A. M. Gliksberg), the "king of humour" Don-Aminado (Shpolyansky).

*Poslednie Novosti* had the widest circulation of all emigrant newspapers. Shulgin called it "the citadel of political Jewishness and philo-Semitic Russians." Sedykh regarded this opinion as an "obvious exaggeration." The political tension around the paper also

stemmed from the fact that immediately after the Civil War it was dedicated to “disclosure” and sometimes outright condemnation of the Volunteer Army. Sedykh noted that in Paris “there was not only a political divide, but also a national one”; Milyukov’s editorial team included many Russian-Jewish journalists, while Jewish names virtually never appeared on the pages of the right-wing *Vozrozhdenie* [Rebirth] with the exception of I. M. Bikerman. (*Vozrozhdenie* was founded later than the other papers and ceased operation in 1927, when its benefactor Gukasov fired the main editor P. B. Struve.

The leading literary-political magazine *Sovremennye Zapiski* [Contemporary Notes], published in Paris from 1920 to 1940, was established and run by Socialist Revolutionaries, N. D. Avksentiev, I. I. Fondaminsky-Bunakov, V. V. Rudnev, M. V. Vishnyak and A. I. Gukovsky.

Sedykh noted that “out of its five editors, three were Jews.” In 70 volumes of the *Sovremennye Zapiski* we see fiction, articles on various topics and the memoirs of a large number of Jewish authors. *Illyustrirovannaya Rossia* [Illustrated Russia] was published by the St. Petersburg journalist M. P. Mironov, and later by B. A. Gordon (earlier the owner of Priaзовsky Krai). Its weekly supplement gave the readers 52 pieces of classic or contemporary emigrant literature each year. The literary emigrant world also included many prominent Russian Jews, such as Mark Aldanov, Semyon Yushkevich, the already mentioned Jabotinsky and Yuly Aikhenvald, M. O. Tsetlin (Amari). However, the topic of Russian emigrant literature cannot be examined in any detail here due to its immenseness.

Here I would like to address the life of Ilya Fondaminsky (born in 1880). He was born into a prosperous

merchant family and married in his youth to the granddaughter of the millionaire tea trader V. Y. Vysotsky, yet he nonetheless joined the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and sacrificed a large part of his wealth and his wife's inheritance to the revolution by buying weaponry. He worked towards the outbreak of the All-Russian political strike in 1905 and during the uprising he served in the headquarters of the SRs. He emigrated from Russia to Paris in 1906, where he became close to D. Merezhkovsky and Z. Gippius and developed an interest in Christianity.

He returned to St. Petersburg in April 1917. In the summer of 1917 he was the commissar of the Black Sea Fleet, and later a delegate in the Constituent Assembly, fleeing after it was disbanded. From 1919 he lived in Paris, France, during the period under discussion. He devoted much time and effort to *Sovremennye Zapiski*, including publication of a series of articles titled *The Ways of Russia*. He played an active role in emigrant cultural life and provided all possible support to Russian writers and poets. For a while he even managed to maintain a Russian theatre in Paris. His passion, many-sidedness, energy and selflessness were without parallel among emigrants. He estranged himself from the SRs and joined the Christian Democrats. Along with the like-minded G. P. Fedotov and F. A. Stepun he began to publish the Christian Democratic *Novy Grad* [New City]. He grew ever closer to Orthodoxy during these years. In June 1940, he fled Paris from the advancing German forces, but came back and was arrested in July 1941 and sent to Compiègne camp near Paris; by some accounts, he converted to Christianity there. In 1942, he was deported to Auschwitz and killed.

Between 1920 and 1924, the most important forum for purely Jewish issues was the Paris weekly *Jewish*

*Tribune*, published in both French and Russian with the prominent participation of M. M. Vinaver and S. B. Pozner. It published articles by many of the aforementioned journalists from other newspapers.

*Novoe Russkoe Slovo* [New Russian Word] was founded in 1910 in the United States and added its voice from across the ocean. Its publisher from 1920 was V. I. Shimkin and the main editor (from 1922) was M. E. Veinbaum. Veinbaum remembered: The newspaper was often criticised, and not without reason. But gradually it earned the reader's confidence. Its masthead now proudly boasts: "the oldest Russian newspaper in the world"; it is even two years older than *Pravda*. All the others have died out at various times, for various reasons.

Right-wing or nationalist Russian newspapers appeared in Sofia, Prague, and even Suvorin's *Novoe Vremya* [New Times] continued in Belgrade as *Vechernee Vremya* [Evening Times], but they all either collapsed or withered away without leaving a lasting contribution. (The publisher of *Rus* in Sofia was killed.) The Paris *Vozrozhdenie* of Yu. Semenov did not shirk from anti-Semitic outbursts, but not under Struve's short reign.

### **Early Soviet “Anti-Semitism”**

Those who left soon after the Bolshevik victory could not even imagine the scale of the inferno that broke out in Russia. It was impossible to believe in rumours. Testimonies from the White camp were mostly ignored. This changed when several Russian democratic journalists, the Constitutional Democrat (Kadet) A. V. Tyrkova-Williams, the socialist E. D. Kuskova (exiled from the USSR in 1922), and the escaped SR S. S. Maslov began to inform the stunned

emigrant public about rapid growth of grass-root anti-Semitism in Soviet Russia: “Judæphobia is one of the most acrid features of modern Russia. Perhaps even the acridest. Judæphobia is everywhere:

North, South, East, and West. It is shared regardless of intellect, party membership, tribe, age....

Even some Jews share it.”

These claims were at first met with suspicion by Jews who had emigrated earlier – what’s the reason for this anti-Semitism? The *Jewish Tribune* initially rejected these claims: “Generally, Russian Jewry suffered from Bolshevism perhaps more than any other ethnic group in Russia”; as to the “familiar identification of Jews and commissars – we all know that it is the work of the [anti-Semitic] Black Hundreds.”

