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The Image of America in the Russo-Jewish Press,  
(1881-1910)

by

Judith Zabarenko

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for Ordination

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DIGEST  
"The Image of America in the Pre-Revolutionary  
Russo-Jewish Press (1881-1910)"  
Judith Zabarenko

The Jewish press in Russia developed during the period between 1860-1917. The numerous journals that sprung up and withered during this time used different languages, including Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian and espoused various philosophies. The two Russian-language journals studied in this thesis expressed two different viewpoints. Razsvet, "The Dawn" first appeared as a journal of the Enlightenment. It failed, however, and reappeared as a Zionist paper. Voskhod, or Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda, "The Ascent" or "The Weekly Chronicle of The Ascent" had a moderately assimilationist bent. Neither of these papers advocated immigration to America. Razsvet urged Russian Jews to move to Israel. Voskhod urged them to remain in Russia. These philosophical stances would effect how these two journals reported on America. America was basically viewed in a negative way in the Russian-language Jewish press.

The journey to America was portrayed as harrowing. The immigrants suffered terribly in Brody and on the ships. Sharp businessmen exploited the bewildered passengers.

The American reception for these immigrants was painted as cold and uncharitable. Children begged in

the streets or peddled lest they starve. New immigrants were forced to take care of themselves with scarcely any aid from the Jewish community. In fact, other Jews exploited their "green" brethren. And yet, the picture of the immigrants' reception in America is not completely distorted. A writer in Voskhod acknowledged that some immigrants would quit their jobs if they could receive charity.

Jewish life in America was denegated in this press. Anti-Semitism appeared to be a common phenomenon. The Yahudim looked down on the Russian Jews. Immigrants lost their religion when they came to America. Reform Judaism, an abomination in and of itself, along with other American Jewish institutions, opposed Zionism. This seemed the height of heresy to Razsvet's writers. The Yiddish press and theater were portrayed as harmful, transient developments. American Jews even wanted to import an evil Russian institution, the Grand Rabbinate, to their land. In short, Judaism in America was an abysmal failure; doomed to die at any moment.

The articles which focused on secular life in America mostly concentrated on restrictionist legislation. Here this press' bias can be seen most clearly. Any attempt to pass anti-immigration legislation was stridently criticized. Articles covering more than a decade portray complete restriction

of immigration as immanent. In point of fact, the restrictionists did not succeed in passing their legislation until long after the period these articles cover had passed.

Editorial policy was only one of the reasons that America was viewed so negatively in this press. First of all, in any newspaper, there is a tendency to report bad news as news. Secondly, the reporters and editors of these papers used their experiences as Russian citizens to interpret American events. This caused them to exaggerate Anti-Semitic incidents and government abuses. Thirdly, these journalists wrote for those Jews who remained in Russia. Their readership would not want to know how poor their own life in Russia was compared to the wonders of America. Finally, immigrant life in America was genuinely difficult.

Despite such negative reporting, Russian Jews continued to immigrate to America. Therefore, we may assume that they had other sources of information about America besides the Russian-language Jewish press. We may also assume that they recognized the biases in this press' reportage.

We may only depend on the Russian-language Jewish press to show us a distorted view of immigration to America. However that view is valuable, for it tells us what Russian Jews may have seen as the most negative features of American immigrant life.

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## PREFACE

Translation is something of a balancing act. The closer the translation is to the original language, the less intelligible it is in the second language. In these translations, I've striven to balance the demands of accuracy and readability.

Translation of Pre-Revolutionary Russian texts presents several problems. First of all, the alphabet is slightly different from the modern Russian one. Secondly, these articles were written by non-native speakers: Yiddish was probably their first language. There are many grammatical mistakes in these articles and occasionally the Russian makes no sense at all. In addition, many phrases in Yiddish, German and Hebrew are included in these texts. Thirdly, the style of the Russian is quite difficult. All of these factors make translating Pre-Revolutionary Russian newspaper articles demanding work.

This press is a fascinating resource for studying Jewish history. The articles presented here cover a wide range of topics and times. A more productive way of studying this press might be an in-depth study of one number of a certain journal. Further research in this area would surely prove interesting and valuable.

Many individuals have my sincere gratitude for their help in this endeavor. Jonathan Sarna was an excellent advisor: helpful yet not intrusive, generous

with his time and concern and so very knowledgeable! He was also willing to let me write this thesis even though I had no background in the area at all. Thank you!

Sandy Korros, "Papa Sasha", Kathy Popkin-Sauer, Ron LeBlanc and Robert Patterson all helped with the difficult translations.

Of course I would like to acknowledge the support of my family and classmates in this endeavor. Finally, I would like to thank Laurie Coskey and Buddy Voit, who housesat for me while I was off improving my Russian. Thanks Buddy!



## INTRODUCTION

The modern history of the Jews in Russia began in 1772. The first partition of Poland took place in that year, bringing large numbers of Jews under Russian rule. Subsequent partitions in 1793 and 1795 brought ever-larger masses of Jews into Catherine II's (1762-96) realm.

The Polish Jewish community which dwelt in the land acquired by Russia was well-organized. Its strong and all-embracing communal structure was maintained under Russian rule. Economic affairs in the Jewish community were regulated by an agency named the kahal. This body collected taxes from the new Russian subjects, and therefore Catherine II could ill-afford to abolish it. Thus, the Jewish communal structure remained intact.

Though the Jewish population became and remained loyal to the Russian monarchy, especially during Napoleon's invasion of 1812, they were subject to discriminatory legislation and anti-Jewish harassment. During Alexander I's reign (1796-1825) blood accusations occurred in 1816 and 1823. A far harsher measure, however was the expulsion of Jews from rural districts in 1823.

All Jews were to be evacuated before January 1, 1824 from villages in the provinces of Moghilev and Vitebsk. In the following nine months some 20,000 Jews were removed into the overcrowded neighboring cities without any provision having been made for their housing or employment. The resulting misery

was so great, however, that in 1825 the government had to suspend further deportations and allow many displaced families to return to their prior habitats.<sup>1</sup>

Tsar Alexander I was succeeded by Nicholas I (1825-55). He was a die-hard autocrat who ran the country like an army. While he is remembered in general Russian history for his codification of laws, he lives on in the Jewish collective consciousness for his institution of the rekruchina (draft). Until 1827, Jews had fulfilled their military duty by paying a special tax. Now, however, Nicholas demanded military service from his Jewish subjects. His motives were made clear in a confidential memo, in which he wrote that "the chief benefit to be derived from the drafting of Jews is the certainty that it will move them most effectively to change their religion."<sup>2</sup>

The Jewish community was burdened with the task of delivering these recruits. If they did not come up with the required number of soldiers, an additional tax was levied on the community. The kahal was charged with collecting this tax and providing the soldier. Yearly quotas of soldiers were imposed on the communal leaders. Consequently, they often used illegal and cruel methods to fill them. One of the cruelest was the drafting of eight-year-old boys whose papers they destroyed in order to claim that they were ten years old. As soon as they were drafted they were encouraged to convert. "Estranged from their communities, living as outcasts

among hostile comrades, removed at a tender age from the families and friends, a great many cantonists sooner or later submitted to baptism." <sup>3</sup> When the kahal was abolished in 1844, bringing this practice to an end, it came as a welcome relief.

This did not mark the end of the community's functions, however. It still had to collect taxes, such as the candle tax and meat tax (the karobka). It could not, however, disburse these funds. This left the Jewish community quite vulnerable to abuse through the misuse of this money. After the kahal had been abolished, the Jews had no official representation in the Russian government. But in spite of this, the community survived and continued to provide social services and education to its residents. Many communities maintained a hekdesch, a combination of hostelry and hospital, to accommodate both homeless visitors and sick persons.

After the kahal was abolished, the only legal entities remaining in the Jewish community were the synagogue boards. Rabbis provided leadership of various kinds. There were three kinds of rabbis: crown or communal, "spiritual" and Hasidic. The Crown rabbi was nothing more than an official representative of the state. His function was

to keep registers of birth, marriage, divorce and death. The Crown rabbi was also required to "direct the Jews to the observation of ethical duties and submission of government laws and established powers." He was the only one empowered

to perform the rituals that required registration with the state authorities.<sup>4</sup>

These Crown rabbis were hardly spiritual leaders: at Novgorod the Crown rabbi was dismissed for non-halachic behavior. In contrast, the spiritual rabbi was a true rabbi. He could assist the Crown rabbi in performing religious ceremonies, but could not accomplish them without the Crown rabbi's assistance. These rabbis were knowledgeable and pious. The third kind of rabbi, Hasidic, was a charismatic figure who headed a dynasty or court. The popularity of the Hasidic rabbi, and the influence he exerted over his followers, is thought to have hastened the abolition of the kahal in those communities where such men were powerful. Reform rabbis were not considered rabbis at all. Levitats relates the following incident in this connection:

Isaac Danzig, born 1833, was a Reform rabbi in St. Petersburg, who performed a wedding. The husband was exiled to Siberia. Rabbi Yokhelson of Odessa agreed to permit the wife to remarry without a divorce, on the grounds that the wedding was contrary to law, since the rabbi was Reform and the witnesses to the ceremony had been beardless men who ate non-kosher food and violated the Sabbath.<sup>5</sup>

The religious hierarchy and its values dominated not only the ghetto's politics, but its education as well. Children attended heder and talmud torahs and if they showed the interest and talent went on to study in yeshivot. The elementary schools were severely criticized by the maskilim, or "enlightened ones". The maskilim wanted the Jews to enter the mainstream of Russian secular life and saw the Jewish educational

system as the main impediment to this process. The maskilim criticized not only the educational system but the religious hierarchy, and the Hasidim, as well.

The maskilim succeeded in sowing discontent among Jewish inhabitants of the Pale, and the Russian government encouraged them in their undertaking. However, the government certainly did not support their ideas. It simply hoped that "the new movement might ultimately lead to the conversion and final absorption of the Jewish minority and thereby put an end to the ever-troublesome Jewish question."<sup>6</sup>

In 1833, Nicholas published his new law code, the Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii (the Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire). This document, and a new statute for Jews published in 1835, contained over six hundred anti-Jewish decrees. They ranged

from expulsions from villages in which Jews had traditionally resided to a heavy censorship of Yiddish and Hebrew books; from meddling with the curriculums of Jewish schools to a conscription that tore Jewish children away from parents, often at ages between twelve and eighteen, for periods of up to twenty-five years.<sup>7</sup>

In 1855 Nicholas I's reign came to an end, and a new and better era for the Jews began.

Tsar Alexander II has been called the Great Reformer. He reigned from 1855 until he was assassinated in 1881. At this point in her history, Russia was finally entering the industrial age. As a

consequence, Russia's demand for free laborers increased, and in 1861, Alexander II liberated the serfs. This brought a flood of laborers into the cities which pushed Jews out of their jobs as unskilled laborers. In addition, Jewish craftsmen had to abandon their old skills to become factory workers. This had a huge impact on the Jewish community, since 75% of the Jews were small traders and artisans. All these factors led to the pauperization of the Jews.

Alexander II's reforms extended beyond the economic sphere. He also established judiciary reform in 1864 which

was the most meaningful for the people. It established equality of all persons before the law, separation of the judiciary and the administration, and permanent tenure of judges. In addition it created an independent bar, public reports of trials, oral testimony, adversary procedure and the jury system. 8

Alexander II also reformed the military in 1874. The term of service was reduced from 25 to 6 years and was now mandatory regardless of a man's class. While this reform helped the Jews somewhat, the removal of Jewish disabilities was quite slow. Yet, some real advances were made under Alexander II's reign. For instance, the Jewish press began during this period. Unfortunately, after Alexander II was assassinated in March of 1881 this liberal trend in Russian policy was quickly reversed.

Alexander III succeeded his father and ruled from 1881-1894. Alexander III was a reactionary who

reversed many of his father's liberal policies. He used his father's assassination as an excuse to persecute the Jews. Although the terrorists included only one Jewish woman, Hesia Helfman, who played a minor role in the assassination plot, officially inspired rumors were spread, that Jews had played a leading part in the revolutionary upheaval. As a result of these rumors, a series of pogroms swept through the Ukraine. These pogroms were condoned, if not organized, by the government and generally the police did not act to stop the violence until it had continued for three days.

Alexander III not only persecuted the Jews brutally, he hounded them legally. On May 3, 1882 he instituted a number of new laws restricting Jewish settlement in large centers. The so-called "May Laws" imposed new hardships on the Jews. These measures, coupled with the violence of the pogroms, led to massive Jewish emmigration from Russia.

#### The Pre-Revolutionary Russo-Jewish Press

The pre-revolutionary Russo-Jewish press had several important characteristics. First of all, it reflected the variety within the Jewish community. Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian journals all developed

during the period between 1860 and 1917. The journals differed not only in the language they used, but in the philosophies they espoused. Zionists, diaspora nationalists, Maskilim and others all expressed, or tried to express, their views in this press. Due to economic limitations and government censorship, these journals frequently closed, only to resume publication under a different name.

This pattern is seen in the development of the Hebrew papers Ha-Meliz and Ha-Zefirah. The first Hebrew journal was Ha-Meliz. It was published from 1860 to 1871 in Odessa, and then was published for three more years in St. Petersburg. Its stated purpose was to be "the mediator (ha-meliz) between the Jews and government<sup>9</sup> and between faith and haskalah." Like Ha-Meliz Ha-Zefirah began as a weekly in 1862, but lasted only six months. It resumed publication in 1874 while Ha-Meliz was revived in 1878. Both of these papers became dailies and then died out in the beginning of this century. Ha-Zefirah reappeared as a daily Zionist paper in 1910.

Under Alexander II's relatively more liberal reign, the first Russian language Jewish journal came into existence. Razsvet, "The Dawn", was founded in Odessa as a weekly journal of the enlightenment on May 27, 1860. It was edited by Osip Rabinovich (1817-1869). As the editor, he concentrated on the relationship of the Jews with the Russian authorities. In his



reminiscences, Lev Osipovitch Levanda (1835-1888), a frequent contributor to the journal, outlined the dual program of this journal:

1. To conduct, inside Russian Jewry, the struggle for enlightenment, modernization, reform of institutions--the regeneration of the people;
2. to conduct, vis-a-vis Russian public opinion in general and the authorities in particular, the struggle for the widening of Jewish rights toward full citizenship; the preliminary being the abolition and abrogation of age-old discriminatory practices.<sup>10</sup>

Razsvet had many distinguished contributors such as the poet Judah Lev Gordon (1830-1892) and Michael (Menashe) Margulis (1837-1913).

Razsvet did not meet with great success during its first attempt at publication. It was criticized for exposing Jewish foibles to the Russian-reading, gentile public. Rabinovich decided to close the journal due to a paucity of subscriptions, a hostile Jewish public and the iron hand of the censor. The last issue of the first Razsvet was published on May 19, 1861.

Later, in that same year, Razsvet appeared as the journal Sion, "Zion". Sion was more conservative since it attempted to please the censors. However, attacks on it by the anti-semitic press forced its editorial policy to become more strident and it too discontinued publication in 1861. For seven years after this no Russian-language Jewish journal was published. Then, in 1869, the weekly Den, "Day", began publication in Odessa. This journal advocated Russification of the

Jews. Its publication ceased in 1871 during the anti-Jewish riots of that year.

St. Petersburg became the center of Russo-Jewish journalism. Two weeklies, Razsvet and Russki Yevrei, "The Russian Jew", appeared in 1879. The two journals had different viewpoints. Russki Yevrei

emphasized the fact that the Russian Jews, though not Russians, were Russian subjects of Jewish faith. The journal proved the injustice of the accusations brought against the Jews. While devoting a certain amount of space to questions of Jewish internal life, it did not denounce Jewish shortcomings lest, by such self-criticism, it should supply the enemies of the Jews with material for further persecutions.<sup>11</sup>

Razsvet on the other hand, now edited by Jacob Rosenfeld and G.I. Bogrov, focused more on the problems of the Jewish community.

It courageously directed attention to its failings, and, anticipating no outside help, urged the educated Jews to assume the work of self-improvement. At the same time it pointed out that this work for the Jewish population would prove useful to the world at large also.<sup>12</sup>

The pogroms of 1881 changed the philosophical bases of these journals. Nationalism became the new ideology and Razsvet became a Zionist paper. It ceased publication in 1883, Russki Yevrei in 1884.

A new journal Voskhod was created in 1881 by Adolph E. Landau (1842-1902). Originally a monthly journal, a weekly version appeared starting in 1882 named Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda. It was the only Russo-Jewish paper during the years 1885-99. Landau was a moderate assimilationist and Voskhod's editorial

policy reflected this. The paper's goals were,

to defend the interests of the Russian Jews, and to strive to make the life of Jews in Russia possible and bearable. With this purpose it will defend and guard their rights, and attempt, in so far as lies in its power to effect an extension of these rights. On the other hand, it will cooperate by all possible means in the improvement of the inner life of the Jews themselves and in the attainment of their social regeneration on Russian soil."13

As a consequence of this policy Voskhod, unlike Razsvet, did not advocate immigration as a solution to the problems of Russian Jewry. Voskhod's vociferous defense of Jewish rights brought warnings from the censors. Its publication was suspended for eight months in 1891 and two issues of Voskhod were suspended in 1903 for advocating Jewish self-defense after the Kishinev pogroms. Voskhod ceased publication in 1906.

Voskhod and Razsvet reported Jewish news from within Russia and from foreign countries. Their reportage was naturally shaped, at least in part, by their editorial policies. These policies certainly affected their presentation of news from America.

Neither Voskhod with its assimilationist bent nor Rasvet with its Zionist one, would tend to portray America as an attractive new homeland for Russian Jews. In addition, these papers were written by and for highly educated Russified Jews. Most of these Jews wanted to remain in Russia, not leave it. Therefore, they would probably be reluctant to depict America as "the golden land". They believed they could build that land in Russia or Palestine. This tendency to denigrate America

and the immigrant's lot there is seen in almost every article contained in this thesis. These articles are presented in four groups: background and journey, arrival and reception in the United States, Jewish life in the United States and secular life in America. In each of these sections these papers' biased reporting of events in America will be noted.

#### Footnotes

1

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## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND JOURNEY

The course of Jewish affairs in Russia reached its nadir in 1881. Czar Alexander II was assassinated and one of the six people convicted in the case was a Jew. The Russian government used this as a pretext to allow mob violence against the Jews. This caused the Jews to panic and emigrate from Russia in large numbers. Further impetus to emigrate came with the introduction of the "May Laws", temporary restrictions introduced in 1882 which restricted Jewish settlement and employment.