The old view, that anti-Semitism resides not in the people but in Czarism, began to transform into another, that the Russian people are themselves its carriers. Therefore, Bolsheviks should be credited for the suppression of popular Black Hundred attitudes in Russia. Others began to excuse even their capitulation at Brest [at which Russia ceded large amounts of territory to the Kaiser’s German military]. The *Jewish Tribune* in 1924 dusted off even such argument: “The Russian revolution of 1917, when it reached Brest-Litovsk, prevented the much greater and more fateful betrayal planned by Czarist Russia.”) Yet the information was gradually confirmed; moreover, anti-Jewish sentiments spread over a large segment of Russian emigration. The Union for Russian Salvation (dedicated to crown prince Nikolai Nikolaevich) produced leaflets for distribution in the USSR in a manner like this:

**“To the Red Army. The Jews have ruled Great Russia for seven years.... To Russian workers. You were**

**assured that you would be the masters of the country; that it will be the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat.’ Where is it then? Who is in power in all the cities of the republic?”** Of course, these leaflets did not reach the USSR, but they scared and offended Jewish emigrants.

S. Litovtsev wrote: “In the beginning of 1920s, anti-Semitism among emigrants became almost an illness, a sort of delirium tremens.” But it was a broader attitude as many in Europe during the first years after the Bolshevik victory rejected and damned the Jews, so that the identification of Bolshevism with Judaism became a widespread part of European thought. It is ridiculous to assert that it is only anti-Semites preach this social-political heresy. But could it be that the conclusions of Dr. Pasmanik were somehow premature? Yet this is what he wrote in 1922: “In the whole civilised world, among all nations and social classes and political parties, it is the established opinion now that Jews played the crucial role in the appearance and in all the manifestations of Bolshevism. Personal experience tells that this is the opinion not only of downright anti-Semites, but also that representatives of the democratic public reference these claims, i.e., to the role of Jews not only in Russian Bolshevism, but also in Hungary, Germany and everywhere else it has appeared. At the same time, the downright anti-Semites care little for truth.

For them all Bolsheviks are Jews, and all Jews are Bolsheviks.”

Bikerman wrote a year later: “Waves of Judæophobia now roll over nations and peoples, with no end in sight, not just in Bavaria or Hungary, not only in the nations formed from the ruins of the once great Russia, but also in countries separated from Russia by continents and oceans and untouched by the turmoil. Japanese academics came to

Germany to get acquainted with antiSemitic literature: there is interest in us even on distant islands where almost no Jews live. It is precisely Judeophobia – the fear of the Jew-destroyer. Russia's miserable fate serves as the material evidence to frighten and enrage.”

In the collective declaration *To the Jews of the World!* the authors warn: **“Never have so many clouds gathered above the Jewish people.”**

Should we conclude that these authors exaggerated, that they were too sensitive? That they imagined a non-existent threat? Yet doesn't the abovementioned warning about anti-Semitic literature in Germany sound very scary in retrospect, from our historical perspective?

The opinion that Jews created Bolshevism was already so widespread in Europe (this was the “average opinion of French and English philistines,” Pasmanik notes) that it was supported even by Plekhanov's son-in-law, George Bato, who claims in his book that Jews are inherently revolutionaries: “As Judaism preaches an ideal of social justice on earth, it has to support revolution.”

Pasmanik cites Bato: “Over the centuries Jews have always been against the established order. This does not mean that Jews carried out all revolutions, or that they were always the sole or even main instigators; they help the revolutions and participate in them. One can responsibly claim, as many Russian patriots, often from very progressive circles do, that Russia now agonizes under the power of Jewish dictatorship and Jewish terror. Impartial analysis of the worldwide situation shows the rebirth of anti-Semitism, not so much against Jews as individuals, as against the manifestations of the Jewish spirit.”

The Englishman Hilaire Belloc similarly wrote about “the Jewish character of the Bolshevik revolution,” or

simply: “the Jewish revolution in Russia.” Pasmanik adds that “anyone who has lived in England recently knows that Belloc’s opinion is not marginal. The books of both authors (Bato and Belloc) are enormously popular with the public. Journalists all over the world argue that all the destructive ideas of the past hundred years are spread by Jews, through precisely Judaism.”

“We must defend ourselves,” Pasmanik writes, “because we cannot deny obvious facts. We cannot just declare that the Jewish people are not to blame for the acts of this or that individual Jew. Our goal is not only an argument with anti-Semites, but also a struggle with Bolshevism not only to parry blows, but to inflict them on those proclaiming the Kingdom of Ham. To fight against Ham is the duty of Japheth and Shem, and of Helenes, and Hebrews. Where should we look for the real roots of Bolshevism? Bolshevism is primarily an anti-cultural force. It is both a Russian and a global problem, and not the machination of the notorious ‘Elders of Zion.’”

### **The Protocols**

The Jews acutely realized the need to defend themselves in part because the post-war Europe and America were flooded with *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, suddenly and virtually instantly. These were five editions in England in 1920, several editions in both Germany and France; half a million copies in America were printed by Henry Ford. The unheard-of success of the *Protocols*, which were translated into several languages, showed how much the Bolshevik revolution was believed to be Jewish.

English researcher Norman Cohn wrote: “In the years immediately after the World War I, when the *Protocols*

entered mainstream and thundered across the world, many otherwise entirely sensible people took them completely seriously.”

The London *Times* and *Morning Post* of that time vouched for their authenticity, although by August 1921 the *Times* published a series of articles from its Istanbul correspondent, Philipp Greaves, who sensationally demonstrated the extensive borrowing of the text in the Protocols from one of Maurice Jolie’s anti-Napoleon III pamphlets (*The Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*, 1864). At that time, the French police managed to confiscate every single copy of the infamous pamphlet.

The *Protocols* came to the West from a Russia overtaken by the Civil War. The official version of their provenance is that they are a journalistic fraud produced in the early 20th century, in 1900 or 1901. The *Protocols* were first published in 1903 in St. Petersburg. The mastermind behind them is thought to be P. I. Rachkovsky, the 1884-1902 head of the Foreign Intelligence unit of the Police Department; their production is attributed to Matvei Golovinsky, a secret agent from 1892 and son of V. A. Golovinsky, who was a member of Petrashevsky Circle. The latter was a Russian literary discussion group of progressive-minded commoner-intellectuals in St. Petersburg organized by Mikhail Petrashevsky, a follower of the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier. Among the members were writers, teachers, students, minor government officials, army officers. While differing in political views, most of them were opponents of the Czarist autocracy and Russian serfdom. Among those connected to the circle was the writer Dostoyevsky.