Once the flood of emigration had begun, it swelled rapidly. Starting with some 5-6,000 immigrants in 1881, this number "more than doubled in the following year, increased to over 32,000 in 1887, and reached over 51,000 in 1891 and 73,636 in the next year."<sup>1</sup> Bernard Weinryb explains the emigration's "snowball" effect.

Every event which served to deepen the crisis (pogrom, expulsion, sudden economic downtrend) caused a large wave of emigration. This, in turn, increased the mobility of the Jews in the old country, created a neurosis favoring emigration, brought them nearer to the overseas countries, led to exaggerated rumors both about the opportunities abroad and about Jewish organization helping immigrants reach their destination, thus becoming the cause of further migration.<sup>2</sup>

Though the pogroms and May Laws sparked emigration from Russia, they were more the occasions that motivated Russian Jews to emigrate, not the causes of emigration. Other forces were pushing Jew and non-Jew alike out of Russia. Much of the motivation was of an economic nature. The Russian economy was weak;

slowly developing industries led to dislocations in trade and handicrafts. The hardships such developments caused were aggravated by depressions in 1890, 1896 and 1903-04. Such economic factors encouraged and even compelled immigration.

The articles under consideration illustrate this argument well. Even as early as November 27, 1881, immigration had become inevitable. As an article in the journal Razsvet reports, "The idea of immigration ever more permeates the minds of a certain segment of Russian Jewry. The recognition of the inevitability and the necessity of immigration becomes ever stronger."<sup>3</sup>

Once immigration was accepted as a desirable and even necessary action, the next question to be asked was "Whither to immigrate?". Different Russo-Jewish groups gave varying answers to that query according to their ideological stances. The Zionists favored Palestine. Other sought a homeland for the Jews wherever the land and sovereignty might be had. Some wanted to found Jewish colonies in America. However, Razsvet's writer reveals that ideology played only a small role in the masses' decision on "whither" it was best to immigrate.

While we, as it is said, each philosophize in the quiet of our own study and deliberate about what is better: America or Palestine; the masses suffer and seek an outlet for themselves. Whether or not they err, they find this outlet in America and we will by no means stop them.<sup>4</sup>

And in fact, the majority of Russian Jews did immigrate to the United States. Whereas 30-40,000 Jewish

immigrants went to Palestine during 1881-1914, over one  
and a half million went to North America.<sup>5</sup>

The journey to America was not an easy one. It was especially complicated for the Russian Jews since they had to travel a great distance over land before they even reached the ships that would take them to the United States.

The first waves of immigrants made their way to the town of Brody in Galicia. Rumors had spread that Western European Jewish philanthropic organizations such as the French Alliance and the English Mansion House Fund would provide for all the immigrants' needs once they reached Brody. Perhaps the committees could have handled a slow, orderly, limited stream of immigrants, but the tidal wave of refugees that flooded Brody was more than they could cope with. This misconception on the immigrants' part had tragic consequences. One observer in Brody wrote,

It's remarkable that all the immigrants in general, and every one individually were sure that everything was prepared for them in Brody and all they had to do was be ready in time...They are running from the frying pan into the fire. One may positively say that if the situation of immigrants in Brody doesn't get better soon, these unfortunates are doomed to a sure, hungry and agonizing death.<sup>6</sup>

The dire situation of the Jews stranded in Brody forced the Western European Committees into action. The action they chose was to send all these immigrants to America.

Though these Western European Committees were no

doubt motivated by altruism, their main concern was that this mass of indigent refugees not make Europe their final destination. From the very beginning of the mass immigration from Eastern Europe, the American Jewish community made it clear that it did not want, nor was it able to provide for, the number of immigrants arriving from Russia. The Americans asked that the French, British and German Committees stem the flow of immigrants. These Committees ostensibly agreed not to send any more immigrants to America, but in fact, they were not able to hold these refugees back.

The Committees and Funds from various Western European countries did not work in concert to aid the Russian Jews. Though meetings of representatives from all these philanthropic organizations were held, little cooperation resulted. Frequent disagreements prevented the Committees from working together.

Most of the immigrants were unaware of the inability and unwillingness of both the European and American communities to help them immigrate. Apparently they assumed that they would be taken care of by the Committees. To their disappointment, they found the accommodations in Brody completely insufficient and they suffered greatly there. A whole article in Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda is devoted to describing the horrible conditions at Brody.

The impoverished and often starving immigrants encountered further difficulties with the railroad and



shipping lines that carried them to their destinations. The trains were packed and uncomfortable. Once they reached the harbor they often resided in a shelter provided by the shipping lines. "The steamship companies realized that passengers awaiting their sailing date were a captive audience. Consequently, in many of these company-owned boarding houses filthy quarters and over-priced food were the norm." I. Petrikovski, writing for Razsvet in the December 18, 1881 issue, describes just such a situation. Having arrived in Antwerp, a group of immigrants enters a shipping-line cafeteria to find,

an unbearable stench of melted suet, composed the main ingredient of the muddy soup prepared for us, which compelled us to retreat upstairs in order to assign sleeping places. A new disappointment: for 270 people three dark, dirty rooms were prepared. Growling, several immigrant families dispersed throughout the city to search for rooms.<sup>8</sup>

An even more trying environment often awaited the immigrants on board the ship. Frequently they had to endure substandard physical conditions and mistreatment from the crew. Petrikovski describes the scene as his family saw the steerage compartment for the first time.

I was horrified: imagine a cellar with rusty, sweating iron walls, a dirty floor, lined with two-level wooden cribs stuffed with layers of lying men, women and children. I say layers because if someone wanted to stand up he hit his head on the ceiling...The noise, the din, the crying of children and women was heard. Despair took possession of all.<sup>10</sup>

The food on the ship was apparently as poor as the steerage compartment.

The rooms and food on the boat were disgusting, many did not have proper personal facilities. In the course of twelve days we were fed ship's herring and undigestible rolls. I advise Jewish immigrants to supply themselves with plenty of rye bread, smoked fish, tea (ship's tea resembles the brewed leaves of a broom), sugar and lemon.<sup>11</sup>

After such a harrowing journey, the immigrants would obviously not have appeared at their best. Their dirty and downtrodden condition apparently made their entrance into America more difficult. Pamela Nadell relates how one inspector mistreated the new arrivals.

As the ship docked in New York, Brandenburg watched while one steward maliciously dragged aside a woman blocking the gangway with her baggage, bruised her wrist, and then broke the chair that she had carried all the way from Europe.<sup>12</sup>

The mistreatment and exploitation of these immigrants often continued after they'd entered America.

The Russian-language Jewish papers depict the journey to America as a harrowing one. Yet in these early articles, America's reception of the immigrants' is made out to be cordial. Immigrants, according to the newspapers, were provided with the basic necessities of life and aided in their colonization attempts. This relatively positive image of America may be attributed to several factors. The immigration movement was just beginning and the vagaries of American life were as yet unknown to Russian readers. Besides, whatever hardships America offered must have seemed minimal after the violence of Russia in 1881 and the primitive conditions in Brody. In addition, the truly massive waves of

immigration that would come later had not yet begun: immigration to America from Russia was a new adventure for the Russian and American Jews. This period, during 1881-1882, perhaps represents the "honeymoon" era of this press and its treatment of America.

#### Footnotes

1

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2

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Russki Yevrei, 1881

"From All the Countries of the World"

New York (from letters of an immigrant to the editor of R.Y.)

...We set off from Europe. Almost all of the passengers of the ship on which I went were Jews who were immigrating from Russia. The care and management<sup>1</sup> of the Paris "Alliance Israelite", which took us from<sup>2</sup> Brody to here, led us on the ship too. We were given everything that was necessary for a comfortable, and even excellent trip: kosher food, a general Jewish prayer service, a warm bed; all of this was at our service. For example, here are six points that were printed in the name of the "Alliance" in Germano-Jewish jargon on the back of every immigrant's passenger ticket. "1) We advise that you have with you a warm, woolen blanket for protection from colds. 2) Every person is granted, free of charge at anytime during the voyage, the use of a bed and linens. 3) The food on the ship is kosher: breakfast is at 8:00 in the morning consisting of coffee or tea with sugar, and fresh bread or hard biscuits with butter. At 1:00 in the afternoon--dinner of soup, beef, potatoes, beans or peas with bread. At 6:00, supper: potatoes with meat, coffee or tea with sugar, fresh bread or hard biscuits. The food will be healthful and nutritious. 4)

Immigrants will be transported to New York, Philadelphia, Boston or Baltimore. It is advised that upon their arrival, they quickly turn to the local Jewish society or, in New York, to the Board of Delegates.<sup>3</sup> 5) We advise that you save this ticket and present it to the society or to the Board. 6) It is urgently requested of immigrants that upon their arrival in America, after some time to inform the "Alliance" about their situation. To this end, every immigrant is given a sheet of paper with an envelope."

When we arrived in New York, we were met by representatives of the Board, who immediately took all of us out into the city, to a hotel where each person was given an especially comfortable room. When we had rested from the journey, they invited us into the presence of the Board to question us about the state of affairs in Russia, about our situation and how we would like to occupy ourselves. For us, artisans who wish to practice our own craft, they hunted out jobs and set us up at fixed places with excellent salaries, from \$40 to \$45 a month. They sent individuals who did not have a trade to a special agricultural farm where they would clothe them, feed them and teach them agriculture and the English language for one year.<sup>4</sup> One must see the happiness of these dependent martyrs in order to cry tears of joy together with them.

--Yanki

1.

The Alliance Israelite Universelle, a Jewish philanthropic organization founded in France in 1860. The founders included J. Carvallo and Charles Netter. These men formulated the Alliance's aims as follows: "to work everywhere for the emancipation and moral progress of the Jews; to offer effective assistance to Jews suffering from anti-semitism; and to encourage publications calculated to promote this aim." See Zoza Szajkowski, "The European Attitude to East European Jewish Immigration (1881-1893)," PAJHS vol. 41 (1951), p. 127 and "How the Mass Migration to America Began," Jewish Social Studies vol. 4 (1942) p.291.

2

Brody, Galicia. In 1881, Brody was a frontier town under Austrian rule which became a temporary asylum for the refugees from Tsarist pogroms. See Zoza Szajkowski, "How the Mass Migration to America Began", Jewish Social Studies, vol. 4 (1942), p. 291.

3

That is, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, the first national organization of Jewish congregations in the United States, founded in 1859. It was modeled on the Board of Deputies of British Jews (founded 1760) and thus the confusion of the name. See also Max Kohler's "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859-1878)," PAJHS, vol. 25 (1925) and "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859-1878)" by Allan Tarshish in PAJHS vol. 49 (1959) pp.16-32.

4

This probably refers to the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society. See Gilbert Osofsky's article "The Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society of the United States (1881-1883)," PAJHS, vol. 49 (1959), pp.173-187.

Razsvet November 27, 1881

"Concerning the Immigrant Question: A Letter to the Editor"

At this time when we, with the greatest anxiety, with fear and hope, await the decision of our fate which depends on that or the other response of the commissions which are meeting now in various cities of the Empire, the idea of immigration ever-more permeates the minds of a certain segment of Russian Jewry. The recognition of the inevitability and the necessity of immigration becomes ever stronger, acquiring the rights of citizenship (?). That this is so [is proven] by the frequently-appearing news about unceasing parties of immigrants setting off for America. The majority of them go without any means, without any outlined plan, without any organization. In a word, they go, as it is said, whither their eyes wander; not thinking about the future.

But alongside such immigrants, others of an entirely different sort have recently begun to appear. I speak of a party of immigrants, composed of 300 or more young Jewish men and women who, in the early part of this month, founded a European contingent setting out<sup>1</sup> for America. The majority of them are people with good educations (a few with university degrees, others finished agricultural and assessment institutions) and consequently, they belong to those few, happy Jews who might live in Russia more or less well and peacefully;

not fearing that one fine day they'll be crushed, disgraced and left without any means of support. In addition to such people, there are also artisans of various professions in this party. Finally, there are a goodly number of young women in it, and this I especially underline, since this fact shows what kind of huge success our women have recently achieved in the way of intellectual development and self-awareness. The writer of these lines is personally acquainted with a few members of this party of immigrants and knows them to be honest, energetic, developed people living a fully-idealistic life.

2

In their letter which is now being passed from hand to hand in many of the cities where Jews live, they say, "It is not material need that has driven us from Russia. No! Every one of us, without exaggeration, clearly recognizes that in one's native country, where he has spent ten or more years in his education and the study of his country's character and the people among whom he mingles, he can live better than in a new place where everything is strange and unfamiliar. But the moral pressure which was brought to bear upon us by our environment...was the stimulus which made it necessary for us to leave our motherland. We are setting off for a new country, not to obtain gold, not for luxury and wealth, but to find the opportunity to use our brains and physical strength in honest, useful labor."



environment...was the stimulus which made it necessary for us to leave our motherland. We are setting off for a new country, not to obtain gold, not for luxury and wealth, but to find the opportunity to use our brains and physical strength in honest, useful labor."

From these words, the goal which inspires these people is already visible. Some say that perhaps their goal is too egoistic: the idea too narrow. Indeed, of what use is it to Russian Jewry in general if some three hundred of its members will have the chance to live by means of honest and useful labor? The following passage of the letter I have quoted may serve as an answer to this question. "Our task is too vast and complicated. It cannot be confined to that which relates to getting a paltry number of people to live honestly and peacefully. Our goal is to extend our community by means of a constant influx of fresh strength, that in case of a repetition of the disaster to our spiritual brothers, they might know that beyond the ocean there is a handful of people they may contact for advice."

From this it is apparent that their goal is far from egotistical. The idea which inspires them is far from narrow. In order to finally characterize this party of immigrants and their goal, I am allowing myself to cite still one more extract from that same letter. "Our labor will be purely agricultural, applying the recent findings of science to this task."

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And so, from all that has been said, it is apparent that these people differ from the usual immigrants in many ways. They compose a completely organized whole. They have a clearly recognized goal and a definite idea. The following question now arises: must we look on these people with full sympathy and

fellow feelings; expressing this in word and deed or, considering them to be idealists and fantasizers, unable to bring their own people any benefit, should we recoil from them and leave them to the mercy of their fate in the waves of the sea of life?

I pose this question in view of the recent appearance of various articles in the columns of the Russo-Jewish organs; some of which polemicize on behalf of America and others on behalf of Palestine. I do not intend to investigate how valid are the arguments of these and those articles. But I call to the attention of the reader the following, which are to my mind the important circumstances. Such an important, vital question as the question "whither is it better to immigrate?"<sup>3</sup> is, in the end, only a matter of time. In all probability, the first Europeans who set off for America didn't think, didn't guess, that their labor would yield such an abundant harvest. On the contrary, they naturally feared that their incredible labor would not be crowned with success; that they would perish in a battle with the primitive conditions of life in America with her untouched soil, virgin, impassible forests and wild Indians. And that's just for starters! In the second place, even if we had decided in principle that it was best to immigrate to Palestine then it would be too naive on our part to think that all Russian Jews would move there. Finally, in the third place--and this

is the most important--while we, as it is said, each philosophize in the quiet of our own study and deliberate about what is better: America or Palestine; the masses suffer and seek an outlet for themselves. Whether or not they err, they find this outlet in America and we will by no means stop them. We see that, regardless of all the obstacles which they meet on their way; regardless of the fact that they are forced to die in Brody; that they literally die from hunger and sundry deprivations, all the same they aspire to immigrate mainly to America. Judging by newspaper reports, there are a fair number of our brethren located there who may easily perish in a new, unfamiliar place if we decline to support them, at least at first.

Taking into account all that I've said above, it seems to me that just as there are supporters of America, so are their supporters of Palestine who will agree with me that our moral obligation is to aid these young people about whom I spoke in the beginning, according to one's strength, in word and deed. For by supporting them, we will simultaneously create support for these, the more-or-less numerous of our brethren who have set off for America without any organization. They will know that a young community, to which they may always turn for advice and material and moral cooperation is located there.

1This is the Am Olam ("The Eternal People") group. It was founded in Odessa in 1881 by Mania Bakl and Moses

Herder. The contingent mentioned here left for America from Yelizabetgrad in 1881 and was followed by additional groups in 1881-1882. See Abraham Menes, "The Am Oylom Movement" The Yivo Annual, vol. 4 (1949), p. 9 and Uri Herscher, Jewish Agricultural Utopias in America (1880-1910) (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981).

2

For more on this letter see Abraham Menes, p. 12.

3

The decision whether to immigrate to America or Palestine was an important one. See Joel S. Geffen, "Whither: To Palestine or to America in the Pages of the Russian-Hebrew Press: Ha-Melitz and Ha-Yom (1880-1890), Annotated Documentary," American Jewish Historical Quarterly vol. 59 (1969), pp. 179-200 and see Abraham Menes, pp. 19-20.

Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda May 22, 1882

"By the Way" (Impressions of Brody)"

Before us is a document which creates a sad impression. This is the letter of a woman who spent some time in Brody as a representative of the Women's Philanthropic Committee of Vienna.<sup>1</sup> We bring forth this letter in abbreviated form, partly because we do not want to overly frighten the imaginations of the readers.

"For a person used to air, light and tidiness," writes this lady, "to visit the general apartment of these unhappy immigrants is not at all an easy task. Here you fear to breathe the poisonous air which immediately pours over you as soon as you open the door. On the wet, clay floor, no matter where you look, you see hundreds of unfortunates lying in dirty rags with stupefied expressions (on their faces who) present such a picture of horror and bitterness that it defies any description.

"Already at the entrance, I came across a woman lying (on the floor) who stretched out a hand to me in entreaty, apparently lacking the strength to rise. With difficulty I defended myself and pushed away the crowd and, getting close to the unfortunate woman, heard how she, pointing to her child who was barely a month old, said, "At least just one glass of milk! The child is

dying in my arms!" The unhappy mother told me that she  
is from Balta:<sup>2</sup> they plundered her belongings and burnt  
her house. They dragged her husband and three children  
to somewhere unknown. And she herself, then being in  
only the first days after birth, was disgraced and  
thrown into the street with her newborn child. When, by  
my order, they brought milk to this woman's child, one  
poor woman after another began to step forward from all  
parts of the apartment with infant children. Here was a  
very young woman who was a raving beauty. Her three-  
week-old infant gave out screams which could touch even  
the hardest heart. "He's dying, he's dying!" groaned  
the young mother. "Just let him have one swallow!" In  
a flood of tears, she told us that yesterday, after  
three weeks of wandering, she arrived here from Kiev.  
At the border, they stripped her of those negligible  
sums of money which she had put together from the sale  
of her domestic belongings. At first they searched  
her bedding materials, prodding the width and length,  
and when nothing turned up, they stripped her naked and  
found 45 rubles--her only resources--under the shirt on  
her chest. But they were still not satisfied with this.  
The pen refuses to transmit this unfortunate woman's  
terrible story with those details which were poured out  
before us from her sore and burning heart. Because of  
the fright and suffering at the border, this poor woman  
was even stripped of the ability to feed her own infant..."

We will skip the further horrors, the unbelievably

harrowing details of the fate of this woman and of other immigrants.

"My gaze came to rest on one twelve-year-old child with an intelligent expression on his face," the author of the letter continued, "and he showed me his blind father leaning against a wall. How many horrors did I have to hear concerning this blind man!..."

"Where is your mother?" I addressed the boy.

The child was silent. "It's better not to ask" he finally answered in a choking voice and, running up to his blind father, he laid his head on his knees and sobbed bitterly. Those around explained to me that his mother had died 8 days ago on the way to Brody.

"And my mother" --"And mine!" was heard from various children's voices.

"Did you bury her quietly on the way?"

"We had to leave her in the woods"--they answered me. All of our people said that if we busied ourselves with burials (we'd be delayed) and we'd miss the train in Brody, which must take us to America"(!)

It's remarkable that all the immigrants in general, and every one individually, were sure that everything was prepared for them in Brody and that all they had to do was be ready in time. They wish to run as far away as possible from the fatherland so strongly that it turned into a savage, dangerous desert. These people are in such a hurry that they don't even consider



it possible to bury their own dead. They run from the frying pan into the fire. One may positively say that if the situation of immigrants in Brody doesn't get better soon, these unfortunates are doomed to a sure, hungry and agonizing death."

"It would be going too far," the author concluded her letter, "--if I had taken it into my head to describe all the bitterness and unhappiness with which I met in the kennels of immigrants, where you are more likely to see corpses than living people. Only one thing became clear to me, that not one pen has yet presented such a terrible picture of the pogroms as is painted before the very eyes of the observer of these pogrom victims. Our century which is already approaching its end, which had imagined its progress in the progressive procession along the path of the prosperity of humanity must now hang its proud head in shame. After what you see and hear in Brody, any comprehension of humanity, love for one's neighbor, international rights, etc. seems just like empty sounds..."

1

One of many Jewish Vienesese philanthropic organizations, founded in 1816.

2

Balta is located in the Ukraine, approximately one hundred miles northwest of Odessa.

Razsvet December 18, 1881

"The Odyssey of Immigrants in a New Place"

(Correspondence of Razsvet)

I have already spent more than a month in New York and only now have I taken it upon myself to write briefly to you, for want of time, about the odyssey of Russian Jews who, by the irresistible laws of history, had to take up their walking sticks again and set off in quest of a new homeland. Only now, I say, have I collected my thoughts to write to you, because only now have I begun to recover from the turmoil of new feelings and impressions [which were] conceived on the way to America. Only now am I in a condition to gather all that I have seen and heard into one whole...and it must be confessed: the ways of God are great and unfathomable.

I will begin straight away with the setting off of our party, composed of 270 persons, from Brody, for you must surely already know about the arrival of Jewish immigrants in Brody. On the seventeenth of November, a Tuesday at 12:00 noon, we were already spread among the train wagons. The platform was overflowing with local Jews and bureaucrat. The vice-president of the Paris Alliance, Mr. Netter<sup>1</sup> and his helper Dr. Schafier<sup>2</sup> distributed supplies throughout the wagons for four days

(enough until we reached Antwerp): bread, butter, cheese, herring, vodka and eggs. The immigrants' passionate words (of farewell) were heard from the train and were sincerely echoed by the crowd outside. Mr. Netter, shedding the passionate tears of a Jewish patriot, took us by the hand and in a voice breaking with tears, wished that we would continue to believe in the traditions of the Jewish nation. The solemn farewell was finished. The train set off. A solemn silence spread. The heart sadly contracted: Brody was the last link connecting us with the abandoned homeland. Now the final separation was felt. The train set out, a thunderous immigrant hurrah was heard and here the serious figure of Netter was replaced by the lively, nervous face of Schafier and--farewell motherland!

We were silent. Every one of us was absorbed in his own thoughts. But in one of the neighboring cars, someone babbled in a shaking voice, "We don't wish to be worse than a dog, they don't give us our human rights, we will seek them across the ocean..."

I could no longer stand it and I, nestling my head against the cold glass, sobbed. I remembered against my will the dear motherland with which my childhood and the sweet dreams of my youth were bound up.

The next evening, we arrived in the fine old city of Brussels and stayed at the station about four hours.  
3  
On the order of Strauss, our accompanying agent who was contracted by the Paris Alliance to get a few thousand

Russian Jews to America, we were given a cup of coffee and a glass of beer. Of course it didn't make the rounds, without toasts. On Friday evening we arrived in the Belgian port city of Antwerp. It was only here that we were convinced that we had fallen into the hands of this adroit operator of Mr. Strauss's: while we were under the ministrations of Strauss's protege, we approached the immigrant section and went into a shed, which served as a cafeteria. An unbearable stench of melted suet composed the main ingredient of the muddy soup prepared for us, which compelled us to retreat upstairs in order to assign sleeping places. A new disappointment: for 270 people three dark, dirty rooms were prepared.<sup>4</sup> Growling, several immigrant families dispersed throughout the city to search for rooms. My family, consisting of six adults and four children, took an apartment in one of the best sections and paid 19 francs for 24 hours, including lunch and supper. Strauss returned this sum to us, saying that the Alliance would reimburse him. On Saturday evening, we trudged to the wharf. It was pitch black and pouring buckets. Balancing for a few minutes on piles of flail and cable and then let down by narrow, slippery, slanting stairs, I found myself on the edge of some kind of dark hole, on a mine which twinkled with lights. Moans and cries of adults and children were heard...I had groped to the second small set of stairs, by which

people and hand baggage were slid down, each in their turn with someone else's luggage on their backs. Our cabin was a new disaster; poorly lit by a lonely lantern. When I descended thither on hands and knees along the wet, dirty stairs and stood upright, I was horrified: imagine a cellar with rusty, sweating iron walls, a dirty floor lined with two-level wooden cribs stuffed with layers of lying men, women and children. I say layers because if someone wanted to stand up he hit his head on the ceiling. Only a fraction of the immigrants were on the cribs. The rest--the majority--were dispersed on the floor, having placed their hand baggage beneath themselves. The noise, the din, the crying of children and women was heard. Despair took possession of all. Screams were heard: "Where is Strauss?" "Come here you rascal!" But the Antwerpian trickster had foreseen this outburst and was prudently absent.

In order to completely characterize Mr. Strauss--  
nicht gedacht soll er sein<sup>5</sup>--I'll tell you that he was recently sued here by the immigrants to whom he sold tickets at an unbelievably high price. By the way, the New York Immigration Commission<sup>6</sup> (New Iorke Einwanderungs Commission) has brought its own charges against this Strauss.

The whole night we stood at anchor and at dawn<sup>7</sup> sailed on the Shelde. The rolling started and 1 1/2 days of nausea, with its known accompaniment, followed

all the way to Hulya . Here we were given a Straussian dinner and after a six-hour railroad journey we arrived in Liverpool. Having rested for two days, we boarded the huge steamship "Egypt"<sup>9</sup> and went out onto the open sea. The rooms and food on the boat were disgusting, many did not have proper personal facilities. In the course of twelve days, we were fed ship's herring and undigestible rolls. I advise Jewish immigrants to supply themselves with plenty of rye bread, smoked fish, tea (ship's tea resembles the brewed leaves of a broom), sugar and lemon.

On Sunday morning, the sixth of November, our eyes beheld the fabulous shore of New York. Delight was universal: all the deprivations were forgotten. At 2:00 in the afternoon, we went to Castle Gardens<sup>10</sup> --a huge building where arriving immigrants of all nations have the right to stay and wallow about on the floor uncomprehendingly until they receive work. Here various employment bureaus help immigrants. Because we chanced to arrive at Castle Garden on a Sunday, we had to spend the night. The next morning, members of the Jewish committee appeared. At this meeting, which the members organized, I was able to see that all the hopes which we had placed on the local committee were exaggerated. Thus the committee, having recorded us by name, advised all indigent and unskilled people to go back to Russia at the Committee's expense. Loud laughter was the

answer to such a humane suggestion. The immigrants were dispersed through several rooms. The fee for 24 hours for an adult is one dollar, for children fifty cents. Notwithstanding this high price, the food and rooms were reminiscent of the ship's. Having given the immigrants a day of rest, the committee began to send them off, one to Philadelphia, another to Chicago, Cincinnati, Millvan [Milwaukee?], etc. And as my acquaintances write to me, the respective local Jewish Committees in the places to which they were sent send the single people to factories and give the families a few dollars for the purchase of a few small bits of notions and they are made into peddlers. In the beginning, the local committee did not want to hear about agriculture, saying that this involves great expense and trouble. Then I sent off a letter to the local committee, in which I described the hopeless situation of Russian Jews which forced the masses to immigrate to America and pointed out that if the American committees hope to truly do a good deed, then they must take care to properly strengthen the Jewish element in American society and that perhaps this may be achieved only by the colonization of Russian Jews. This letter created quite an impression and at the meeting it was decided to send off one of the members of the local committee to Europe in order to organize a world-wide Jewish committee and, in the event of success, the American committees would be in a position to colonize Russian Jews.

Meanwhile, the local committee telegraphed to Brody in order to stop the departure of immigrants. Of all our party, 25 families from Elizabetgrad<sup>11</sup> had agreed in advance to farm exclusively on the principles<sup>12</sup> of cooperatives. Nine Kievan families joined them. Three thousand dollars of capital was collected and the group began to persistently demand the construction of a colony. After long debates, the local committee agreed,<sup>13</sup> and got in touch with the New Orleans committee which quickly responded that the colonization of these 34 families would take approximately \$14,000 since they would have to be supported until the first harvest. These families were sent off to New Orleans and, from the information I've received from there, the situation is (apparently) as follows: the local committee leased some cultivated land at ten dollars an acre from a certain Neymont<sup>14</sup> and gave every family 50 acres of land. The families stayed in New Orleans in a specially-rented house and the men were sent to the colony to build houses under the guidance of several carpenters.<sup>15</sup> The leading New Orleanian Jews donated a synagogue with Torah scrolls, windows and doors for the houses to the colony and one Christian<sup>16</sup> donated 20 plows. Recently, several newly-arrived Kievan families were sent to them, so that now there are about 200 souls in the colony.

At a general meeting of the colonists, under the



leadership of the New Orleans mayor<sup>17</sup>, a Jew, it was decided to name the colony, "The Colony of Russian Jews<sup>18</sup> in America--Neymontov".

The New Orleanian committee, having received \$1,800 of aid from the New York committee, deduced that the colonists' debt would be due in 7 years, since payment would begin with the second year of the colony's existence. We wish our Jewish pioneers full success on their new field under the shining rays of American freedom, and let Jehovah help the long-suffering people.

By Tuesday the 13th of December, three ships with Russian Jews are expected. Among them is a society of young Jewish "intelligenti"<sup>19</sup> with capital of a few thousand dollars and two agronomists. Together with this society I hope to found a colony on cooperative principles. Only not in Louisiana, where yellow fever reigns, but in Texas. If, as I expect, the local committee refuses to colonize us, then we will manage to reach the sacred goal without its assistance by appealing to other committees specially for this construction. We shall live, we shall see! I will not delay in communicating the further course of our immigrants.

--I. Petrikovski

1  
Charles Netter (1826-1882) was a leader of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. He visited Brody at the end of 1881 and remained there for some months. He helped to arrange the immigration of 1,200 Russian Jewish refugees to America.

2

Dr. Schafier managed one of the three bureaus set up in Brody by Netter. His bureau carried out the concrete work of physical aid to the refugees. See Zoza Szajkowski, "How the Mass Migration to America Began" Jewish Social Studies, vol. 4 (1942), p. 296.

3

Henri Strauss was a Belgian travel agent. He was born in Brussels in 1844 and was an important Belgian figure. On August 14, 1881 the central committee of the Alliance decided to send 500 persons to America and made their arrangements with him.

4

For more on the boarding houses provided to immigrants, see Pamela Nadell, "The Journey to America by Steam: The Jews of Eastern Europe in Transition," American Jewish History, vol. 71 (December 1981), p. 273.

5

"may he not be remembered!"

6

This Commission worked in concert with the Secretary of the Treasury to collect the federally imposed head tax on immigrants and aid immigrants in distress. See Thomas Pitkin, Keepers of the Gate: A History of Ellis Island (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 9-10.

7

Unable to identify this ship.

8

The British city Hull. This is a seaport in Yorkshire, England. Immigrant ships frequently went from Hull to Liverpool.

9

Unable to identify this ship.

10

Castle Gardens was the original site where immigrants arrived in America. It was located in New York's Battery and conditions there were poor. Ellis Island eventually superseded Castle Gardens as the entry point to America for immigrants.

11

Yelizabetgrad, changed to Zinov'yevsk in 1924 and to Kirovo in 1936 and finally to Kirovograd in 1939. A city in the Ukraine.

12

Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine.

13

The New Orleans Jews gave the settlers a warm reception as did many in the Louisiana government. The governor promised the New Orleans Immigrant Aid Committee that he would encourage the immigrants and do all in his power to make the colony a success. See Uri Herscher, pp. 32-37.

14

Probably Isidore and Henry Newman, prominent

Jewish New Orleans philanthropists who supplied a tract of land to the settlers. See Julian B. Feibelman, A Social and Economic Study of the New Orleans Jewish Community (Philadelphia, 1941), pp.87-88.

15

See footnote 14.

16Unable to identify this man. Perhaps it is the German farmer mentioned by Herscher on page 35.

17

The only Jewish mayor of New Orleans listed in the Encyclopedia Judaica is Martin Behrman who served four terms from 1904 to 1920.

18

The correct name is "The First Agricultural Colony of Russian Jews in America."

19

The Am Olam group.

## CHAPTER TWO: ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION

The first wave of Russian-Jewish immigrants in this period began to arrive in America in 1881. They had very high expectations of the welcome this country would extend to them. The immigrants placed particularly high hopes on the philanthropic Committees, not only of Europe, but of the United States as well.

The American committee to which they looked for monetary and moral resources was not an established philanthropic society. Rather, it was an ad hoc, emergency organization founded on December 8, 1881. The Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society lacked the full financial and psychological support of the Jewish community, and the New York City community as a whole. It had no established position among the international relief committees, and was in constant conflict with the Mansion House Committee and other European immigrant committees.

HEAS demanded money, screening of immigrants and cooperation from the European committees. However, these committees were loathe to oblige. On two occasions HEAS simply threatened to refused to take on any more immigrants. Though this may have been only a ploy to obtain more money from European Jews, their threats were real enough. In July of 1882, Augustus S. Levey of HEAS wrote to the Paris Alliance, a French philanthropic organization which aided immigrants, that:

We, as a Society, and as American citizens, can not

and will not be parties to the infliction upon our community of a class of emigrants, whose only destiny is the hospital, the infirmary, or perhaps the workhouse.<sup>1</sup>

The immigrants' high expectations combined with HEAS's tenuous status to create deep disappointment. They anticipated that HEAS would provide them with everything: shelter, food, money and rewarding work. When these benefits were not forthcoming, it came as a crushing blow. In his autobiography, Alexander Harkavy, an early immigrant, expresses his dismay when he discovered that the Committee would not shelter him for an extended period of time.

We were taken to this [immigrant shelter] house on the day we arrived in New York, and stayed there for about a week. We originally thought that we would be maintained there for several weeks, but after just one passed, we were informed that the time had come for us to leave. This seemed wrong to us, and we said that we would stay on notwithstanding the demands of the society's lackeys.<sup>2</sup>

Elieser Maschbir, a frequent contributor to Niedielnaya Xhronika Vosxhoda, describes the immigrants' plight sympathetically.

"Don't put your trust in princes!" said David the psalmist. It's too bad that my Russian brethren completely forgot this extremely wise advice. It is especially applicable here in this free republic where...everyone thinks, lives and works only for themselves...What must the situation of immigrants be who put their hopes entirely in the committee instead of in their own personal strength, energy and patience. Yes, they are very sorry!<sup>3</sup>

The immigrants' unrealistic view of HEAS contributed to their disappointment and made the adjustment to American life more difficult.

The attitude of the American Jewish population toward immigration also contributed to the immigrants' disappointment. This community wanted to limit the immigration of their Russian brethren to the United States during this period. This was not the view held by the general American population: from 1876 until 1893, America often encouraged immigration. This was due largely to economic factors which fluctuated cyclically. At that time America was consumed with the problems of territorial development and industrial expansion. During economic depressions, though fewer immigrants arrived, anti-foreign sentiments grew stronger. When times grew better, so did the American attitude toward immigrants. Thus, American attitudes toward foreigners were determined by economic factors to a large extent. During the early 1880's the American attitude toward immigration was favorable.

The Jewish community's opinion, however, was generally speaking quite negative. The American Jews were caught in a double bind. George Price, in an article originally written for Voskhod, summarized the situation in its full complexity.

[T]he American Jew, who enjoys political freedom, tries to avoid anything which might provoke enmity against him and might supply fuel to the dying flame of intolerance. That is why Russian-Jewish immigration brought the American Jew face to face with a special problem. The American Jew is afraid that the mass influx will delay the process of assimilation--the process of Americanization of the Jews of the United States...On the one hand, here are his true relatives who are dear to him and whom he wants to help; on the other hand, what a

blemish! All his aristocratic neighbors, and he, himself, will again become aware of his descent, of his past and his poverty. But he cannot help himself. The relatives are in need. They require help. Our friend spends a great deal of money and tries to rehabilitate his relatives. But after this first party of relatives, there arrives a second, third and fourth and there seems to be no end to the influx. Thus the wealthy man is terrified, not knowing what to do with his uninvited guests. This is the position the American Jew finds himself in.<sup>4</sup>

The American Jews saw their European counterparts as much wealthier than themselves; more able to support indigent refugees. They were afraid that this influx of immigrants would pauperize them. They appealed to the European Committees to screen the immigrants and send only skilled workers to America. Otherwise, they threatened, they would accept no immigrants at all and they would have to remain in Brody. The European committees agreed to compromise, but the articles under study show that many unskilled workers found their way to America. An article in the November 27, 1882 issue of Niedielnaya Xhronika Voskhoda states that a group of new immigrants in HEAS's care "all sang the same song and told me the same story: 'We surely don't know any kind of trade to practice as a specialty' So they must take black work [menial labor]."<sup>5</sup>

The immigrants found this kind of work degrading. They had come with expectations of meaningful and lucrative employment in America, and often displayed reluctance to take on "dirty work". This was interpreted by the American Jewish community as a

disinclination to work.