Still, new theories about the origin of the *Protocols* appear all the time. Although the *Protocols* were published

and re-published in 1905, 1906, 1911, they had little success in prerevolutionary Russia. They did not find broad support in Russian society and the Court did not give support to their distribution either. After many failed attempts, the *Protocols* were finally presented to Nicholas II in 1906 and he was very impressed. His notes on the margins of the book included: “What a foresight!”, ‘What precise execution!’, “It is definitely them who orchestrated the revolutionary events of 1905!”, ‘There can be no doubt about their authenticity.’

But when the right-wing activists suggested using the *Protocols* for the defence of the monarchy, Prime Minister P. A. Stolypin ordered a secret investigation into their origins. It showed they were a definite fabrication. The monarch was shocked by Stolypin’s report, but wrote firmly: “remove the *Protocols* from circulation. You cannot defend a noble cause with dirty means.” From that point on Russia’s rulers’ dismissed *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; no reference to the *Protocols* was allowed even during the Beilis Trial.

However, 1918 changed everything for the *Protocols*. After the Bolsheviks seized power, after the murder of the royal family and the beginning of the Civil War, the popularity of the *Protocols* surged. They were printed and reprinted by the OsvAg [White Army counterintelligence agency in the South of Russia] in Novocherkassk, Kharkov, Rostov-on-Don, Omsk, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, and were widely circulated among both the Volunteer Army and the population (and later Russian emigrants, especially in Sofia and Belgrade). After the Bolshevik victory, the selling of *Protocols* was banned in Russia and became a criminal offence, but in Europe the *Protocols* brought in by the White emigration played an ominous role in the development of right-wing ideology, especially National Socialism in Germany.

Exposure of the *Protocols* as forgery, and general denial of identity between Bolsheviks and Jews constituted a major share of liberal emigrant journalism of the 1920s and 1930s. We see several prominent Russians there: Milyukov, Rodichev, Burtsev and Kartashev.

A.V. Kartashev, historian of religion, Orthodox theologian and at the same time, a public figure, wrote about the unacceptability of anti-Semitism for a Christian in the pre-revolutionary collection *Shchit* [Shield], which I have often cited. In 1922, in emigration, he wrote the foreword to Yu. Delevsky's book on the *Protocols*. In 1937 Burtsev too asked him to write a foreword for his book. Kartashev wrote in it: "A man with common sense, good will and a little scientific discipline cannot even discuss the authenticity of this police and journalistic forgery, though certainly a talented forgery, able to infect the ignorant.... It's unfair to continue supporting this obvious deceit after it has been so unambiguously exposed. Yet it is equally unfair to do the opposite, to exploit the easy victory over the *Protocols*' authenticity to dismiss legitimate concerns. A half-truth is a lie. The whole truth is that the Jewish question is posed before the world as one of the tragic questions of history. And it cannot be resolved either by savage pogroms, or by libel and lies, but only by honest and open efforts of all mankind. Pogroms and slander make a sensible and honest raising of the question more difficult, degrading it to outright stupidity and absurdity. They confuse the Jews themselves, who constantly emphasize their 'oppressed innocence' and expect from everybody else nothing but sympathy and some sort of obligatory Judeophilia." Kartashev certainly regarded debunking of this sensational apocrypha as a moral duty, but also thought that "in washing out the dust of *Protocols* from the eyes of the ignorant, it is unacceptable to impair their

vision anew by pretending that this obliterates the Jewish question itself.”

Indeed, the Jewish question cannot be removed by either books or articles. Consider the new reality faced in the 1920s by Jews in the Baltic countries and Poland. In the Baltics, although Jews managed to maintain for a while their influential position in trade and industry, they felt social pressure. A good half of Russian Jewry lived in the newly independent states. New states trumpet their nationalism all the louder the less secure they feel. There Jews feel themselves besieged by a hostile, energetic and restless popular environment. One day, it is demanded that there be no more Jews percentage-wise in the institutions of higher learning than in the army. The next, the air of everyday life becomes so tense and stressful that Jews can no longer breathe. In the self-determined nations, the war against Jews is waged by the society itself: by students, military, political parties, and ordinary people. I. Bikerman concluded that “in leading the charge for self-determination, Jews were preparing the ground for their own oppression by virtue of higher dependence on the alien society. The situation of Jews in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania is literally tragic. Yesterday’s oppressed are today’s oppressors, what is more – extremely uncouth oppressors, entirely unashamed of their lack of culture.”

So it transpired that the breakup of Russia also meant the breakup of Russian Jewry as the history paradoxically showed that the Jews were better off in the united Russian Empire despite all the oppression. So now in these splintered border countries Jews became the faithful guardians of the Russian language, Russian culture, impatiently waiting for the restoration of the great Russia. Schools that still teach in Russian became filled with Jewish children, to the exclusion

of learning the languages of the newly-formed states. In these tiny countries, the Russian Jew, accustomed to life in the open swathes of a great empire, felt uncomfortable, squeezed and diminished in his social status, despite all the civil rights and autonomy.

Still, the position of Jewry in the circles of international post-war politics was strong, especially in Paris, and in particular regarding Zionism. In July 1922 the League of Nations recognised the World Zionist Organization as the ‘Jewish Agency,’ which first and foremost represented the interests of Zionists, and secondly of non-Zionists, and also provided support to the European Jews.

Bikerman accused the Zionists of seeing a fragmented Russia as an ideal. This is why the organization of Russian Zionists calls itself not Russian, but Russo-Ukrainian. This is why the Zionists and related Jewish groups so assiduously fraternized with the Ukrainian separatists.

\* \* \*

After the Civil War, Soviet Russia sank into a heavy silence. From this point and for decades to follow, all independent voices were squashed and only the official line could be heard. And the less was heard from Russia, the louder was the voice of emigration. All of them, from anarchists to monarchists, looked back in pain and argued intensely: who and to what extent was to blame for what had happened?

Discussion developed within emigrant Jewry as well. In 1923 Bikerman noted: “Jews answer everything with a familiar gesture and familiar words: we know, we’re to blame; whenever something goes wrong, you’ll look for a Jew and find one. Ninety percent of what is written in the

contemporary Jewish press about Jews in Russia is just a paraphrase of this stereotype. And because it's impossible that we're always to blame for everything, Jews take from this the flattering and at first glance quite convenient conclusion that we're always and everywhere in the right."