The disappointment these young immigrants felt led to some return migration. Jonathan Sarna estimates that return migration before 1900 was in the range of 15-20%<sup>6</sup> He points out that these first immigrants were mostly young, single males who "arrived in New York brimming with unrealistic hopes, filled with misinformation, and lacking marketable skills."<sup>7</sup> This exactly describes the group of immigrants that Maschbir characterizes in his Nov. 27, 1882 article.

The air of this group of immigrants, young people, healthy-looking but still not settled on anything, reminded me of verses from my homeland:

The last cloud of the dispersed storm  
You alone carry yourself in the bright azure  
Only you bring a sad shadow.<sup>8</sup>

When these dreamy young immigrants became disillusioned, they demanded to return to Russia. To this end, they turned to HEAS for aid.

It's understood that you could hate all of America with its freedom and blessings. They have no illusions about the future, but they take only one thing into account: "I will be back in Russia under any circumstances." This is the alpha and omega of all their hopes and strivings and they demand that the Committee either dispatch them back to Russia or give them monetary aid sufficient for that purpose.<sup>9</sup>

However, such aid was not available. Instead, HEAS suggested that they be taught a trade at HEAS's expense.

Immigrant life was difficult indeed and the translated articles portray it in the worst light. The newspapers under consideration describe America from the newcomers' viewpoint: a land where sharp businessmen



are waiting to exploit poor, hardworking immigrants. For instance, there is this account of immigrants working at railroad construction.

This work pays, but sometimes you fall into the hands of sharp businessmen and if you are a "greener" then you'll be able to see your money like you see your ears--you'll work for a week and they won't pay."<sup>10</sup>

This denegrating and accusatory tone dominates the articles describing the immigrants' arrival and reception. The generosity of the American Jews is rarely mentioned in these articles. In the example above, HEAS would not pay the immigrants' way back to Russia. However they did offer to teach these unhappy people trades at the Committee's expense. Yet this apparently does not redound to HEAS's credit; such philanthropy is seen as the immigrants' due. The negative attitude toward America which pervades these articles may reflect the genuinely traumatic nature of the immigrants' first adjustments to America. However, it may also reveal a bias in the reportage of the Russian-language Jewish press.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Zosa Szajkowski, "The Attitude of American Jews to East European Jewish Immigration (1881-1893)," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, vol.40 (1950-51), p. 226.

<sup>2</sup>

Alexander Harkavy, "Chapters from my Life," translated by Jonathan Sarna, "American Jewish Archives, vol. 33, 1981. p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>

Niedielnaya Xhronika Voskhoda, August 7, 1882.

4

George M. Price, "The Russian Jews in America," translated by Leo Shpall, Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, vol. 48 (1958-59), p. 109.

5

Niedielnaya Xhronika Voskhoda, November 27, 1882.

6

Jonathan D. Sarna. "The Myth of No Return: Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe, 1881-1914", American Jewish History, vol. 71 (1981), p. 259.

7

ibid., p. 261.

8

Niedielnaya Xhronika Voskhoda, November 27, 1882.

9ibid.

10

ibid.

New York, 28 July

"Don't put your trust in princes!" said David the psalmist.<sup>1</sup> It's too bad that my Russian brethren completely forgot this extremely wise advice. It is especially applicable here in this free republic where there are very few "Rachmonim Bnei Rachmonim"<sup>2</sup> and everyone thinks, lives and works only for themselves. "Sorgen sie selbst fur sich"<sup>3</sup>--that's the answer immigrants receive from every corner. This is not because local Jews don't love to help others, but simply because every one of them reached their own position through their personal strength, without any philanthropy from "charitable brothers," they point [out] to every newcomer with pride.

What must the situation of immigrants be who put their hopes entirely in the committee instead of in their own personal strength, energy and patience. Yes, they are very sorry! When they find themselves in a tete-a-tete with the battle for existence, that battle in which energy always comes out the victor, these twice-defeated citizens of the Russian earth quickly lose heart. They completely forget that every piece of bread they earn may be eaten [by them] peacefully. They will not be choked. No one will blame them for snatching

it [the bread] from another's hungry mouth. The situation of those Jews not suited for physical labor is really unenviable. At their insistence, they are gradually being sent back to Sacred Russia. Concerning colonization: although it is slow, it is moving forward. A few days ago, Mr. T.(H.?) Rosenthal<sup>4</sup> left here for Dakota, where a small colony<sup>5</sup> is being founded in which there are 8 men, 19 women and about 20 children. They expect a few prosperous families to come there from Elizabetgrad, Russia.<sup>6</sup> Every adult is registered for 360 acres of land; this huge amount of land is being taken for reserves for the Spring. It is suggested (that on this land) a significant number of immigrants will be settled and colonized in this excellent place, whose climate is pleasant for inhabitants of Russia.

God willing, this new attempt<sup>7</sup> will be more successful than the Louisiana colony which caused so much harm. How favorable this place is for colonization was proved a few days ago when an American Jew<sup>8</sup> left with his family in order to dedicate himself to agriculture there; this person is an intellectual and quite well-off.<sup>9</sup> According to the newspaper "Deborah" several colonies will emerge through the means of the Cincinnati committee before long.<sup>10</sup> According to a personal letter we received, one colony of 10 families has already been founded. The details are still not

known.

11

--Elieser Maschbir

1

Psalm 146:3

2

Literally "merciful ones, sons of merciful ones", that is, very merciful people.

3

"Let them worry about themselves!"

4

Herman Rosenthal (1843-1917), writer and pioneer of Jewish settlement in the United States. He established Sicily Island in Louisiana and then the Cremieux colony in South Dakota. For more on this Colony, see Uri Herscher, Jewish Agricultural Utopias in America (1880-1910), (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), pp. 48-52.

5

The Cremieux Colony, founded by Herman Rosenthal in 1882. Named for Adolphe Cremieux, a past president of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. Also, see footnote

4.

6

See Chapter One, Razsvet December 18, 1881 footnote 11.

7

The Sicily Island Colony which failed in less than a year.

8

Probably Godner, an ex-soldier who had lived in America for twenty years. See Gabriel Davidson, Our Jewish Farmers (New York: 1943), p. 221.

9

A German-language paper published in Cincinnati from 1885-1900.

10

Rabbi Isaac M. Wise advocated settling on government land and helped sponsor the Beersheba Colony in western Kansas.

11

Mashbir was active in the self-defense movement in Balta. He organized a self-defense unit there made up of porters and coachmen. Davidson gives his biography in Our Jewish Farmers on page 220. According to Davidson, Eleazer S. Marshbeer went on this colony.

Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda October 16, 1882

New York 2 October

Since the dismissal of M.G. Heilprin<sup>1</sup> there was a pause of several days and then the committee<sup>2</sup> again resumed its activity, only in a different form. In the office which conducts all the correspondence with Europe and Africa, handles all the accounts and serves as the place for all committee meetings there are now only a new secretary<sup>3</sup> and a new bookkeeper--a woman.<sup>4</sup> The rooms of the ground floor which served as a place for the distribution of money and clothes, now stand empty and grieving for mourning "Russian citizens". However,<sup>5</sup> No. 27 Greenwich St. has revived a bit. A kitchen for immigrants is located on the second floor and there is a warehouse containing Jewish goods saved after economic payment. The committee appointed the former cashier as a report maker. He sits all day in the barn and anyone who has a request asks him about it and he writes it down. In the evening he presents all the notes to Mr. Toska<sup>6</sup> who either grants the request or not. In this regard, Mr. Schwartz's<sup>7</sup> opinion plays a large role since in the three months since he took office, he has already succeeded in studying the ways of those several hundreds of immigrants who are inseparable from the committee.

Since the 10th of September they have abolished both "boarding houses" and have presented this alternative to all those immigrants who are still unable

8

to earn their bread: "Wards Island or nothing." It is understood that one chooses the lesser of two evils and they were all sent to Wards Island. Every Sunday a specially-elected committee of volunteer representatives meets there and insofar as they are able, they help people stand on their own two feet, if they express the desire and appear to have a goal in mind. If just anyone requests money in order to peddle "ein leben<sup>9</sup> machen", then they are refused. Last Sunday, President<sup>10</sup> Mr. Henry allowed one hundred dollars to be given to one intellectual family who came here not long ago so that these diligent people could make "mansof business (sic)"--businessmen of themselves here. Mr. Toska took it upon himself to find something for this family.

11

The "Castle Garden" Bureau of the committee sent off more than one hundred immigrants to work on the building of a railroad last week. The pay: a dollar-and-a-half a day.

The Women's Employment Bureau, open at No. 35 East Broadway, which had existed since July, was closed last week for want of clients. Almost all arriving girls and married women with no children receive work: one at a factory, another in a store, another in the private homes of the president and vice-president of this foundation. Miss Alexander<sup>12</sup> and Miss Kontrowitz<sup>13</sup> themselves born in Russia, worked at this pleasant task all the time without pay, only their assistant, Miss Lipschitz,<sup>14</sup> an experienced Russian citizen who had come

here with the first Kieven immigrants, received any wage and it was insignificant; only as much as one person needs for the very poorest life. She took it [this work] not for the labor, but for survival. It must be said that these three workers are to be sincerely thanked for the warm sympathy and active participation with which they undertook this good deed on behalf of the bitter lot of their suffering sisters and former compatriots.

The editorship of the German-Jewish newspaper  
15  
"Zeitgeist" has strongly attacked the Brody and Lvov  
16  
committees, accusing them of causing the miserable situation of the Russian Jews who have immigrated to America. In the first place, these committees are accused of taking 35 rubles (half of the costs) from them that this money would be returned to them upon their arrival in Liverpool. We consider it our duty to explain that this is far from how the matter stands. We were able to attend the first two sessions of the Lvov  
17  
"Vorstand" which took place on the 10th and 11th of April this year. There it was decreed that an immigration committee be founded in Lvov (see No.17 of "Chronicles"). At the second of these meetings, Baron  
18  
Montagu and Dr. Asher  
19  
attended as delegates of the  
20  
"Mansion House" fund. Dr. Emil Byk,  
21  
a  
22  
representative of the Lvov society "Schomer Israel", who has taken an active part in the fate of Russian



Jews, brought up the following question: "It is not enough to just transport Jews to America, where they don't even have an Austrian kopek to their name and can't speak the language. They may find themselves in even more trouble. Instead of bringing them a little benefit, we bring them still more harm." The delegates answered that every immigrant in Liverpool receives the following: men five pounds sterling, women three pounds and children one pound so that in general circumstances, (each) family member would have a little capital. Rabbi<sup>23</sup> Arnstein, a Russian by birth, explained that this sum is quite enough for a diligent and thrifty Russian Jew<sup>24</sup> to make his way. R. Levinstein enlarged on this still further: "Meine Phantasie," he said "geht noch weiter--ich sehe schon im verlauf von 50 jahren einen der russischen fluchtlinge auf dem Americaner Präsidentstuhle." (I can see a Russian Jew sitting in state in the American President's chair in as little as fifty years.)

Meanwhile, the number of unfortunate victims in Brody and Lvov has grown not by the day, but by the hour. The distressing situation of these people has grown more quickly. (Even) with the two trains which set off from Brody daily, it is impossible to hope to transfer them all to America so soon. But there were many among the immigrants who had the ability to pay half the costs; and since the railroad company made a reduction of 50% for every one hundred immigrants, the

Lvov committee, with the agreement of the London committee, added a third so-called "zahluge".<sup>25</sup> On the basis of the delegates' words, they were absolutely certain that this (sum), if given to those who didn't have it, would exceed their expenses. The Lvov committee could not have suspected that this would not come true. In any case, these "zahluge" were very useful to paupers; waiting for whole months in Brody for their "schiffskarte" (ship ticket) which costs much less than 35 rubles.

Another reproach thrown at these committees by the editorship of "Zeitgeist" was that the members of the Brody and Lvov committees had allegedly painted America as a country where "die gebratene tauben in munde fliechen",<sup>26</sup> where one need only scoop up gold with a shovel, etc., etc. This accusation hasn't the smallest basis.

In the course of a month's sojourn in Brody and Lvov, the writer of these lines often frequented the circles of immigrant representatives. In our presence, a young man already assigned to transportation on one of the next trains, appeared before Mr. Verber, the editor of "Hailbry"<sup>27</sup> and a member of the Brody committee, and asked that a Brody maiden whom he intended to marry be entered into the list. The fiancée and her mother stood right there. Mr. Verber addressed this question to her: "Are you allowing this madman to take your child?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders and eagerly asked. But Verber continued, "Yes, you are positively crazy! You are going to a country you don't know, where you will have to work and work hard, in order to support yourself, and you are taking a wife?"

"To work, to work, to work hard, as long as it won't be useless, but with a goal," that's what everyone says about America. But the desire "to (go to) America!" was so strong that they paid no attention to this at all.

Soon we will present figures concerning this subject which will well illustrate the immigration question.

--Elieser Maschbir

1

Michael Heilprin (1828-1888) became the secretary of the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society in September, 1882. He served in this post without a salary. See Gustav Pollack, Michael Heilprin and His Sons (New York, 1912).

2

That is, the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society. This organization was created specifically to aid the Russian refugees that came to America in 1881-1882. It disbanded in 1883 when the crisis was over. For a complete history, see Gilbert Osofsky, "The Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society of the United States (1881-1883)," PAJHS, vol. 49 (March 1960), pp. 173-187.

3

Unable to identify. Was it Heilprin?

4

Unable to identify.

5

A restaurant and home were established at this address to aid the dispersal of the immigrants. Osofsky lists more of these specific addresses in his article p. 181.

6

Morris Tuska, characterized by George M. Price as, "a former man of wealth, honest but not energetic, was elected HEAS' first President." George M. Price, transl. Leo Shpall. "The Russian Jews in America,"

PAJHS vol. 48 (1959), p. 35.

7Dr. Julius Schwartz, a representative of HEAS. See Joseph Brandes, Immigrants to Freedom (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971), p. 82.

8  
The Ward's Island Refuge was opened on December 19, 1881. Immigrants were housed there until they found employment. While residing there, they were provided with kosher meals and were given instruction in English.

9"to make a living"

10

Unable to identify.

11

See Chapter One, Razsvet December 18, 1881, footnote 10.

12

Unable to identify.

13

Unable to identify.

14

Unable to identify.

15

Zeitgeist was a German-language newspaper edited by edited by Adolph and Isaac Moses, begun in 1880.

16

Lvov is a major city in the Ukraine.

17

Unable to identify.

18

Samuel Montagu, First Baron Swaythling (1832-1911), banker, communal worker and philanthropist. He traveled to Palestine, Russia and the United States on behalf of Jewry.

19

Dr. Asher Asher (1837-1889) was a Scotch physician who traveled to Palestine, America and Russia with Samuel Montagu.

20

The Mansion House Fund began as meetings convened by the mayor of London to protest anti-semitism. The first meeting was held on July 3, 1840. The Mansion House Committee collected funds to aid Russian victims of pogroms and supervised the transportation of large numbers of these victims from Brody to America. The Fund had a branch office in Liverpool.

21

Emil Byk (1845-1906) was a lawyer, politician and assimilationist leader in Austrian Galicia. In 1869, he was among the founders of Shomer Israel, the first Jewish political organization in Galicia.

22

See footnote 21.

23

Zosa Szajkowski gives a detailed account of these meetings in "The European Attitude to East European Jewish Immigration (1881-1893)," PAJHS, vol. 41 (1951-1952), pp. 144-146. However, he mentions neither Rabbi Arnstein nor Rabbi Levinstein.

24

See footnote 23.

25

Literally, "payment".

26

Literally, "the dove flies into his mouth".  
Idiomatically, "the streets are paved with gold."

27

That is, "Ha-Ivry", "The Hebrew", a newspaper edited by Baruch and Jacob Werber.

Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda November 27, 1882

New York, 6 December

Exactly six weeks ago, I acquainted the readers of Vosxhod with that phase which the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society had entered from the time of Michael Heilprin's departure from it. Since then, everything has gone according to its designated pattern: Mr. Schwarts solemnly sat the whole day at 27 Greenwich Street, accepted petitioners, got upset, snapped, raged and considered himself to be the benefactor of his far-from-beloved Russian brethren (he himself is Hungarian) and in the evenings he wrote papers to Superintendent Toska. Every day he, as it is usually expressed, "argefartigt" (dealt with) about 20 to 30 people, but near his house one could always meet 70 to 100 Russian Jews who had never seen an American watchdog with a stick in his hand--the only protector of order in the country.

The air of this group of immigrants, young people, healthy-looking but still not settled on anything, reminded me of verses from my homeland:

The last cloud of the dispersed storm  
You alone carry yourself in the bright azure  
Only you bring a sad shadow.1

I began to talk with one and then with another and they all sang the same song, and told me the same story: "we surely don't know any kind of trade to practice as a specialty." So they must take black work [dirty work]. While they worked loading and unloading ships, they

received up to two dollars a day which was "all right"; but with the stoppage of this (work) they were sent off for railroad construction.

This work pays, but sometimes you fall into the hands of sharp businessmen and if you are a "greener" then you'll be able to see your money like you see your ears--you'll work for a week and they won't pay. If this is in the area of New York, then Castle Garden's management and the so-called "Deutscher Rechts-Schutz Verein" (German Rights Protection Association)<sup>2</sup> will defend the "Greeners" without charge. If they take on these cases they very rarely lose.

Many of these poor knights [a reference to Don Quixote] were already in Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, St. Louis and other cities of Western America and after various hardships found their way back to New York again--this reservoir of America--and back in the care of the Committee. A few of them told me of their work in the quarries--this is the hardest and most dangerous work, since you break the stony mountains into pieces with gunpowder. As a consequence, if you don't run away at just the right moment then it hits you in the hands, legs and sometimes in the head, and thus many have received mutilations and one even lost his life. It's understood that you could hate all of America with its freedom and blessings. They have no illusions about the future, but they take only one thing into account: "I will be back in Russia under any circumstances." This

is the alpha and omega of all their hopes and strivings and they demand that the Committee either dispatch them back to Russia or give them monetary aid sufficient for that purpose. They don't accept the suggestion that they be taught a trade at the Committee's expense. "We didn't come here to be made into craftsmen." I saw many such (people) who demanded to be sent back three months ago, who, when they recognized that this was vain labor, that their request would not be granted, set about things and now are earning a decent living.

When the more-or-less cold evenings began, the Committee gave orders that not one immigrant must spend the night at Castle Garden's. It was decreed on Ward's Island that young, able-to-work people would not be accepted and therefore they started to give 8 to 15 dollars to everyone so that they could rent an apartment with a table for themselves and the Committee would find work for them which, by the way, is not easy since immigrants have been--not without cause--discredited in New York, and besides this, sometimes the suggestion is more a demand.

But when a rumor spread among the immigrants that unmarried men would again be given aid, then many abandoned the factories in order to make use of the philanthropy once more, even though it's a lean piroge.<sup>3</sup>

Twenty immigrants worked for one manufacturer, a certain Jacob,<sup>4</sup> and so one fine morning he ran to the Committee



with this complaint: why did they call back the workers which they had formerly recommended to him? The matter was explained. It is illustrated by the following numerical statistics: when the list of those who were loafing in Castle Garden was composed, it numbered 40 to 50 people, but when they approached to register their requests and for distribution of aid, on the second and third days, more than one hundred people showed up. On the fourth day, 200 people already lounged around by the entrance in the charitable barn, where it was already necessary to have a policeman to preserve order. Fearing that the number of petitioners would grow at this rate, the Committee considered it best to stop everything immediately. And so, on the first of November of the new calendar, the free kitchen, which had opened in July, was closed. Lately very few people had needed it. Distribution of any monetary aid was stopped on the 2nd of November. All who still ran to this were left, finally, with 15 State St. and with 27 Greenwich St. and they turn to 8th Street at 58 St. Markes Place and "United Hebrew Charities" (the Philanthropic Society of United American Jews).<sup>5</sup> We'll talk about that another time.

All the same, the office on 15 State St. has still not closed and the Committee is now occupied with Ward's<sup>6</sup> Island and colonization. Toward this end, in Vineland<sup>7</sup> (in New Jersey) a 900 acre (about 300 desyatin) section of land was acquired in October from an English

company. The colony is already almost built. Sixty families will settle on this section (of land). There was not enough land in the already-built Vineland colony for 25 of these families and 35 families (those abiding on) Ward's Island. The company takes \$600 from each family and allots it a 15 acre section of land; a house, the necessary tools, furniture, utensils and all other domestic belongings. Of this amount, the Committee takes \$150 from each family. Every family will be obliged to repay the remaining \$450 at (the rate of) \$45 a year beginning with the fourth year. The Vineland families have already arrived at the place and Ward's Island families will leave in a few days.

Until Spring, the company is committed to deliver work to the colonists, probably cutting wood. It will be good if they don't fall into the hands of the smart businessmen who aren't hard to find in "blissful" America.

Because the projected second colony in Colorado<sup>8</sup> neighbors the first, it will be more propitious. In the first place, because the place itself is more favorable; and in the second place because the choice of families will be more careful and suitable and finally, because the Committee itself relates to this colony with more warmth since it has placed greater hopes on it than on all those before it. They propose to spend \$20,000 for the colonization of 30 families. This money is

expected from Europe in the near future, according to news we received, so around the new year, the cornerstone of the new colony will be laid. Every family will be given 40 acres, a full economic establishment and they will be supported until the first harvest.

In general, it is necessary to note that Europe, more than any other place, is occupied with the establishment of Russian immigrants in America. By the way, that's what Herman Magnus,<sup>9</sup> the representative of the Lipschitz Committee<sup>10</sup> who is well-acquainted with the mood of all these Jewish Committees wrote to me concerning this..."To promote making farmers out of immigrants in America is the invariable decision of all European Committees. But no one is about to give land to people who have no understanding of agriculture. Therefore, I advise everyone who wishes to be established in a colony to enter (training) farms for a fundamental and practical education in agriculture in the Spring, since there will be other colonies beside Vineland and Cotopaxi. European Committees will now no longer send anyone back to Russia, since with every one that returns back the "natives" [Americans] exult, saying: "Look, Jews aren't needed anywhere because they don't want to work!" Our honor is violated; we hope and are obliged to reconstruct it and to prove the contrary.

We read the message of the arch-old-timer of the New Times with a smile, whether malignant or ironical,

about how the Committee allegedly announced that it is no longer able to find work for immigrants. This is absolutely a lie. On the contrary, when they gave out the last aid, they announced that they would search out work all the same. The difficulty of this is an altogether different question. In any case, this has nothing to do with a general disinclination (to do so).

This week several tardy Russian swallows arrived. They came at their own expense. A few of them came to their already-established relatives, and a few (came) not fearing the dreary and sad news from here and the fruitless toil of many knights of the sad way [Don Quixote]. You can't accuse these immigrants of coming to the Committee and not to America. There is great doubt that such (people) will go back.

--Elieser Maschbir

1  
Unable to identify.

2  
Unable to identify.

3  
A common Russian food: a meat mixture covered with dough.

4  
Unable to identify.

5  
The United Hebrew Charities was founded in 1874 by six philanthropic societies. It provided poverty relief, an employment bureau and a vocational training school, granted loans to aid families launching small businesses and maintained a work room where women were paid while they learned one of the garment trades.

6  
Vineland's first Jewish colony was founded by the Alliance Israelite Universelle in 1882 in Salem County. It was followed by others with biblical names such as Carmel.

7

A desyatin equals 2.7 acres.

8

The Cotopaxi, Colorado colony, founded in 1882. For a complete history of this colony, see Uri Herscher, pp. 55-61.

9

Dr. Hermann Magnus

10

That is, the Leipzig Committee

### CHAPTER THREE: JEWISH LIFE IN AMERICA

As seen above, the Russian-language Jewish press under consideration gave a negative view of the immigrants' journey to, and arrival and reception in America. This attitude is also reflected in the following articles concerning Jewish life in America--generally presented as difficult and unfulfilling.

These articles paint a bleak picture of Judaism in America: the practice of traditional Judaism appears to be moribund. An article in Yevreiski Mir from February 4, 1910 reported that almost no one was happy with the state of the Jewish religion in the United States.

What comes to mind first is the universal dissatisfaction. In nine out of ten cases you hear complaints and curses of America from Orthodox Jews. There is no sincerity, no soul in American religion: it is all dry, formal. Another complaint, produced by representatives of the other side--from the side of the "Yahudim" is an accusation against immigrant youth for their extreme antireligiousness. The youth has lost its faith, its God, and therefore is rising to socially and politically high levels of radicalism. They are no less troubled by the "uncouthness" of Jewish Orthodoxy...Of their own religious life they think significantly less. Be sure that for the Reform synagogue no greater question exists. But the facts of the last few years clearly show that this was a self-deception and that really, Reform is experiencing a chronic ailment.<sup>1</sup>

Reform Jews, and particularly Reform rabbis, were denegated in the Russo-Jewish press. When several Reform rabbis spoke out against a supposed racial slur, a writer in Razsvet January 18, 1908 reviled them.

In Russia, people usually complain that the rabbis don't concern themselves [enough] with the questions of Jewish societal life. Here in

America, one is often forced to complain that several of the rabbis (Reform.) come forward [too often] in the defense of their people. Worst of all, in the non-Jewish world, it is thought that the Jewish people speaks through the lips of these spiritual leaders.<sup>2</sup>

While some articles predicted that Judaism was doomed to die in America, others recognized that the religion was undergoing some necessary adaptations and that Judaism and the Jewish people would probably survive despite America's vagaries. An article in the October 27, 1907 Razsvet offers the following analysis of the situation.

But it seems to me that for all that, it is still early to read the prayer for the dying over the Jewish people in America. It is always necessary to have in mind that the definition of "Jewish community" is not quite so restricted and determined as is thought. In the course of centuries of wandering, it has taken different forms. And every time there is a transition of Judaism to another phase, from different camps--both friend and foe--are heard cries either of joy or sadness, that Judaism is just about at the point of ending...But without a doubt it (America) carries the seed of fruits of a new Jewish community.<sup>3</sup>

One specific chapter in American Jewish religious history received extensive, and biased, treatment in the press under study. The New York Orthodox community's attempt to establish a Chief Rabbi was covered in a most derisive way by Niedielnaya Xhronika Voskhoda. When one considers the corruption that permeated the official rabbinate in Russia the antecedents of this attitude become apparent. Associations with that corruption eventually brought down Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph's career. He tried to institute a tax on kosher meat since he had been brought

to America in part to regulate this industry. This proved too reminiscent of the karobka tax in Russia, which had been used to extort money from the Jewish community for the Tsar's coffers. The idea that anything like this institution might be established in the United States raised the ire of the immigrants. Butchers who had supported the idea of a Grand Rabbi revolted and rejected the Rabbi's authority. Both of the articles reporting on the Grand Rabbi are written in an ironic tone. They portray him as money-hungry, pompous and un-American.

When R. Harif (i.e. Rabbi Jacob Joseph) agreed to fill the post of the New York grand-rabbi he was sent \$5000 for travelling expenses. This solid sum turned out to be insufficient for the personage of the Lithuanian magid and for a second time \$5000 was sent to him.<sup>4</sup>

The Association of American Hebrew Congregations which brought R. Joseph to the United States eventually expired, and the Grand Rabbi was never established as an American institution.

Other Jewish institutions in America were maligned by the Russo-Jewish press as well. The American Yiddish press and theater were severely criticized for their low levels of artistry and spirituality. These shortcomings were crucial since the new immigrants were quite dependent on these institutions, especially the press. Most of them had never received a secular education or read any journals in Russia. The Yiddish press was practically their only source of information. A writer



in Razsvet October 27, 1907 noted this dependence, warning, "don't forget that there exists no other Jewish literature outside of these newspapers,"<sup>5</sup> This would not necessarily have been an undesirable situation, however, the quality of these journals was not the highest. As Mordecai Soltes notes, "their (the journals') tendency is towards popularization, with sensationalism as the inevitable culmination."<sup>6</sup> The writer in Razsvet bemoaned the quality of the Yiddish press.

Read these papers and notice how our masses feed themselves. In place of spiritual food, they receive a substitute: vileness. I do not say that these newspapers are much worse than others in the "yellow press" in this country...Only think of what kind of education our masses have from these empty and harmful publications.<sup>7</sup>

This journalist had the same low opinion of the Yiddish theater. He dubs it "an exotic plant which may wither from absence of sunlight and favorable winds...the Jewish theater can in no way be considered a serious factor of enlightenment, especially for the younger generation, the future Jews."<sup>8</sup> This proved to be the case, in fact. As soon as the immigrant readers, theater-goers and actors could read and speak English, they moved on to the English-language press and theater.

Here is an instance where the negative view of America presented in the Russo-Jewish press may have been justified in part. The Yiddish press and theater

were important agents of Americanization. Though they served this vital function, their literary quality was low. Nonetheless, journalists who preferred to write in Russian may have tended to view the Yiddish press of any country in a negative way.

The process of Americanization was an arduous one and the Russo-Jewish press described its difficulties in detail. The struggle for economic survival became a means of both adjustment and alienation. Through their work, the immigrants came in contact with natives or assimilated immigrants. They could then observe their way of life and begin to imitate them. In many occupation, they were forced to conform, at least externally, with the accepted code of behavior. They had to learn English and the forms of doing business. This process was difficult and many immigrants endured great hardships while making their adjustment to American life. An article in Niedielnaya Xhronika Voskhoda from July 10, 1888 describes their plight.

But this doesn't happen with poor people. Their agony is indescribable: they must literally withstand hunger and need and sleep on the streets...The colors of shame appear on the face and the heart bleeds when you see young people who were only recently removed from a Russian Gymnasium form, on the streets with heavy baskets on their shoulders and with dried lips pronouncing sounds in an unknown language only three words in English: "Lady, lookin basket!(sic)"<sup>9</sup>

The immigrants helped each other cope with their new surroundings by creating circles of landsmen, or fellow immigrants from the same town in Russia. An

article in Razsvet, November 3, 1907, describes these circles in a surprisingly positive way, perhaps because these circles were tied with Russia.

With all gratitude to the homeland which has allowed them to enter, the immigrants feel a deep attachment to the old country. Every city, every village in Russia has its own emigrants here organizing their own separate society, carrying the name of the native place...All of these circles pursue charitable goals: the assistance of poor landmen, the support of "green" comrades...and so forth.<sup>10</sup>

These circles of landmen helped the immigrants associate themselves more closely with the new country, while at the same time setting them apart.

The attitude of the Russo-Jewish press toward American anti-semitism reflects an important bias in its reportage. The experiences of Russian life were occasionally projected onto American reality, thereby distorting it. In Russia anti-semitism was endemic, official and could surface at any moment. As a result of their experiences, the Russian journalists portrayed anti-semitism as a vile and vital force in American life. Thus an article in Razsvet March 30, 1907 begins on an almost hysterical note.

The social situation of the Jews in America is getting worse from day to day. They are beginning to boycott Jews in all branches of life...I will dwell only on those [events] which have occurred most recently. In the great American university, Columbia University in New York, Jewish students were definitively excluded from all student "fereyn" (fraternities or associations) and groups. They are likewise not accepted into athletic clubs or mutual aid societies...Anti-semitism obviously has a good base here and is growing from day to day.<sup>11</sup>

American Jews apparently thought this somewhat paranoid attitude absurd. An article from the January 18, 1908 Razsvet states, "as to antisemitism, these same 'patriots' [native American Jews] assure us that it's only the sick fantasy of an immigrant from Russia that could imagine the existence of such a monster here."<sup>12</sup> Here is a case where the press reports its own biases! This is just one example of the bent with which the Russian-language Jewish journals reported American events and trends.

#### Footnotes

1

Yevreiski Mir, February 4, 1910.

2

Razsvet, January 18, 1908.

3

Razsvet, October 27, 1907.

4

Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda, July 24, 1888.

6

Mordecai Soltes, "The Yiddish Press-An Americanizing Agency," America Jewish Year Book, vol. 26 (1924-25), p. 175.

7

Razsvet, October 27, 1907.

8

ibid.

9

Niedielnaya Xhronika Voskhoda, July 10, 1888.

10

Bernard Weinryb, "Jewish Immigration and Accommodation: Research, Trends, Problems," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, vol. 46, 1956-57, p. 379.

11

Razsvet, March 30, 1907.

12

Razsvet, January 18, 1908.

Niedielnaya Xhronika Vosxhoda July 10, 1888

"A Letter to the Editor"

The (amount of) immigration by our brethren from Russia to America is now beyond belief. The waves of the Atlantic Ocean daily throw up hundreds of people who have become victims of the "Provisional Laws" <sup>1</sup> on to the territory of the Northern United States. The fate of the majority of these paupers, if they don't know English and do not have relatives here is a bitter one. It is exceedingly difficult for them to get a piece of bread and a heavy burden is laid on the heads of their little-better-off fellows.

The fate of our young fellow believers who received a secondary education in Russia and, according to the famous circular, have been thrown overboard by their almei matris is especially sad here. Having arrived here physically exhausted and morally dejected, they perish disgracefully. Of course, those who have the contemptible metal (money) are somehow able to get by. They attend a university and they are able to complete their education somehow. But this doesn't happen with poor people. Their agony is indescribable: they must literally withstand hunger and need and sleep on the streets or, as it is called here, on "expresses" and so forth. I would ask the greatly-respected editor to use the influence of the printed word to warn young people against such travels which are dangerous for

them. At home (in Russia) they think that beyond the sea a heifer is 1/4 kopek. But what escapes notice is that for those who don't know the language, it is just as hard to get that 1/4 kopek here as it was to get a whole ruble in the mother country...America, as a free land, cherishes only those who are strong physically or materially. But America would rather punish youths who have just recently risen from the school bench or who are still sitting on it, since such people are in no condition to endure those physical labors which a foreign pauper needs (to live through to be able) to make a living. The colors of shame appear on the face and the heart bleeds when you see young people, who only recently were removed from a Russian Gymnasium form, on the streets with heavy baskets on their shoulders, and with dried lips pronouncing sounds in an unknown language only three words in English, "Lady, lookin (sic) basket!"

It is hard for a student here to count on charity, because American Jews have a practical point of view on this matter and find that a pauper doesn't need to obtain a higher education. In their opinion, it's better to teach them to sew on a sewing machine. Now, it must be asked, may or must a poor Russian young person who has finished Gymnasium set off for America with the goal of entering a university, using the means of a Jewish philanthropic society?

I leave it to the reader to answer this question.

Now we will look at how the artisans are doing. The condition of artisans is also not what it was 10 to 15 years ago: [there is] a suggestion of greater demand [for artisans]. Consequently it appears that nothing [here] is worse than the condition of artisans in our notorious "Jewish Pale".<sup>2</sup> With capital and a knowledge of the language, however, everything comes out very well.

Concerning the situation of Jewish farmers, nothing better could be hoped for: everything is excellent for them, because they are industrious and diligently study their affairs. In any case, that's how they are spoken of by Americans. I would advise new arrivals to send someone from among their midst to find out how reliable the Americans' opinion of Jewish farmers really is.

--New York 17 (5) of June, G.L.

<sup>1</sup>  
These Provisional Laws were the "May Laws" instituted on May 3, 1882 which forbade Jews to settle anew outside the Pale and to carry on business on Sundays and Christian holidays. In addition to these "May Laws", further restrictions were enacted, including a numerus clausus for secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. A quota of 10% was established in 1887 for all such schools within the Pale.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Pale of Settlement was a specific territory within czarist Russia where Jews were legally authorized to live. The (Temporary) May laws of 1882 restricted new settlement of Jews to this area. See Encyclopedia Judaica 13:25 for a map of the Pale at the end of the 19th century.

Razsvet March 30, 1907

"Correspondence: A letter from New York"

The social situation of the Jews of America is getting worse from day to day. They are beginning to boycott Jews in all branches of social life. There are many facts with which you are probably already familiar. I will dwell only on those which have occurred most recently. In the great American university Columbia University in New York, Jewish students were definitively excluded from all student "fereyn" [fraternities or associations] and groups a little while ago. They are likewise not accepted into athletic clubs or mutual-aid societies. And when they complained about this to the professors, they answered them in the Russian manner: "If you don't like it--get out of here!" And this--notwithstanding that an American Jewish student may really only be recognized by the size of his nose. Antisemitism obviously has a good base here and is growing from day to day. It is enough to recall the agitation for the restriction of immigration and the stand of the press especially, for whom antisemitism appears to be a specialty. Of course, the immigration bill<sup>1</sup> passed and became law, although not entirely in the form in which it had been introduced. The points regarding a literacy test (i.e. knowing how to read and write) and physical examinations of immigrants (it is planned to admit only immigrants possessing very good health, thus restricting the number



of Jews) were rejected. But on the other hand, there was an increase of the entry tax. But this question is still definitely not exhausted: the United States is a republic organized in a fully democratic way and the will of the people, especially if it concerns the restriction of immigration, is capable of expression in reality. The following fact is also illustrative, that at the head of the movement for restriction of immigration stood the American Federation of Labor,<sup>2</sup> the strongest labor union in America, with more than two million members, whose president is Samuel Gompers,<sup>3</sup> a Jew. It is even more remarkable that the Jewish unions, having entered into the rank-and-file of this Federation, did not even protest against this. Thus, thousands of Jewish workers took a direct part in this grim "campaign". Here we have at once an example of the international "solidarity of the proletariat" in general and the solidarity of Jews in particular. One may assume that the prospect of equality for Jews in Russia strongly influenced the rejection of stronger measures against immigration.