However, consider: "Before the revolution, the Jewish society passionately argued that a revolution would save the Jews, and we still ardently adhere to this position." When the Jewish organizations gathered resources in the West to aid their co-ethnics, suffering in the USSR, they denounced, belittled, and slandered everything about pre-revolutionary Russia, including the most positive and constructive things; See, Bolshevik Russia has now become the Promised Land, egalitarian and socialist! Many Jews who emigrated from Russia settled in the United States, and pro-Bolshevik attitudes spread quickly among them. The general Jewish mood was that Bolshevism was better than restoration of monarchy. It was widely believed that the fall of Bolshevism in Russia would inevitably engender a new wave of bloody Jewish pogroms and mass extermination. And it is on this basis that Bolshevism is preferred as the lesser evil.

Then, as if to confirm that Bolsheviks are changing for the better, that they can learn, the NEP [New Economic Policy] came! The Reds loosened their suffocating grip on the economy, and that made them all the more acceptable. "First NEP, then some concessions – hopefully, it'll all work out for us!"

We cannot call the entire Jewish emigration pro-Bolshevik. Yet they did not see the Bolshevik state as their main enemy, and many still sympathized with it.

Yet a noteworthy incident, mockingly described in *Izvestia*, happened to Goryansky, a Jewish emigrant writer. In 1928, the already famous Babel (and already well-known

for his links to the Cheka) was temporarily residing in Paris to muster creative inspiration. While in the Cafe Rotonda he noticed his old acquaintance, probably from Odessa, who magnanimously offered his hand to him: "Greetings, Goryansky." But Goryansky stood up and contemptuously turned away from the offered hand.

The rise of Hitlerism in Germany naturally and for a long time reinforced the preference for Bolshevism in the social mind of the European Jewry. The First International Jewish Congress took place in Vienna in August 1936. M. Vishnyak disapprovingly suggested that the collective attitude toward the Bolshevik régime was perfectly exemplified by the opinion of N. Goldman: if all sorts of freedom-loving governments and organizations "flatter and even fawn before the Bolsheviks ... why shouldn't supporters of Jewish ethnic and cultural independence follow the same path?" Only Moscow's open support for anti-Jewish violence in Palestine slightly cooled the Congress leaders' disposition toward the Soviet state. Even then they only protested the banning of Hebrew and the banning of emigration from the USSR to Palestine, and finally they objected to the continuing suffering of Zionists in political prisons and concentration camps. Here N. Goldman found both the necessary words and inspiration.

In 1939 on the eve of the World War II, S. Ivanovich noted: "It cannot be denied that among emigrant Russian Jews the mood is to rely on the perseverance of the Soviet dictatorship if only to prevent pogroms."

What of Jewish Bolsheviks? I. Bikerman: "Prowess doesn't taint – that is our attitude to Bolsheviks who were raised among us and to their satanic evil. Or the modern version: Jews have the right to have their own Bolsheviks. I have heard this declaration a thousand times, at meetings of

Jewish emigrants in Berlin one after the other, when a respected Kadet, a Democrat, a Zionist ascended the podium and each proclaimed this right of Jews to have their own Bolsheviks ... their right to monstrosity."

Here are the consequences of these words: Jewish opinion across the world turned away from Russia and accepted the Bolsheviks. When a famous, old, and well respected Jewish public figure – a white crow – suggested to a high Jewish dignitary in one of the European capitals organizing a protest against the executions of Orthodox priests in Russia [i.e. in the USSR], the latter, after reflecting on the idea, said that it would mean struggling against Bolshevism, which he considers an impossible thing to do because the collapse of Bolshevik regime would lead to antiJewish pogroms.

But if they can live with Bolsheviks, what do they think of the White movement? When Josef Bikerman spoke in Berlin in November 1922 at the fifth anniversary of the founding of the White Army, Jewish society in general was offended and took this as a slight against them.

Meanwhile, Dr. D. S. Pasmanik (who fought on the German front until February 1917, then in the White Army until May 1919, when he left Russia) had already finished and in 1923 published in Paris his book *Russian Revolution and Jewry: Bolshevism and Judaism* (I cited it here), where he passionately argued against the commonplace explanation that Bolshevism originated from the Jewish religion. "The identification of Judaism with Bolshevism is a grave global danger." In 1923, together with I. M. Bikerman, G. A. Landau, I. O. Levin, D. O. Linsky (also an ex-member of the White Army) and V. C. Mandel, Pasmanik founded the National Union of Russian Jews Abroad. This group published an appeal *To the Jews of the World!* in the same

year, and soon after published a collection Russia and the Jews in Berlin.

Here is how they describe the task they undertook and their feelings. Pasmanik said: “The unspeakable pain of the Jew and the unending sorrow of the Russian citizen motivated this work. Because of the dark events of the recent years, it was difficult to find a balanced point of view on both Russian and Jewish questions. We attempted to merge the interests of the renewed Russia and of the afflicted Russian Jewry.”

Linsky: “Unfathomed sorrow dwells in the souls of those who realize their Jewishness while similarly identifying as Russians. It is much easier when one of the two streams of your national consciousness dries up, leaving you only a Jew or only a Russian, thus simplifying your position toward Russia’s tragic experience. The villainous years of the revolution killed the shoots of hope” for rapprochement between Jews and Russians that had appeared just before the war; now “we witness active Russo-Jewish divergence.”

Levin: “It is our duty to honestly and objectively examine the causes of and the extent of Jewish involvement in the revolution. This might have certain effect on future relations between

Russians and Jews.”

The co-authors of the collection rightly warned Russians not to mix up the meaning of the February Revolution and Jewish involvement in it. Bikerman if anything minimised this involvement (the power balance between the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Soldiers’ and

Workers’ Deputies and the Provisional Government was for the most part unclear to contemporaries). However, he thought that after the October Bolshevik coup “the Jewish

right to have their Bolsheviks implies a duty to have also their right-wingers and extreme right-wingers, the polar opposites of the Bolsheviks.”

Pasmanik: “In all its varieties and forms, Bolshevik communism is an evil and true foe of Jewry, as it is first of all the enemy of personal identity in general and of cultural identity in particular. Bound by a plethora of intimate connections to our motherland, to its political system, economy and culture, we cannot flourish while the country disintegrates around us.”

Obviously, these authors were fully aware of the significance of the Russian catastrophe. In describing those years, I heavily relied on the work of these people with the hope that their bitter, but not at all “self-hating,” reflections can finally be understood and comprehended in their entirety.

Their 1923 Proclamation stated: “The National Union of Russian Jews Abroad firmly believes that the Bolsheviks epitomize the greatest evil for the Jews as well as for all other peoples of Russia.... It is time for the Jew to stop trembling at the thought of going against the revolution....

Rather, the Jew should fear going against his Russian motherland and his Jewish people.”

However, the authors of *Russia And the Jews* saw the Jewish national consciousness of the early 1920s as something very different from what they thought it should have been. “Almost all circles and classes of Russian society are now engaged in grievous self-reflections, trying to comprehend what has happened. Whether these self-accusations and admissions of guilt are fair or not, they at least reveal the work of thought, conscience, and aching hearts.... But it would be no exaggeration to claim that such spiritual work is the least noticeable among the Jewish intelligentsia, which is no doubt a symptom of certain

morbidity.... For an outsider, it appears that a typical Jewish intellectual has no concerns.” For this intellectual “everyone else is to blame – the government, the generals, the peasants, etc. He has nothing to do with all this.... In no way did he forge his own destiny and the destinies of those around him; he is just a passerby, hit on the head by a falling brick”; “so they were complicit in destroying the world around them+, but after it was finished they became unaware of their role in it.”

Jewish Bolsheviks was a particular pain for the authors. “A sin that carries the seed of its own nemesis. What greater affliction is there for a people than to see its sons debauched?” It is not just that the Russian upheaval needed people of a certain sort for its perpetuation, or that the Jewish society provided this sort of people; what is most important is that they were not rebuffed, did not meet enough opposition from within their own society. “It is our duty to shoulder the struggle specifically against the Jewish Bolsheviks, against all kinds of YevSeks [the ‘Jewish Section,’ the name given to officials appointed by the Soviets to deal with Jewish affairs], and against Jewish commissars in general.”

It should be noted that these authors were not alone in arguing that Russian (and now emigrant) Jews should fight against the Bolsheviks. From the pages of the *Jewish Tribune*: “If Bolshevism was swept from power in Russia by a wave of popular wrath, Jewry might be held, in the eyes of the masses, responsible for prolonging Bolshevism’s lifespan. Only active participation in the struggle to liquidate Bolshevism can secure Jews a safe position in the common cause of saving Russia.”

Bikerman warned: “If we support the Bolsheviks on the principle that your own shirt is closer to the body then we

should not forget that we thus allow the Russian to take care of his own shirt that is closer to his body; that it justifies the call, 'Slaughter Yids, Save Russia.'"

What of the Jewish attitudes toward the White Army? "This unworthy attitude that Jews have towards people who have taken upon their shoulders the endlessly difficult task of fighting for Russia, for the millions of the sheepish and weak-willed, points out to the complete moral disintegration, to a sort of perversion of mind. While all of us, Jews and non-Jews alike, placed ourselves obediently under the communist yoke and our backs under the whip, there were some Russians, courageous and proud, who overcame all obstacles, gathered from what remained of the breached and ripped apart fronts [of World War I], consolidated and raised the banner of resistance. Just that they were willing to fight under these circumstances alone immortalizes them for the history. And these people became an object for abuse on the side of so many Jews, libeled by every loquacious tongue so instead of appreciation the tragedy, we see epidemic mindlessness, endless laxity of speech, and triumphant superficiality." And yet "the Russia for which the Whites fought is not alien to us; it is 'our shirt' too. Jewry should have fought for the White cause as for the cause of Jewish salvation, for only in the restoration and swift rescue of Russian statehood can Jews find salvation from that death that has never been as close as in these days."

(Death was indeed approaching, although from another direction).

Who would deny these conclusions today, after decades of the Soviet regime? But at that time only few authors, Jewish or Russian, could see so far ahead. The Jewish emigrant community as a whole rejected these thoughts. And thus, they failed the test of history. It might be

objected that it did not cause Jewry any noticeable, significant harm, and certainly it was not the Holocaust brought by Hitlerism. Yes, it did not bring commensurable physical harm, but historically its spiritual harm was noticeable. Take, for instance, the success of Bolshevism in the expulsion of the Jewish religion from the country where it had once deeply spread its sacred roots. And there was more – the Jews, by betting on Bolshevism influenced the overall course of events in Europe. The authors of the *Russia And the Jews* appealed in vain: “In the many centuries of Jewish dispersion there has not been a political catastrophe as deeply threatening to our national existence as the breaking of the Russian power, for never have the vital forces of the Jewish people been as united as in the bygone, living Russia. Even the breakup of the Caliphate can scarcely compare with the current disaster. For the united Russian Jewry, the breakup of Russia into separate sovereign states is a national calamity. If there is no place for the Jews in the great spaces of the Russian land, in the boundlessness of the Russian soul, then there is no space for

Jews anywhere in the world.... Woe to us, if we do not wise up.”

Of course, by the very end of the 20th century we can easily reject these grim prophecies, if only as a matter of fact – just as enough space has been found on earth for formerly Russian Jews, so a Jewish state has been founded and secured itself, while Russia still lies in ruin, powerless and humiliated. The warnings of the authors on how Russia should be treated already appear a great exaggeration, a failed prophecy. And now we can reflect on these words only in regard of the spiritual chord that so unexpectedly bound the two our peoples together in History. “If Russia is not our motherland, then we are foreigners and have no right to

interfere in her national life. Russia will survive; her renaissance must become our national concern, the concern of the entire Russian Jewry.” And in conclusion: “The fate of Russian Jewry is inextricably linked to the fate of Russia; we must save Russia, if we want to save Jewry. The Jews must fight the molesters of the great country shoulder to shoulder with all other anti-Bolshevik forces; a consolidated struggle against the common enemy will heal the rifts and substantially reduce the current dramatic and ubiquitous growth of anti-Semitism; only by saving Russia, can we prevent a Jewish catastrophe.”

Catastrophe! – this was said ten years before Hitler’s ascension to power, eighteen years before his stunning sweep across the USSR and before the start of his program of Jewish extermination. Would it have been possible for Hitler to preach hatred of Jews and communists in Germany so easily and successfully, to claim Jews and communists are the same, if the Jews were among the most prominent and persistent opponents of the Soviet regime? The spiritual search of the authors of *Russia And the Jews* led them to prophetically sense the shadow of the impending Jewish catastrophe, though erring in its geographical origin and failing to predict other fateful developments. Yet their dreadful warning remained unheard.