If however, Jews are allowed into America without especial willingness, then at the same time, speculators may profit on their account. Rumors are being disseminated in Europe about a new Jewish Autonomous Colony in the state of New Jersey.<sup>4</sup> Rumors concerning this begin about the "natural realization of

territorialism", and The London Jewish World is already beating its drums and celebrating. But really, this affair is very simple. A few speculators, thrown out the sphere of land speculation by their happier rivals, fell upon the idea of building a Jewish colony: the crowding in the Jewish quarters is terrible, volunteers would be found and then--we'd be in business. An ad "done" in the American style, collection of weekly fees, the conducting of meetings and even a parade were all accomplished. It is possible to predict how all of this will end, of course.

When confirmation by the authorities and documents of "incorporation" were needed, they were categorically refused under the pretext that "the law" does not recognize "special" Jewish colonies. In general, this sounds comical, when you read in the Russo-Jewish press about some colonization plans in Texas or some place inside the United States. There is no country on the globe which so fears any national concentration as the United States. And this is very natural if one takes the composition of the American nation into account. The American press speaks only of the ability of this or that nationality to "assimilate" as its most important merit. Lately, they have even talked such nonsense as the restriction of the autonomy of the states and of stronger administrative centralization.

1

The Immigration Act of February 20, 1907. For the detailed contents of this bill, see Edward P. Hutchinson, Legislative History of American Immigration Policy (1798-1965) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp.136-143.

2

The American Federation of Labor was established by Samuel Gompers in 1886. The AFL demanded the restriction of immigration in order to protect the competitive position of workers in America.

3

Samuel Gompers (1850-1924) was a trade unionist. His family immigrated to the United States in 1863. He helped found the AFL in 1886 and became its president. See his autobiography Seventy Years of Life and Labor, 1925.

4Woodbine, a Jewish colony in New Jersey, became incorporated in 1907. It was hailed as "The First Self-Governed Jewish Community Since the Fall of Jerusalem". See Joseph Brandes, Immigrants to Freedom (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971), p. 236.

Razsvet September 21, 1907

"Correspondence: Letters from New York"

As is known, the first protest against Zionism as an idea which recognizes the existence of the Jewish nation and which strives for the restoration of a Jewish government, came from among the German rabbis who became famous in the history of Zionism under the name of Protest Rabiner.<sup>1</sup> Really, in the homeland of Reform Judaism,<sup>2</sup> it was hard to get used to the idea that the labor of a whole century for the "assimilation" of Judaism would die in vain. It was hard to get used to the idea that nationalistic Judaism, long buried by the Reformers and which they thought was consigned to history, has been suddenly resurrected and is taking on new life.

Of course, these opponents of Zionism had allies in other countries, however, they battled less fiercely with the "new heresy" than their German teachers.

Zionism met the least rebuff from the side of Reform Judaism in America. More than that, the famous Reform rabbis, the late Dr. Gottheil<sup>3</sup> and Dr. Jastrow<sup>4</sup> stood at the head of Zionism in America and until now, the best representatives of Reform Judaism in America are committed to Zionism, especially the young.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the rabbinical seminaries, nationalistic ideas are permeating ever more and more and are acquiring adherents both among the young students and among the

professors.

In Cincinnati, a rabbinical seminary (Hebrew Union College)<sup>5</sup> has already existed for 32 years. This seminary has produced a great many able and active rabbis. In the last few years, the dawn of Zionism has begun. And notwithstanding the fact that the head of this seminary, Dr. Wise,<sup>6</sup> was a confirmed anti-Zionist, no conflicts occurred. Dr. Wise was such a liberal that he put up with his ideological opponents and turned a blind eye to Zionist propaganda in the seminary, apparently resigned to the spirit of the times.

But the situation has changed since that time, when four years ago Dr. K. Kohler<sup>7</sup> was chosen as the president of this seminary. This respected professor, who arrived in America 40 years ago from Poznan,<sup>8</sup> does not share the forbearance of his predecessor. The first thing done from his side was a strict prohibition to seminarians to read "Al Parshat Drachim" by Ahad Ha-Am.<sup>9</sup> (By the way, the ideas of the founder of spiritual Zionism have influenced many minds.) For that reason, he furiously came out against Zionism, arguing that it is impossible to be a patriot in one's own homeland and to be a follower of the idea of Zionism at the same time. "How", he said, "can a modern, civilized Jew dream of immigration to wild Asia?"

Finally, he argued with his own followers until three of the professors of this seminary (Dr.

Margolis,<sup>10</sup> Dr. Malter<sup>11</sup> and Dr. Slesinger<sup>12</sup> ) having admitted that they were Zionists, were forced to give up their posts. In its own time, this conflict caused a considerable rucus.

But local general opinion is now interested to a much greater degree in another verdict on Zionism, coming from the mouth of Jacob Schiff,<sup>13</sup> the exceedingly popular Jewish philanthropist.

Three months ago in a public speech delivered to an educational society, this philanthropist said that his imagination paints for him a great future for Jews in America, as they become a noticeable political and economic force in this country. In passing, the orator touched also on Zionism, calling it a noble but impracticable idea.

But apparently, Schiff recognizes Zionism's right to inspire only the souls of Russian or other foreign Jews, but by no means Americans. His open letter to Professor Solomon Schechter,<sup>14</sup> printed a few days ago in the Anglo-Jewish journal The American Hebrew<sup>15</sup> showed this. In this letter, Schiff expresses his regret concerning the scholar, so very respected by him, that a representative of Jewish knowledge would engage in Zionist propaganda. "No Jew," said the author of this letter, "must ever forget for a minute that America is his homeland to which his fate is tied. Jews of all countries are connected only by a common religion. Our people is entrusted with the realization of the mission

to disseminate the ideas of goodness and justice in the world, and therefore it would be a shame to refuse this mission, etc."

As you see, in these arguments there is nothing new. All this has gotten old in America long ago. If many spoke about this letter here, then it is because of the person who wrote it, who enjoys great celebrity as a patron of American Judaism. Professor Schechter has become the president of the New York seminary (Jewish Theological Seminary)<sup>16</sup> which is considered the best in the country. It is necessary to add that since Prof. Schechter became president of the seminary, a "new course" was begun because Prof. Schechter's opinions about Judaism differ from those of local Reform rabbis.

In this way, he is stirring up discontent among the founders and supporters of the seminary who have little sympathy with ideas of nationalism and Zionism.

Meanwhile, several rabbis have replied to Schiff's letter, like Dr. Friedenwald,<sup>17</sup> the president of the Federation of American Zionists.<sup>18</sup> Their replies also include little that is new. The old arguments are repeated once more, the famous quotes are brought out, pleading against the "vain invention".

How strange all this must sound to a Russian Zionist, looking on all these arguments as self-evident truths. And how sad that these old truths must be repeated once more even in the present time.

1

This is a phrase coined by Herzl in 1897 to describe five German rabbis, Orthodox and Reform, who had signed a protest letter against Zionism. The Rabbis were M. Horowitz, A. Auerbach, S. Maybaum, J. Gutmann and K. Werner.

2

That is, Germany.

3

Gustav Gottheil (1827-1903). Gottheil served as the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in New York 1875-1899.

4

Marcus Jastrow (1829-1903) American Rabbi and scholar. Jastrow is known for his Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature.

5

Hebrew Union College, Reform rabbinical seminary, founded in 1875 by Isaac Mayer Wise. For a complete history see Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years, Samuel E. Karff, ed. (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1976).

6

Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900) U.S. rabbi and pioneer of Reform Judaism. He founded the Hebrew Union College in 1875.

7

Kaufmann Kohler (1843-1926). U.S. Reform rabbi and president of Hebrew Union College from 1903 to 1921.

8

Poznan belonged to Prussia from 1793 to 1807 and 1815-99. It is now in a province of Western Poland. Kohler came to America not from Poznan, but from Leipzig.

9

Ahad Ha-Am (Asher Hirsch Ginsberg 1856-1927), Hebrew essayist, thinker and leader of the Hibbat Zion movement. Al Parshat Derakhim is the set of his collected essays, begun in 1895.

10

Max Leopold Margolis came to the Hebrew Union College in the fall of 1905. Kaufmann Kohler, then president of HUC, thought him to be a radical universalist, however he had become a Zionist after reading Ahad Ha-Am's essays.

11

Henry Malter had been a faculty member at HUC before Kohler became president of the College. His views on the Talmud and Zionism were quite different from Kohler's and he wished to leave the College to teach at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

12

Max Schloessinger was appointed to the HUC faculty by



Kohler in 1904. He united with Margolis and Malter in advocating Zionism. For a complete account of this incident, see Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years, pp. 63-67 and Herbert Parzen's "The Purge of the Dissidents, Hebrew Union College and Zionism, 1903-1907," Jewish Social Studies, vol. 37 (1975), pp. 291-322.

13

Jacob Schiff (1847-1920), U.S. financier and philanthropist. His complete letter to Dr. Schechter is printed in Cyrus Adler's Jacob H. Schiff, His Life and Letters (New York: Doubleday, 1928, vol. 2), pp. 164-166. Schiff was considered a "cultural Zionist"; one who wanted Zionism to fit in with the American scene. See B. Halpern, "America is Different," The American Jew (New York: 1956), pp. 34-69.

14

Solomon Schechter (1847-1915), rabbi and president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America from 1902-1915. In 1905 he called Zionism, "the great bulwark against assimilation."

15

The American Hebrew, a weekly New York newspaper begun in 1879, published by Philip Cowen. The paper often took an anti-Zionist position.

16

The Jewish Theological Seminary is the rabbinical seminary for the Conservative movement in the United States. It opened in New York in 1887.

17

Dr. Harry Friedenwald (1864-1950) was not a rabbi. He was, however, president of the Federation of American Zionists from 1904-1918.

18

The Federation of American Zionists was established in 1898 under the leadership of Richard Gottheil and Stephen S. Wise. It was a consolidation of America's Zionist groups on a national level. Friedenwald was considered a "cultural Zionist" who tried to adapt Zionism to the American scene.

Razsvet October 27, 1907

"Correspondence: Letters from New York"

In one of his speeches, the famous philanthropist Jacob Schiff said that Jewry in America seems to have a brilliant future, when Jews in this country will acquire great political strength through their organization. This optimistic opinion does not differ from that of the majority of general Jewish representatives. But those people who live among the masses and observe their lives are especially uninclined to believe Schiff's prophecy.

A few days ago I had a discussion with one of these pessimists. He ridiculed the patriotism of rich American Jews who entrust all their hopes in "the new Zion" as they love to call America.

"Look," began my discussant, "I do not believe in the ability of Jews to acquire political strength. Our people in all places and times has wasted its energy in working for others and is not at all inclined to organization. The evidence supports this fact for until now in the United States, Jews have played an insignificant role while other peoples have occupied a very noticeable place here.

"The real strength of our people," he continued, "is hidden in the high standard of its spiritual development. Unfortunately, this strength vanishes in this utterly materialistic country. A Jew loses his spiritual wings here and doesn't receive strong legs of

materialism in exchange. Such an existence does not presage longevity.

"But for goodness sake," I retorted, "surely the speedy growth of Yiddish newspapers and their colossal success here testifies that the Jewish masses have spiritual interests..."

"Hah! Exactly that confirms my view. Read these papers and notice how our masses feed themselves. In place of spiritual food they receive a substitute: vileness. I do not say that these newspapers are much worse than others in the "yellow press" in this country. But don't forget that there exists no other Jewish literature outside of these newspapers. Only think of what kind of education our masses have from these empty and harmful publications. Look at the official organ of the socialists [The Jewish Daily Forward],<sup>1</sup> produced through the labor of workers and which stands as a kind of religion for them. This paper has grown and at the present time has a circulation of seventy thousand. Nu? It is entirely permeated with a gutter mentality ad nauseum. Besides this, in the last few years it has taken it into its head to destroy Judaism and Jews. This is not a sermon on freethinking; this is not the propagation of new ideas, but a clear vandalism which attempts to destroy everything. And what is still worse is the tone of this whole press which is characterized by the famous "Spit on me!"<sup>2</sup> And other papers are not better.

"But surely there are other factors here which enlighten the masses. For instance, the Jewish theater."

"Yes, they exist. More than that, I tell you that for the last few years, the Jewish theater has been taking a step forward. Its repertoire now consists of more or less dramatic presentations, and not only monstrous plays of the Goldfaden <sup>3</sup> school as it did not long ago. But all this has nothing in common with the question of the future of Jews in this country. On the contrary, if you wish, this proves that Jews have no soil here. It is enough to show you this sad fact, that as soon as the patrons of the Jewish theater have learned the English language they prefer the English theater. And therefore, the more talented artists cope with their situation on the Jewish stage and dream only of how they can most quickly run away, and at the first opportunity they leave the Yiddish theater. You have probably read about how David Kessler, <sup>4</sup> the darling of the Jewish theater-going public, went to the English stage at the beginning of the last theater season. You also know that he endured a terrible fiasco there and he had to return to the Jewish theater. I know that there were people who, on this account, said many "wretched words"; flinging reproaches at the "fickle" artist. But you must think how lonely it must be for a person who prefers the last place in Rome to the first place in the

countryside. You understand that under these conditions, it is impossible to expect that Jewish culture will arise here. Notwithstanding the fact that the Jewish theater has existed here for several decades, we have not had one dramatic production which portrays the character of the new life of Jews in America. All the plays, without exception, portray the life and customs of Jews in Russia. This is the best proof that the Jewish theater has not put down roots here. It exists as an exotic plant which may wither from absence of sunlight and favorable winds. From all this, it follows that the Jewish theater can in no way be considered a serious factor of enlightenment, especially for the young generation, the future Jews."

I transmit to the readers my friend's words, a man who has lived in America a long time. His pessimistic views about the future of the Jewish theater differ from  
5  
none other than Jacob Gordin, the author of the majority of plays for the local theater and consequently the most competent person to talk about this question.

But it seems to me that for all that, it is still early to read the prayer for the dying over the Jewish people in America. It is always necessary to keep in mind that the definition of "Jewish community" is not quite so restricted and determined as it is thought. In the course of centuries of wandering, it has taken different forms. And every time there is a transition of Judaism to another phase, cries of either joy or

sadness--from both friend and foe--are heard from different camps. This same thing is happening at the present time in America. And if it is hard to be an optimist like Jacob Schiff, because after all, for us Jews of the old world the old forms of Judaism to which we've become so accustomed that they are transmuted into our flesh and blood are infinitely dear to us. On the other hand, it is impossible not to notice that within the Jewish people there now exist invisible creative strengths. This latent creation has not yet taken a clear or concrete form. But without a doubt, it carries the seed of fruits of a new Jewish community.

--M. L--on

1  
The Jewish Daily Forward, a Yiddish newspaper established in New York in 1897. It was edited by Abraham Cahan from 1903-1951.

2  
Unable to identify.

3  
Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908) was a Yiddish poet, dramatist, composer and father of the Yiddish theater.

4  
David Kessler (1860-1920) was a Yiddish actor. In 1907 he appeared in the English-language play, The Spell on Broadway. It was a failure and he returned to the Yiddish stage. For a complete history of the Yiddish theater see Hershel Zohn's The Story of the Yiddish Theater (New York: 1979).

5  
Jacob Gordin (1853-1909) wrote more than 100 plays for the Yiddish stage and is considered, after Goldfaden, to have had the most important formative influence on the Yiddish theater in America.

Razsvet November 3, 1907

Nowhere in all the world is the unique principle<sup>1</sup> of Landsmanschaft which is typical of the Jews, so strongly developed as in America, especially in New York. With all gratitude to the new homeland which has allowed them to enter, the immigrants feel a deep attachment to the old country. Every city, every village in Russia has its own emigrants here organizing their own separate society, carrying the name of the native place. The richer and larger of these have their own synagogue, their own rabbi, even their own cemetery. Of course, only a comparatively few are able to allow themselves such luxury. The majority of them merely form a circle of landsmen to preserve the memory of the old country. All of these circles pursue charitable goals: the assistance of poor landsmen, the support of "green" comrades (thus are recent arrivals named) and so forth. often these circles assign a certain sum for the service of the native village in Russia, wrecked by disaster, fire or other natural trouble. Frequently the home societies in Russia appeal to these circles for help in the construction of various institutions. For these reasons all the circles try to increase their revenues. To this end, gay picnics where all the landsmen meet are held in various parks in the summer. And in winter, these strolls change to evening parties which are usually vocal-musical-dancing parties. (The number of) these charitable evenings increases every

year and they are well-liked by the New York public.

Circles, as they are understood in other countries, that is a group of people pursuing a known, ideological goal, are less developed here. It is true that on the Jewish street various parties and political circles exist. But one would sooner consider them the weaker children of the primary center in Russia. In general, they play a relatively small role in local Jewish life. From time to time, these parties come to life, having risen by means of fresh "strength" from Russia. But in a short time the "new strength" loses its charm of freshness and the party again vegetates.

<sup>2</sup>  
Poalei Zion has shown energetic activity lately, animated by the outcomes of the recent party congress at which it was decided that it was necessary to work harder. The new editor of their party organ "Kempfer",<sup>3</sup> Mr. E. Zar,<sup>4</sup> just arrived from Russia, recently began to give a series of lectures on the Zionist themes: "Nationalism and Cosmopolism", "What Constitutes the Jewish Question?", "Territorialism and Zionism" and others.

Another national-Jewish party, known under the name S.S. or S.T.<sup>5</sup> as it is now called, which some time ago closed its party organ "Das Volk"<sup>6</sup> developed weak signs of life here. But how great is the God of Israel! He has mercy on the fallen soul of the party. This week the very leader of territorialism himself, Dr. N.



7  
Syrkin arrived here to be the editor of the resurrected party organ. It is feared that this convinced opponent of Zionism intends to continue the battle against it begun in Russia. But in a discussion with one reporter he expressed the intention to fight at least for national principles and hopes to organize in America all the strength necessary for the great work of the resurrection of our people. In one word, not to destroy, not to divide, but to build, to create. It is in this manner that at least one local Yiddish paper portrays Sirkin's words.

Recently a literary circle in the name of the dramatist Jacob Gordin began its activity. He gave a few lectures about Asch<sup>8</sup> and Hirshbein.<sup>9</sup> A series of lectures about Russian and Norwegian literature will follow. These lectures are attended by a large number of the public. The first lectures made a mediocre impression because of their superficiality and diletantism, although the author who is known in literary circles, read them.

--M. L---on.