I am not aware of anything else close to *Russia And the Jews* in the history of RussianJewish relations. It shook the Jewish emigration. Imagine how hurtful it was to hear such things coming from Jewish lips, from within Jewry itself. On the part of Russians, we must learn a lesson from this story as well. We should take *Russia And The Jews* as an example of how to love our own people and at the same time be able to speak about our mistakes, and to do so mercilessly if necessary. And in doing that, we should never alienate or

separate ourselves from our people. The surest path to social truth is for each to admit their own mistakes, from each, from every side.

Having devoted much time and thought to these authors (and having dragged the reader along with me), I would like here to leave a brief record of their lives.

\*Josef Menassievich Bikerman (1867-1942) came from a poor petty bourgeois family. He attended a cheder, then a yeshiva, provided for himself from the age of fifteen; educated himself under difficult circumstances. In 1903, he graduated from the historical-philological faculty of the Imperial Novorossiya University (after a two-year-exclusion gap for participation in student unrest). He opposed Zionism as, in his opinion, an illusory and reactionary idea. He called on Jews to unite, without relinquishing their spiritual identity, with progressive forces in Russia to fight for the good of the common motherland. His first article was a large tract on Zionism published in the *Russkoe Bogatstvo* [Russian Treasure] (1902, issue 7), which was noticed and debated even abroad. In 1905, he was deeply involved in the Liberation movement. He worked in several periodicals: *Syn Otechestva* [Son of the Fatherland], *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, *Nash Den* [Our day], *Bodroe Slovo* [Buoyant Word]. As an emigrant, he was printed in the Paris *Vozrozhdenie*, when it was run by P. B. Struve.

\*Danil Samoilovich Pasmanik (1869-1930) was a son of Melamed (a teacher in a cheder). In 1923, he graduated from the medical faculty of Zurich University and then practiced medicine in Bulgaria for seven years. In 1899-1905 he was the freelance lecturer in the medical faculty at Geneva University. He joined Zionist movement in 1900 and became one of its leading theorists and publicists. He returned to Russia in 1905 and passed the medical license exam. He

participated in the struggle for civil rights for Jews; he opposed the Bund and worked on the program for PoaleZion; in 1906-1917 he was a member of the Central Committee of the Russian Zionist organization. He was a member of editorial boards of *Evreiskaya Zhizn* [Jewish Life], and then of *Rassvet*. He wrote many articles for *Evreisky Mir* [Jewish World] and the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*. He published his medical works in specialized journals in German and French.

Pasmanik was in Vienna when the WWI broke out in 1914, from where he with great difficulty managed to return to Russia; he joined the army and served in field hospitals until

February 1917. He joined the Kadets after the February Revolution; he supported General Kornilov and the White movement; in 1918-1919 he was involved in the White government of the Crimea, was elected chairman of the Union of the Jewish Communities of the Crimea. In 1919, he emigrated from Russia to France. In 1920-1922 in Paris he together with V. L. Burtsev edited the White émigré newspaper *Obshchee Delo* [Common Cause]. Overall, he authored hundreds of articles and tens of books; the most notable of them include *Wandering Israel: The Psychology of Jewry in Dispersion* (1910), *Fates of the Jewish People: The Problems of Jewish Society* (1917), *The Russian Revolution and Jewry: Bolshevism and Judaism* (1923) *The Revolutionary Years in Crimea* (1926), *What Is Judaism?* (French edition, 1930).

\*Isaak Osipovich Levin (1876-1944) was a historian and publicist. Before the revolution, he worked as a foreign affairs commentator for *Russkie Vedomosti* [Russian Journal] and for the P. B. Struve's magazine, *Russkaya Mysl* [Russian Thought]. He emigrated first to Berlin. He was a member of the Russian Institute of Science, worked in the

Rul, Russkie Zapiski and in the historical-literary almanac *Na Chuzhoi Storone* [In the Foreign Land]; he regularly gave presentations in particular on the topic of the rise of German anti-Semitism. He moved to Paris in 1931 or 1932. He was widowed and lived in poverty. Among his works are *Emigration During the French Revolution* and a book in French about Mongolia. During the German occupation, he registered according to his “racial origins” as was required by authorities; he was arrested in the early 1943, for a short time was held in a concentration camp near Paris, then deported; he died in a Nazi concentration camp in 1944.

\*Grigory (Gavriel) Adolfovich Landau (1877-1941) was son of the well-known publicist and publisher A. E. Landau. He graduated from the law faculty of the St. Petersburg University in 1902. He wrote for periodicals from 1903, in the newspapers *Voskhod* [Sunrise], *Nash Den*, *Evreiskoe Obozrenie* [Jewish Observer], the magazines *Bodroe Slovo*, *Evreisky Mir*, *Vestnik Evropy* [European Herald], *Sovremennik*, *Severnye Zapiski* [Northern Notes], and the yearly almanac *Logos*. He was one of the founders of the Jewish Democratic Group in 1904 and the Union for Equal Rights for Jews in Russia in 1905.

He was an outstanding Kadet, member of the Central Committee of the Kadet Party. In August 1917, he participated in the Government Conference in Moscow; from December 1917 he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Community of Petrograd. He emigrated to Germany in 1919; from 1922 to 1931 he was I. V. Gessen’s deputy at *Rul*. Apart from *Rul*, he also wrote for the magazine, *Russkaya Mysl*, the weekly *Russia and the Slavs*, the collection *Chisla* [Dates], etc. He often lectured at émigré evenings; in 1927 in the talk titled *The Eurasian Delusion* he criticised “eurasianism” as a movement contrary

to the values of Russian history and leading to ideological Bolshevism. From Nazi Germany he fled to Latvia, where he worked for the Riga newspaper *Sevodnya* [Today]. He was arrested by the NKVD in June 1941 and died in the Usollag camp (near Solikamsk) in November.

Among his works the most influential were *Clownish Culture* (in *Nash Den*, 1908), the article *Twilight of Europe* (*Severnye Zapiski*, 1914, issue 12), which antedated much of what would later bestow worldwide fame on Oswald Spengler, and later a book with the same title (Berlin, 1923), *Polish-Jewish Relations* (1915), *On Overcoming Evil* (in the collection book *The Works of Russian Scholars Abroad*, Berlin, 1923), *The Byzantine and the Hebrew (Russkaya Mysl*, 1923, issues 1 and 2), *Theses Against Dostoevsky* (*Chisla*, volume 6, Paris, 1932), *Epigraphs* (Berlin, 1927). Much of what he wrote was dismissed by contemporaries. He was too conservative in spirit to be accepted by the progressive public. He was a sagacious thinker.

We could not find any substantial information about D. O. Linsky (he served in the White Army during the Civil War) or V. C. Mandel, who was an active participant in Russian political life in 1907-1918. He emigrated to Berlin and died in 1931.)

\* \* \*

In *Russia And The Jews*, the behavior of Jewish emigrants during 1920s was explicitly and harshly admonished. The authors called on their co-ethnics to “admit their own mistakes and not to judge the Great Russia in which they had lived and which they had made a home for hundreds of years”; to “remember how they demanded justice for

themselves and how upset they are when they are collectively accused for the acts of some individuals.” Jews should not be afraid to acknowledge some responsibility for all that has happened. “First of all, we must determine precisely our share of responsibility and so counter anti-Semitic slander.... This is absolutely not about becoming accustomed to anti-Semitism, as claimed by some Jewish demagogues.... This admission is vital for us, it is our moral duty. Jewry has to pick righteous path worthy of the great wisdom of our religious teachings which will lead us to brotherly reconciliation with the Russian people to build the Russian house and the Jewish home so they might stand for centuries to come.”

But “we spread storms and thunder and expect to be cradled by gentle zephyrs.... I know you will shriek that I am justifying pogroms! ... I know how much these people are worth, who think themselves salt of the earth, the arbiters of fate, and at the very least the beacons of Israel.... They, whose every whisper is about Black Hundreds and Black Hundreders, they themselves are dark people, their essence is black, very obscure indeed, they were never able to comprehend the power of creativity in human history.... It is imperative for us to make less of a display of our pain, to shout less about our losses. It is time we understood that crying and wailing is mostly evidence of emotional infirmity, of a lack of culture of the soul. You are not alone in this world, and your sorrow cannot fill the entire universe. When you put on a display only your own grief, only your own pain, it shows disrespect to others’ grief, to others’ sufferings.” That could have been said today, and to all of us.

These words cannot be obviated either by the millions lost in the prisons and camps of the GULag, nor by the millions exterminated in the Nazi death camps.

The lectures of the authors of *Russia And the Jews* at that year's National Union of Jews were met with great indignation on the part of emigrant Jewry. Even when explicitly or tacitly accepting the truth of the facts and the analysis, many expressed indignation or surprise that anyone dared to bring these into the open. See, it was not the right time to speak of Jews, to criticise them, to determine their revolutionary misdeeds and responsibility, when Jewry has just suffered so much and may suffer even more in the future. The collection's authors were almost declared enemies of the [Jewish] people, the abettors of reaction and allies of the pogromists.

The *Jewish Tribune* replied to them from Paris a few months later: "The question of Jewish responsibility for the Russian revolution has hitherto only been posed by anti-Semites. But now there is a whole penitent and accusative movement, apparently, we have to not only blame others, but also admit our own faults, yet there is nothing new apart from the same old boring name counting of Jews among Bolsheviks. Too late did Mr. Landau come to love the old statehood; penitent Jews turned reactionaries, their words are incompatible with the dignity of the Jewish people and are completely irresponsible."

Especially offensive was this attempt to separate the popular anti-Semitism from the official one, attempting to prove that "the people, the society, the country – the entire populace hates the Jews and considers them the true culprit responsible for all national woes; just like those who connived the pogroms, they repeat the old canard about the popular anger."

Sometimes it descended into the outright abuse: "This group of Berlin journalists and activists, which has nearly disappeared from the Jewish public life by now craves to put

themselves into limelight again, and for that they could think of no better way than to attack their own compatriots, Russian Jews, This tiny group of loyalists Jews are blinded by a desire to turn the wheel of history backwards, they write indecencies, give comical advice, take on themselves the ridiculous role of healers to cure national wounds. They should remember that sometimes it is better to stay quiet.”

One sophisticated modern critic could find a better assessment for that collection than a severe hysteria. Both that attempt and their later journey are genuine tragedies, in his opinion, and he explains this tragedy as a self-hatred complex.

Yet was Bikerman hateful when he wrote, on his “later tragic journey,” that: “The Jewish people is not a sect, not an order, but a whole people, dispersed over the world but united in itself; it has raised up the banner of peaceful labour and has gathered around this banner, as around the symbol of godly order”?

However, it is not true that European or émigré Jews did not at all hark to such explanations or warnings. A similar discussion had taken place a little earlier, in 1922. In the reestablished Zionist publication *Rassvet* the nationalist G. I. Shekhtman expressed his incomprehension at how the intelligentsia of other nationalities could be anything other than nationalistic. An intelligentsia is invariably connected to its own nationality and feels its pain. A Jew cannot be a Russian democrat, but naturally a Jewish democrat. “I do not recognise dual national or democratic loyalties.” And if the Russian intelligentsia “does not identify with its nationality” (Herzen), it is simply because until now it “has not had the opportunity or need to feel sharp pains over its national identity, to worry about it. But that has changed now.” Now the Russian intelligentsia “has to cast aside its aspirations to

be a universal All-Russian intelligentsia, and instead to regard itself as the Great Russian democracy.”

It was difficult to counter. The gauntlet was picked up by P. N. Milyukov, though not very confidently. We remember (see Chapter 11) that back in 1909 he had also expressed horror at the unveiling of this stinging, unpleasant national question “who benefits?” But now this new awkward situation (and not a change in Milyukov’s views), when so many Russian intellectuals in emigration suddenly realized that they lost their Russia, forced Milyukov to amend his previous position.

He replied to Shekhtman, though in a rather ambiguous manner and not in his own highly popular *Poslednie Novosti*, but in the *Jewish Tribune* with a much smaller circulation, to the effect that a Russian Jew could and had to be a Russian democrat. Milyukov treaded carefully: “But when this demand is fulfilled, and there appears a new national face of Russian democracy (the Great Russian),” well, wouldn’t Shekhtman be first to get scared at the prospect of “empowerment of ethnically conscious Great Russian Democracy with imperial ambition?” Do we then need these phantoms? Is this what we wish to ruin our relations over?

The émigrés lived in an atmosphere of not just verbal tension. There was a sensational murder trial in Paris in 1927 of a clock-maker, Samuel Shvartsbard, who lost his whole family in the pogroms in Ukraine, and who killed Petliura with five bullets. (*Izvestia* sympathetically reported on the case and printed Shvartsbard’s portrait.) The defence raised the stakes claiming that the murder was a justified revenge for Petliura’s pogroms: “The defendant wished and felt a duty to raise the issue of anti-Semitism before the world’s

conscience.” The defence called many witnesses to testify that during the Civil War Petliura had been personally responsible for pogroms in Ukraine. The prosecution suggested that the murder had been ordered by Cheka. “Shvartsbard, agitated, called out from his place: ‘the witness doesn’t want to admit that I acted as a Jew, and so claims I’m a Bolshevik.’”

Shvartsbard was acquitted by the French court. Denikin, a leading White general during the Civil War was mentioned at that trial, and Shvartsbard’s lawyer proclaimed: “If you wish to bring Denikin to trial, I am with you. I would have defended the one who would have taken revenge upon Denikin with the same passionate commitment as I am here defending the man who had taken revenge upon Petliura.”

And as Denikin lived in Paris without guards, anyone wishing to take revenge upon him had an open road. However Denikin was never put on trial. (A similar murder happened later in Moscow in 1929, when Lazar Kolenberg shot the former White general Slashchev, who after the Civil War returned to Russia and served in Soviet military, for doing nothing to stop pogroms in Nikolayev. During the investigation, the accused was found to be mentally incompetent to stand trial and released.

During Shvartsbard’s trial the prosecutor drew a parallel to another notorious case (that of Boris Koverda): for Petliura had previously lived in Poland, but “you [speaking to Shvartsbard] did not attempt to kill him there, as you knew that in Poland you would be tried by military tribunal.” In 1929, a young man, Boris Koverda, also “wishing to present a problem before the world’s conscience,” had killed the Bolshevik sadist Voikov; he was sentenced to ten years in jail and served his full term.

A White émigré from Revolutionary Terrorist Boris Savinkov's group, Captain V. F. Klementiev, told me that in Warsaw at that time former Russian officers were abused as "WhiteGuard rascals" and that they were not served in Jewish-owned shops. Such was the hostility, and not just in Warsaw. Russian émigrés all over Europe were flattened by scarcity, poverty, hardship, and they quickly tired of the showdown over "who is more to blame?" Anti-Jewish sentiments among them abated in the second half of the 1920s. During these years Vasily Shulgin wrote: "Are not our visa ordeals remarkably similar to the oppression experienced by Jews in the Pale of Settlement? Aren't our Nansen passports [internationally recognized identity cards first issued by the League of Nations to stateless refugees], which are a sort of wolf ticket obstructing movement, reminiscent of the Jewish religion label, which we stamped in Jewish passports in Russia, thereby closing many doors to them? Do we not resort to all kinds of middleman jobs when we are unable to attain, because of our peculiar position, a civil servant post or a certain profession? Are we not gradually learning to work around laws that are inconvenient for us, precisely as Jews did with our laws, and for which we criticized them?"

Yet during these same years anti-Jewish sentiments were on the rise in the USSR and were even reported in the Soviet press, causing distress among Jewish émigrés. So in May 1928 a public debate on anti-Semitism was organized in Paris among them. A report of it was placed in the Milyukov's newspaper. (Bikerman's and Pasmanik's group, already non-active, did not participate.)

The formal reason for the debate was "a strong rise of Judæphobia in Russia, a phenomenon that periodically occurs there." The Socialist Revolutionary N. D. Avksentiev

chaired the debate, and there were more Russians than Jews among the public. Mark Slonim explained that “the long oppressed Russian Jewry, having finally attained freedom, has dashed to secure formerly prohibited positions,” and this annoys Russians. In essence, the past fatefully determined the present” “Bad things” of the past (Czarist times) resulted in bad consequences. S. Ivanovich stated that Jews were now tormented in the USSR, because it has become impossible to torment “the bourgeois” thanks to the NEP. But what is worrying is that the Russian intelligentsia in the USSR, although neutral on the Jewish question, now takes the liberty to think: good, “it will begin with anti-Semitism, and lead to Russian freedom. What a dangerous and foolish illusion.”

Such apologetic ideas outraged the next orator, V. Grosman: “It is as if Jewry stands accused!” The question needs to be considered more deeply: “There is no reason to distinguish Soviet anti-Semitism from the anti-Semitism of old Russia,” that is to say there is still the same Black Hundredism so dear to Russian hearts. “This is not a Jewish question, but a Russian one, a question of Russian culture.”

(But if it is so quintessentially Russian, entirely Russian, inherently Russian problem, then what can be done? What need then for a mutual dialogue?)

The author of the debate report, S. Litovtsev, regretted post factum that it was necessary to find for the debate “several honest people, brave enough to acknowledge their anti-Semitism and frankly explain why they are anti-Semites … Who would say simply, without evasiveness: ‘I don’t like this and that about Jews…’ Alongside there should have been several equally candid Jews who would say: ‘and we don’t like this and that about you…’ Rest assured, such an honest and open exchange of opinions, with goodwill and

a desire for mutual comprehension, would be really beneficial for both Jews and Russians – and for Russia....”

Shulgin replied to this: “Now, among Russian émigrés, surely one needs more bravery to declare oneself a philo-Semite.” He extended his answer into a whole book, inserting Litovtsev’s question into the title, *What We Don’t Like About Them*. Shulgin’s book was regarded as anti-Semitic, and the proposed “interexchange of views” never took place. Anyway, the impending catastrophe, coming from Germany, soon took the issue of any debate off the table.

A Union of Russian-Jewish Intelligentsia was created in Paris as if in the attempt to preserve a link between the two cultures. Yet it soon transpired that life in exile had created a chasm between fathers and sons, and the latter no longer understand what a Russian-Jewish intelligentsia is. So the fathers sadly acknowledged that the Russian Jews, who used to lead global Jewry in spiritual art and in the nation building, now virtually quit the stage. Before the war, the Union had managed to publish only the first issue of collection Jewish world. During the war, those who could, fled across the ocean and untiringly created the Union of Russian Jews in New York City, and published the second issue of the Jewish World. In the 1960s, they published the *Book of Russian Jewry* in two volumes, about pre- and post-revolutionary Jewish life in Russia. The bygone life in the bygone Russia still attracted their minds. In this work I cite all these books with gratitude and respect.

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