1  
The circles were an important factor in the immigrants' adjustment to American life. Thomas Kessner in "Jobs, Ghettoes and the Urban Economy 1880-1935," PAJHS, vol. 71 (1981), p. 226 says, "Newcomers needed friends, countrymen, and relatives to help ease their way into a new society...Ghetto life provided social closeness and a host of fraternal organizations which helped the newcomer in times of need." Also see Hyman B. Grinstein, "The Efforts of East European Jewry to Organize its Own Community in the United States," PAJHS, vol. 49 (1959), especially page 86.

2

Poalei Zion was a movement that tried to base itself on the Jewish proletariat and combined Zionism and Socialism. The movement started in Russia. A World Union of Poalei Zion was founded in 1907.

3

The Yidisher Kemfer was U.S. Yiddish weekly founded in Philadelphia in 1906 as an organ of the Poalei Zion Party.

4

Isaac Zar was an editor of the Yidisher Kemfer. Avyatar Friesel mentions him in his The Zionist Movement in the United States, 1897-1914 [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 1970), p. 270, note 32.

5S.S. stands for Sionisti-Sotsialisti or Zionist-Socialists in Russian. This was a group of Russian socialist territorialists led by Nachman Syrkin.

6Literally, "The People",

7

Nachman Syrkin (1868-1924) was one of the first leaders of Socialist Zionism. He immigrated to the United States in 1907 and in 1909 joined the Poalei Zion party and led it until his death.

8

Sholem Asch (1880-1957) was a Yiddish novelist and dramatist.

9

Peretz Hirschbein (1880-1948) was a Yiddish dramatist and novelist.

Razsvet January 18, 1908

"Correspondence: Letters from New York"

(from our Correspondent)

When conversation gets around to the situation of the Jews in America, it is usually asserted that only "greenhorns", that is recent immigrants, have still not succeeded in getting used to the new life and look at everything through dark glasses. Local "patriots" say that Jews in the United States have, in fact, such [great] freedom [that they] so manage to get what is best; they have nothing more to wish for. As to antisemitism, these same "patriots" assure us that it is only the sick fantasy of immigrants from Russia who could imagine the existence of such a monster here."

Therefore, weren't our American "patriots" greatly amazed when the view of the famous reform Rabbi Emil S. Hirsch<sup>1</sup> in this regard were published in the newspapers. The venerable rabbi, by no means a greenhorn, spoke a few days ago in Chicago at a congress of the "Ethical Society"<sup>2</sup> about the role of the church in the development of ethical ambitions. And in passing he said the following: "In Chicago there are Jews who avoid walking the streets at night for fear of attack by children who are sure that Jews do not resemble the other citizens of Chicago. Jews are not accepted in many community organizations. It is clear that in the

United States, notwithstanding its glorification of the democratic spirit and civilization, to be a Jew is not very pleasant. In Europe the situation of Jews is worse and in a few countries it is really intolerable. What are the reasons for such relationships? Here is an ethical problem for an ethical society which must find a solution to it."

It must be noted that Rabbi Dr. Emil Hirsch has never borne any sympathy for the Jewish "nationalist" movement. Therefore, his speech made an even greater impression.

If Jews in America frequently close their eyes to displays of antisemitism in many strata of society, they are also sometimes inclined to see it where it is not. This happened a few days ago in an incident brought about by Prof. Eliot's speech.<sup>3</sup> He gave a speech not long ago in a Jewish student circle of Harvard University,<sup>4</sup> in which he said that he didn't understand why Jewish youth show such a great zeal for science, completely neglecting their physical exercise, as a result of which the Jewish race is weaker than others. In earlier times this was explained by perpetual persecutions which did not allow Jews to indulge in sports. "But at the present time," the professor continued, "I don't see any reason why in free America Jews are not involved in the development of their muscular strength. Jews wrongly suppress the warlike

spirit in themselves which inspired their ancestors."

Both the content and tone of this speech were friendly; it was not at all antisemitic. Nonetheless, there are rabbis who felt that it was their duty "to defend" the Jewish people from such criticism.

One claimed that all this was slander, since Jews are not at all physically weaker than other neighboring peoples. Apparently this rabbi hoped that he would be taken at his word. All the observations and facts speak against his assertions.

Another rabbi argued that a spiritual nation ought not to have strong muscles at all and as to the warlike soul, we must only rejoice that we have lost it since this saves us from carrying out the bloodshed of wars. The virtuous rabbi obviously did not have any direct experience to convince himself that even in a "peaceful time" it doesn't hurt for a Jew to have a strong fist.

In Russia, people usually complain that the rabbis don't concern themselves with the questions of Jewish societal life [enough]. Here in America, one is often forced to complain that several of the rabbis (Reform) come forward [too often] in the defense of their people. Worst of all, in the non-Jewish world, it is thought that the Jewish people speaks through the lips of these spiritual leaders.

-----

In the last three years, America has gotten used to meeting all the celebrities of the old world here.

It was especially fortunate to have the visits of "guests" from Europe to the Jewish quarter in New York, since almost all of these "famous guests" come here from Russia. Real or imagined celebrities from Russia were seldom recognized by the non-Russian Jews and the festive appearances of these "celebrities" did nothing to speak to the minds and hearts of local Jewish immigrants from Galicia, Rumania, etc.

But recently one famous Jew came to New York, a Galician by descent, but he enjoys fame throughout the entire Jewish world. I speak of Dr. Nathan Birnbaum<sup>5</sup> (Mathias Acher) who came last week for a visit to America.

"The Union of Galician Jews"<sup>6</sup> which includes all charitable and educational circles of Galician Jews in New York put on a triumphant meeting for its famous landsman in one of the big buildings for this evening. The majority of the orators for this evening were Russian Jews, since the Galician Jews do not have prominent orators in their midst and in general differ in the weakness of their interest in socio-Jewish affairs. In New York's Jewish life they therefore play an insignificant role when compared with their numbers. By the way, this circumstance was touched on in several of the orators' speeches. Together with the usual greetings addressed to a guest, they referred to the role of the Galician Jews in America, the necessity of

their getting closer to Russian Jews and the usefulness to them of organizations, etc.

The secretary of the federation, Dr. J. Magnes,<sup>7</sup> greeted the guest in the name of American Zionists. In a brilliant speech in English, the orator spoke of the meaning of Dr. N. Birnbaum for cultural Zionism. Another speaker, H. Maslianski,<sup>8</sup> popular among the Jewish masses, evaluated the importance of the venerable guest's activities in the development of the national idea, especially among the browbeaten and disparaged Galician Jews. A few orators noted Dr. Birnbaum's great service to neo-Jewish literature since he familiarized the German reading public with it.

Generally the representatives of the socialist party are quite impatient with the leaders of the Jewish national movement, but this time they were quite indulgent of N. Birnbaum. This is explained in part because Dr. Birnbaum is considered a socialist, and therefore his nationalism may be excused. In addition, he triumphed in the eyes of the democrats in his fiery declaration that Yiddish must have the rights of a national language.

In general, the presence of N. Birnbaum called forth marked interest in all strata of local Jewry. Judging from the warmth of the welcome shown to him in New York and by the popularity which his name enjoys among all those who have not lost their ties with their own people, i.e. the Jews, one may expect more such

tender and triumphant meetings with him in the other American cities which he intends to visit in the near future.

1

Emil G. Hirsch (2851-1923) was a U.S. rabbi, scholar and civic leader. He came to the United States in 1866. He was a member of the radical wing of Reform Judaism and opposed Jewish nationalism.

2

Ethical Culture was an American nontheistic movement based on a humanist ideology. It was founded in 1876 and Felix Adler (1851-1933) was its leader for many years.

3

Charles W. Eliot (1834-1926) was president of Harvard and the most influential leader in the educational activities of the country.

4

Published by the Menorah Society of the B'nai Brith.

5

Nathan Birnbaum, whose early pen name was Mathias Acher, (1864-1937) was a philosopher and one of the originators of Zionist ideology. His parents were of Galician and Hungarian origin. He was born in Vienna. During this visit to America he proposed that a world conference on behalf of Yiddish should be called.

6

Hyman B. Grinstein notes in his article "The Efforts of East European Jewry to Organize its Own Community in the United States," PAJHS, vol. 49 (1959-1960), p. 86, "New York City saw the formation of a number of Verbands [Unions of Landsmannschaften] as the twentieth century advanced. The primary aim of these Verbands was to launch institutions of their own and to protect their people from the inner prejudices that were afloat in the East European community. Thus the Galicians organized their Landsmannschaften into a Federation of Galician and Bukhovanian Jews of America."

7

Judah L. Magnes (1877-1948) was a U.S. rabbi and communal leader. He was the secretary of the American Zionist Federation from 1905-1908, and the late President of Hebrew University.

8Zvi Hirsch Masliansky (1856-1943) was a popular Yiddish orator. He immigrated to New York in 1895. He was also active in U.S. Zionist organizations.



Yevreiski Mir February 4, 1910

"Foreign Department: Letters from America, Part I"

Up to this time, the religious life of American Jews has not attracted the attention of investigative reporters. Official statistics extend only until 1890 and Jewish statistics contain only formal lists of congregations' names and their leaders. This paucity of statistics, in conjunction with the absence of an idealistic composition of inner life in American Jewish Orthodoxy made investigators lose all interest in this subject.

Meanwhile, of all the crises that accompany Jewish immigrants on their way in America, the religious crisis undoubtedly leaves the biggest imprint on their souls.

What comes to mind first is the universal dissatisfaction. In nine out of ten cases you hear complaints and curses of America from Orthodox Jews. In American religion there is no sincerity, no soul; it is all dry, formal. Another complaint, produced by representatives of the other side--from the side of the "Yahudim",<sup>1</sup> is an accusation against immigrant youth for their extreme antireligiousness. The youth has lost its faith, its God and therefore is rising to socially and politically dangerous levels of radicalism. They are no less troubled by the "uncouthness" of Jewish Orthodoxy. In their opinion, national support of a Jewish religious service disturbs the Americanization of Jews. Of their

own religious life they think significantly less. Be sure that for the Reform synagogue, no larger question exists. But the facts of the last few years clearly show that this was a self-deception and that really, Reform is experiencing a chronic ailment. By the way, the radical elements long ago pronounced the death knell for the future of the Jewish religion in America. A similar opinion is heard from the mouths of outside observers. Thus, for instance, Professor E. Steinberg (Steiner?),<sup>2</sup> one of the best experts on immigrant colonies in America, is fully optimistic about the future of Jews in America but paints the future of the Jewish religion in the gloomiest colors. "Undoubtedly," he says, "Judaism in America is in store for a great crisis, like that which it experienced in the Babylonian exile. There, Judaism was made; here she will perish. There, enemies tried to make Jews forget Jerusalem, here it is hard for friends to bring themselves to be reminded of Jerusalem. The fullest decay of Judaism will be forestalled only by a constant flood of immigrants from Russia and Poland."

On the other hand, we have before us the newest publication of the Census Bureau containing the results of a questionnaire produced at the end of 1906 about religion in America. (Dept. of Commerce and Labor. Bureau of the Census, Bulletin 103 Religious Bodies: 1906. Washington, 1909).<sup>3</sup> By the way, the full

division of Church and State had its outcome in that the statistics on religion are not included in the general census. Such special questionnaires are only conducted periodically. Such questionnaires were done five times in all; the last, as has been said, in 1906, the next-to-last in 1890.

A characteristic feature of religious life in America is--as is known--the surprising multitude and variety of independent "religions" and sects. In the statistical year 1906, we find no less than 231 names of "religion(s)" which are united into 27 groups. All these religions and sects flourish in the atmosphere of absolute freedom of conscience. In general, religious feelings are sufficiently strong in America. The number of adherents to religion continues to grow, both absolutely and relatively. It is a systematic increase, and so the number of religious institutions increases as well.

For the last 16 years, from 1890 to 1906, the number of religion organizations, excluding Jewish ones, grew by 60.4%. The population of the U.S. grew 54% in this same period of time. Quite a remarkable number of churches and their capacities increased. In 1870, the churches had places for 56.2% of the whole population of the country. In 1890 there were places for 69.2% in the churches; in 1906 there were places for 69.5% of the total population of the country.

A different picture presents itself to us when we

turn to the figures concerning the Jewish faith. First of all, one notices the extreme paucity of Jewish religious statistics. Of all the 231 "religions", there is only one Jewish one...it can't give full and exact statistics or even a partial list of the members of a congregation. Instead, we have only the number of members who are heads of households.

In 1890, the number of members of Jewish religious organizations, both heads of households and single members was 130,496 persons total. In 1906, 65% of all Jewish religious organizations had heads of households and single members totaling 101,457 persons. It is impossible to draw a direct parallel, but doubtless there is growth. What concerns organizations is that in 1890 there were 533 Jewish religious organizations. In 1906, there were 1,769 Jewish religious organizations. This means that in 16 years, the number of organizations grew 231.9%. Let it be remembered that in 1890 there were about 500,000 Jews and at the end of 1906 there were about 1,750,000. We are convinced that the comparative number of Jewish religious organizations was notably lessened, notwithstanding the massive rush of "greenhorns" who are assumed to be the custodians of Orthodox Judaism, since in 1890 there was one organization for every 938 people and in 1906 there was one organization for every 989 people. We have information from 717 congregations concerning the

capacity of their synagogues. These [congregations] constitute 95.2% of all synagogues. Synagogues have the following seats: in 1906, 364,701; in 1890, 139,234; a growth of 161.9%. The (number of seats) in a proportional relationship to the general Jewish population has decreased still further. In 1890 synagogues had places for 27.8% of the Jewish population; in 1906--for only 20.6%. And at this time, as among the remaining population in churches, there are places in 1906 for 69.5% of the population. Of course, one must take into account that 55.6% of all Jewish religious organizations indicated the capacity of their synagogues, while 94.2% of other religious organizations gave this indication. But one may confidently assert that these congregations which did not report exact statistics about their synagogues have the smallest number of people. Taking for them the most reliable presumable numbers, the percentage of capacity rose at the most 29%.

Still more striking is the difference between the numbers of religious schools (Sunday, and for the Jews, Sunday and Saturday schools) for Jews and non-Jews.

In all, the population of schools numbered 178,214 in 1906; 1,648,564 teachers and 14,685,997 students. This means that the percentage of students of religious schools is equal to 17.4% of the general population. Among the Jewish population, there are 600 schools, 2,239 teachers, 49,514 students. The percent of the

general population: 2.2%. True, in the large communities of America there are also "Talmud Torahs"<sup>4</sup> for poor children and among the more prosperous there are tutors of Jewish subjects. But in general, the statistics cited above are representative.

It would be rash to interpret these facts as a decided departure of the Jewish masses from their religion. Personal acquaintance with many of those who resolutely scorn the strictest prohibitions of religion soon convinces me that the factual scorn of religion is not accompanied by a spiritual degeneration. This develops under the pressure of economic needs: under the threat of perishing in the battle for existence. The elimination of the communal pressure of the opinion of the domestic Orthodox environment is revealed. Add to this the distrust of religion's local official representatives and it seems that the number of people which have fallen into the "nonreligious" category through misunderstanding is not less than the number of convinced "non-religionists". The fervor which falls on the Jewish population during the Days of Awe fully confirms this. During these days, they pray everywhere; in theaters, restaurants, and private apartments and thousands and thousand await the celestial verdict in awe. And what is more, convinced, conscious antireligiousity has weakened even among radical-socialist circles in recent years. Thus Yom Kippur

balls and demonstrations have disappeared from the Jewish quarter. At one time--in the first years of the socialist movement--they were considered an inalienable membership right. Later they became the property of the anarchists. But in the last few years, even the anarchists have rejected them. the socialist elements have probably not become pious, but they have become partly tolerant, partly indifferent to questions of faith. It may be that a general spiritual reaction noted in these circles may be their fate. In any case, it sometimes happens that the members of the radical socialist order "Arbeitering"<sup>6</sup> are at one and the same time members of workmens' circles and go to synagogue--a phenomenon which used to be considered impossible.

And so, next to the weakening of religion a small strengthening of it is noted. Such a contradiction would have been unthinkable if it were not for the fact that for most people the only external conditions of life have caused them to fall away from external religious practice, but not from religion.

Instinctively, our "spiritual leaders" understand this state of affairs. They feel that they do not have strength for the battle with conscious antireligiousity. But that for them, a wide field of activity is opening up among the masses who are indifferent to religious practice. On this field, they have recently shown great animation and agility. The weakening of antireligious agitation has given them the courage to start and a

noticeable increase in their number in the last years has created additional material stimuli for them. For the last 16 years, the increase in the number of Jewish spiritual leaders has proportionally outstripped the growth of the Jewish population. From 200 rabbis in 1890, it has grown in 1906 into an army of 1,084 persons--the number of Jewish spiritual leaders grew by 442%. It is clear that the battle for existence must deal with these people seriously, to set about to increase their flock. Thus let it happen.

7  
--K. Fornberg.

1

The "Yahudim" were the German Jews already established in the United States who often looked down on their Russian co-religionists. For a complete treatment of this subject see Moses Rischin's "Germans versus Russians," The Promised City, pp. 95-111.

2

See Edward A. Steiner's autobiography Against the Current: Simple Chapters from a Complex Life (New York: Revell, 1910). Steiner wrote on immigrant issues.

3

See Uriah Z. Engelman's article "Jewish Statistics in the U.S. Census of Religious Bodies," Jewish Social Studies, vol. 9 (1947), pp. 127-174.

4

Talmud Torahs were Jewish educational institutions for indigent children.

5

For a description of the Anarchists' Yom Kippur Balls, see Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), pp. 106-107.

6

"The Workmen's Circle". A socialistically and culturally oriented Jewish fraternal order organized in 1900. Its twofold purpose was to provide its members with mutual aid, health and death benefits and other fraternal services and to support the labor and socialist movements throughout the world.

7

Koppel Fornberg was an early scholar of East European



Jewish life in America. See his "The Russian-Jewish Immigrant to the United States" in YIVO AMPOTEIL II (1939) pp. 7-31 [Yiddish].

Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda July 24, 1888

New York 15 July

New York is exulting, that is to say, that part of New York which is called the ill-sounding name of "Chazer Market"<sup>1</sup> embracing the Jewish streets Essex, Ludlow, Hester and others, is exulting. I suppose the physiognomy of the Jewish-American ghetto has been made sufficiently clear to the Russo-Jewish reading public by the numerous American letters found in the Russo-Jewish periodical press. Therefore, I do not intend to touch on its characteristic features here. I will set my mind on a more modest goal--to describe the long-awaited arrival of the Polish-Lithuanian-American grand rabbi<sup>2</sup> Jacob Harif, about whom the Jewish press in Russia has already trumpeted for quite a while. In the last few years he became the magid in Vilna. When R. Harif agreed to fill the post of the New York grand-rabbi, he was sent \$5000 for travelling expenses. This solid sum turned out to be insufficient for the personage of the Lithuanian magid and for a second time \$5000 was sent to him.<sup>3</sup> On July 7, in the early morning, the ship "Aller"

arrived in Hoboken harbor, having among its Old World passengers, the venerable runaway--R. Harif. Right up to evening he held up the ship and only after conducting the prayers which bid farewell to Shabbat, Havdalah, did he set off for the Jewish hotel Meyers.<sup>4</sup> At 9:00 in the evening the whole street bordering the hotel was jammed with representatives of the Jewish population, thirsting to see their own grand rabbi. Only the elect received permission to join the deputation gathered in the reception hall. At 10:00 R. Harif, accompanied by Mr.<sup>5</sup> Johnson --president of the "Beit-Hamidrash Hagadol",<sup>6</sup> appeared in the hall: everything and everyone rose from their places and the ceremony of exchanging "shalom" began. I confess, I too was sinfully to be found among the number of "shalom givers", however as an employee of "The New York Jewish Illustrated Gazette",<sup>7</sup> published by the well-known Russo-Jewish publisher A. Goldfaden.<sup>8</sup> R. Harif's appearance is extraordinarily imposing: this man is a tall, full, 45-year-old with brown hair a full, black beard, lively black eyes and black hair. The handshaking finished, a deadly silence fell and R. Harif delivered his response to the welcoming delegation.

At 11:30 R. Harif was led out to an apartment prepared for him on the corner of Henry and Jefferson streets in a large three-story house, around which there was such a throng that the police had to use their clubs and wide shoulders in order to make a way for the object

of the celebration... Welcomes and responses by the rabbi began again (and he) was able to find some rest only at 3:00 at night. The next day a huge crowd of people moved to the grand rabbi's house hoping to greet and "give shalom", to the arrival. But there was general disappointment when it was announced that only "the elect" could enter. Nonetheless, such a decree raised the ex-Lithuanian magid still higher in the eyes of the masses. He (R. Harif) does not recognize the American tradition of "handshaking", which not even the U.S. President permits himself to refuse. Reb Harif receives \$3000 every year as a salary. His flock is composed of five congregation with their five sub-rabbis. Yesterday in the "Beit HaMidrash Hagadol" our grand rabbi gave his first sermon, for which he was presented with a golden cane. The residents of the "Chazer Market" already felt the grand rabbinate in excess: the price of meat went up two cents. The time may not be distant when a Russo-Jewish child will appear from across the Atlantic--a meat tax--if only the reasonably-thinking part of the local Jewish population will not use those rights which are set forth in the American constitution (i.e. for separation of church and state). There is already talk of an anti-grand rabbi league, which many wish full success.

The game runs toward the hunter--so goes the Russian proverb. Rabbi Harif had not succeeded in shaking the Russian dust from his legs when some

"practice" turned up for him--and such a one! Listen.

Eighteen months ago, Isaac Walford,<sup>9</sup> a Polish Jew and a prominent Jewish merchant in New York, saw a Jewish girl crying on the main local street of Broadway. Upon inquiring, it turned out that she had just arrived in Castle Garden and, setting out to find her friends, she had gotten lost in the huge city. The girl added<sup>10</sup> that she was called Mina Sterling and that her mother had stayed in Poland for the time being. Walford, moved by the story and the beauty of the girl, offered to let her spend the night under his roof. She agreed happily. Her patron turned out to be a widower with three children who, in a few hours, became friends with the newcomer. The host dismissed his housekeeper the next day and replaced her with Mina. In two months she received an offer from her patron to become his wife.

A few months of happy married life went by. Mina sent monetary aid to her mother every month. Having felt that she was pregnant, she began to ask her husband to give her the means to have her mother at the birth. The obliging husband sent money off to his mother-in-law, who consented to a quick arrival. Business called Walford to another city from which he thought to return before his mother-in-law's arrival. Returning home, he already met his mother-in-law. Seeing Walford enter, she screamed terribly and asked her daughter:

"Who is that person?"

"What does that mean, 'who'? It's my husband."  
answered Mina.

"Your husband, child! It's my husband! My God,  
you married your own father!"

A terrible scene ensued. In the course of a few days, the young woman was between life and death. She gave birth. The mother didn't leave her side for a minute. Walford placed his house at their full disposal and he himself lived in a hotel. By his word, when he'd been a soldier in the Prussian Army twenty years ago, he'd married Mina's mother in some German town. Two months after the wedding, he left his wife, deserted and ran off to America. Six years after his arrival in the New World, he married a second time; he was widowed and as we saw above, made Mina the mother of his three children. His first wife changed her last name and settled in Vienna, where she gave birth to Mina, who believed her father to be dead. The hero spoken of here in this real-life drama, appealed for advice to the new grand rabbi--Reb. Jacob. It's necessary to note that Walford's marriage with Mina is fully legal according to American law. Nonetheless, Walford may be tried for bigamy. How this history will end is still not known.

A Palestinian circle was founded here not long ago<sup>11</sup>  
"Hevrat Hovevei Tsion" which sent off a seven-person delegation to Rabbi Harif, which he received last Monday with extraordinary kindness. He said that he is devoted body and soul to the Palestinian idea and considers its

genuine advocates only those American Jews who, having enjoyed American freedom, nonetheless stop to think and act on behalf of the colonization of the Holy Land. In conclusion, the grand rabbi assured the delegates that as soon as he rests from the many hardships of his journey, he will join with their society and will use all his strength for its prospering. I don't know if this still-born American-Jewish baby can be revived even by the strong hand of rabbinical authority, just as I don't know whether the mission of the Christian doctor<sup>12</sup> Severt from Chicago, who set off not long ago for London to strive on behalf of...you know what? No more and no less than the colonization of Palestine by the Jews and the restoration of the past splendor of Zion. Mister Severt announced in the American papers that as soon as he succeeds in fulfilling this grandiose plan, he will try to get full independence for Palestine as a Jewish government from the European governments. The near future will show us whether our doctor will be a candidate for president of the Jewish government or--pardon the cynicism--for the crazy house.

--I. Petrovski

<sup>1</sup>  
A derogatory name for the kosher meat market.  
[Chazer=pig]

<sup>2</sup>  
Rabbi Jacob Joseph (1848-1902) arrived in America on July 7, 1888. For a complete history of his career, see Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," PAJHS, vol. 44 (1954-1955), pp. 129-198.

<sup>3</sup>  
See Abraham Karp, p. 149.

4  
ibid., p. 149.

5  
Unable to identify.

6  
The Beit Ha-Midrash Ha-Gadol was the first Russian-American Jewish congregation, founded in 1852. For a complete early history see J.D. Eisenstein, "The History of the First Russian-American Congregation," PAJHS, vol. 9 (1901), pp. 63-64, especially p. 64 where he mentions the Chief Rabbi.

7  
A semi-monthly periodical edited by Abraham Goldfaden, begun in October, 1887.

8  
Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908) was a Yiddish poet and father of the Yiddish theater.

9  
Unable to identify.

10  
Unable to identify.

11  
Also known as "Hibbat Zion", "Love of Zion", this was the movement that was the immediate predecessor to the political Zionism of Theodore Herzl. "Hovevei Zion", "Lovers of Zion" were widespread throughout Russia and Rumania.

12  
This may be William E. Blackstone, a Chicago missionary who advocated a return of the Jews to Palestine. He is mentioned in Anita L. Lebeson's "Zionism Comes to Chicago" in Isidore Meyer's Early History of Zionism in America (New York: 1958), pp. 165-170.

Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda October 9, 1888

New York, 27 September

Congratulate us...it's a meat tax!<sup>1</sup> In the last letter I jokingly said that the new grand-rabbi might imagine this thing and behold! last week "hand bills" (hand bills) were scattered around the city in the name of the grand-rabbi, in which pious Israelites of the holy city of New York were informed that only those fowl whose legs have the leaden seal with the descriptive word "kosher" on one side and the endorsement of "Rav Ha-Kolell" (grand-rabbi) on the other are to be considered kosher. The Jewish quarter became animated because, joking aside, the price that kosher butchers charged had suddenly gone up from 12 to 17 cents a pound for chicken! The paupers sighed, bidding farewell to the idea of living it up with a wing on a holiday. People of common sense ground their teeth and unburdened their hearts by reading the excellent satire "Mirror"<sup>2</sup> published for this purpose in "New-Yorker Judsiche Volkszettung"<sup>3</sup> which frightened the grand-rabbi's clique. By the way, the following incident happened. Having secured the agreement of a few butchers, this clique designated observers for every abattoir who had to make sure that every slaughtered bird would be decorated by the grand-rabbi's seal. Two such inspectors set out to inspect a certain Wolf,<sup>4</sup> where they found that not all the chickens being sent to market had the seals. Not only that, but they were met



by the man in a very unfriendly way. In a frenzy, the inspectors seized a few of the chickens and broke their legs. The police were called and took the rabbinical servants away to the police station. In a few days we will have an organized process...This first failure of the grand-rabbi's clique somewhat sobered up the inhabitants of the New York ghetto.

On Sunday the twenty-third of September a huge meeting took place. Besides private individuals, more than 60 butchers and "shochets" (slaughterers) from all the largest New York slaughterhouses attended. The goal of the meeting was to protest the "leaden" law of the grand-rabbi and a committee was founded in order to assure that slaughtering would be conducted according to Jewish law without any meat-tax chains. Rabbis Shepser,<sup>5</sup> Visaner<sup>6</sup> and Ezdner<sup>7</sup> as well as the Jewish writer Zilberstein<sup>8</sup> strongly denounced the disgrace which had fallen on American Judaism thanks to the importation to America of such institutions, which have long been recognized as useless in Russia. More than forty butchers and shochets signed up for the committee, among them the richest butcher in New York, M. Freeman,<sup>9</sup> who was considered one of the fiercest adherents of the grand-rabbi until recently. Every one of them contributed two dollars to a fund which will serve to summon the grand-rabbi's party to court if such interference in the affairs of New York butchers is

repeated. The results of such a protest are already evident: many merchants, having signed up before the holidays for "sealed" birds had to sell them off at a lower price since many rushed to buy exactly those birds not burdened by the seal. On the 30th of September, the second meeting of the commission will take place and will probably deal an even heavier blow to the grand-rabbi's prestige.

Louisville youth recently formed a "Joung Men's Hebrew Association (sic)".<sup>10</sup> The trustees of the congregation "Berith Shalom"<sup>11</sup> gave them the vestry for meetings.<sup>12</sup> They elected Arthur Levitz --the son of the Jewish deputy-prosecutor of the Louisville high court-- as the censor of the young society.

The day after tomorrow, the first ball of the recently-founded "Auxiliary Society of Russian Women"<sup>13</sup> in New York will be held, and somewhat later a Russian spectacle for the benefit of "the Society of Russian Students"<sup>14</sup> who attend the New York University will be held.

15  
--I. Petrovski

<sup>1</sup> "Karobka", literally "a box" in Russian. This was a tax imposed on kosher meat by the Russian government. The income from this tax was used for anti-semitic purposes. It obviously appeared to many that the Grand Rabbi was establishing this corrupt institution in the United States. For a complete account of the Grand Rabbi's career, see Abraham J. Karp's, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," PAJHS, vol. 44 (1954-1955), pp. 129-198. See also Samuel Kirslov's "'Church', State and Kashruth: Some Hidden Dimensions of Pluralism," Jewish Social

Studies, vol. 25 (1963) pp. 174-185.

2

Unable to identify.

3

A Socialist weekly Yiddish newspaper edited by Moses Mintz and Dr. Braslavsky, in New York, begun in 1886.

4

Unable to identify.

5Unable to identify.

6

Unable to identify.

7

Unable to identify.

8

Unable to identify.

9

Unable to identify.

10

Louisville, the largest city in Kentucky, has one of America's oldest Y.M.H.A.'s, founded in 1862.

11

Brith Shalom, one of Louisville's main congregations, is a Reform one, founded in 1881.

12

Unable to identify.

13

Unable to identify.

14

Unable to identify.

15

Unable to identify.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: SECULAR AMERICAN LIFE

The final group of articles here deals with issues in American secular life that touched the Russian Jewish immigrants. Most of these articles concern the struggle over American immigration policy which Razsvet's writers covered thoroughly, though with many of the biases already noted above. These articles portray the battle against restrictive immigration legislation as a desperate one. Russian readers may not have understood such terms as "House Committee" or "Congressional Commission on Immigration", but the implications of the continuous trend toward tighter immigration restrictions was clearly transmitted.

Several different American groups opposed unrestricted immigration and sought to limit and control it. American unions did so because the newcomers allegedly took jobs away from American workers. Roger Daniels points out that the American Federation of Labor, headed by Samuel Gompers, a Jew, favored immigration restrictions.

The trade union movement saw the seemingly inexhaustible supply of European workers, willing to work for almost any wage, as a threat to the standard of living of American workers. 'We keep out pauper-made goods, why not keep out the pauper?' ran a standard A.F. of L. argument that made an analogy between the protective tariff and proposals to limit immigration.<sup>1</sup>

But as Russian immigrants pointed out, they often took the most menial and demanding work; employment that no American worker would accept. One article in Razsvet

noted that, "Immigrants work on railroads, canals, farms, mines; promoting the growth and welfare of our country. You can find an immigrant where the most difficult working conditions prevail, where he exposes<sup>2</sup> his health and life to danger."

Nativists, Americans who believed that immigrants posed a danger to their way of life and polemicized against the "alien menace", had other reasons for attempting to limit immigration. They feared that immigration would bring criminals, prostitutes and radicals to America. Certainly, every immigrant group contained some "undesirables", but America provided an environment in which they could survive. As Alan Kraut points out, "though approximately 50 percent of the prostitutes in large urban areas were immigrants or the daughters of immigrants, they numbered the native-born<sup>3</sup> among their customers." The nativists also feared that the tidal wave of immigrants would drown American culture. The immigrants densely populated the cities because the manufacturing industries that were the major sources of economic growth--and their jobs--were located there. As a consequence, the urban areas seemed to lose their American features.

The first legislation restricting immigration, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, was not directed at the Jews. Jews were affected by laws prohibiting contract labor, enacted in 1885 and 1887, but these were never

strictly enforced. In 1891, a statute was enacted that enlarged the list of individuals to be barred from the country to include "idiots, insane persons, paupers or persons likely to become a public charge, persons suffering from a loathsome or contagious disease, persons who have been convicted of a felony or other infamous crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude."<sup>4</sup> A literacy test for immigrants was first introduced into Congress by Henry Cabot Lodge in 1895. Lodge also favored a \$10 head tax on each immigrant. While the literacy test was passed by Congress several times, it was vetoed by three presidents, Cleveland, Taft and Wilson, before becoming law on February 5, 1917.

In 1907, Congress established a United States Immigration Commission. This Commission, known as the Dillingham Commission, produced a forty-seven volume report which became the basis for later restrictive measures. However, none of these restrictions were enacted during the period under consideration, 1881-1910.

Razsvet's articles clearly reveal the concern with which Russian Jewish readers regarded these matters. Restrictionists are portrayed as villains and the immigrants as victims. The articles are obviously polemical; meant to spur Russian and American readers alike to action. To this end, the articles may portray some of the proposed legislation in a biased way. For

instance, a bill introduced in Congress to limit Oriental immigration is characterized as a general anti-immigration bill in Razsvet, January 31, 1910.

In Congress, several bills have been brought forth by them (the restrictionists), one of which, Hayes's bill, appears to be the "quintessence" and the result of all the restrictionists' dreams...The bill, authored by Hayes, is quite delicately called "The Bill for the Furthest Restriction of the Immigration into the United States." It is understood that (the bill) will not stand in all its volume of laws. But one may say with a great degree of certainty that the question of an addition to the immigration law of 1907 will come in the very near future and that the Hayes bill will then have had its affect.<sup>5</sup>

This bill did not pass the House. Of course, Jews were concerned that any restriction of immigration boded ill for their own freedom to do so.

Another instance of biased reporting is Razsvet's characterization of William Williams, the Commissioner of Ellis Island. In an article in the July 19, 1909 issue he is portrayed as a restrictionist and a villain; a "new Haman" and a "murderer". In fact, Williams' administration led to better treatment of immigrants at Ellis Island. In his history of the island, Thomas Pitkin notes that the Russian press was not alone in its biased reporting of events at Ellis Island.

The foreign language press...sensitive to every exclusion within its several groups, was likely to be shrill and vituperative, freely charging the Ellis Island authorities with perpetrating brutalities, atrocities, and even murder. An Ellis Island veteran with considerable knowledge of European tongues declared, probably with some exaggeration, that he had never read a newspaper article concerning the island that did not make the staff there appear "stupid fools." Able and honest

administrators though they were, Williams and Watchorn were both frequently under attack."6

Thus the Russian-language Jewish press's reportage on secular life in America was often affected by its readers interests.

#### Footnotes

1

Roger Daniels, "Racism and Immigration Restriction." The Forum Series, Harold Woodman, ed. (St. Charles, Missouri: Forum Press, 1974), p. 5.

2

Razsvet, May 23, 1910.

3

Alan M. Kraut, The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921 (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), p. 158.

4

Roger Daniels, 1974, p.4.

5

Razsvet, January 31 1910.

6

Thomas Pitkin, Keepers of the Gate: A History of Ellis Island (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 48.



Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda July 18, 1893

Salt Lake (No. America, the States) 4 July

About a year ago a syndicate of local Jewish capitalists acquired 16,000 acres of land for purely speculative purposes from the local government in the south-western territory of Utah or Utah ("Utah"). The company had already spent a few thousand dollars on the construction of a water canal [which is] necessary for the irrigation of fields or for "irrigation" as it is called here, since this region does not have water and farming without water is impossible, since there is no rain at all here during the summer. The company waited a long time for farmers to show up and buy this land from them, but it appears that the Mormons,<sup>1</sup> the population of the territory of Utah, are smarter than these men, and they know that the land in such a desert-like place like "Millard County"<sup>2</sup> (the place where the purchased land is located) can be gotten from the government free of charge, so they have not hurried to buy the land from the company. And last, seeing that hopes for a high profit through the resale of the land had failed, they turned to another side. In these men's opinions, there is nothing easier than duping the Jewish philanthropists of the Old World. The Jews driven from Russia hang on their necks and they are ready to seize

on any place they can in order to settle these unfortunates there. They found some Hungarian Jew and sent him to Europe with a special mission to resell this land to the Baron Hirsch.<sup>3</sup> Apparently, they achieved their goal because the local papers "Salt Lake Harold<sup>4</sup> (sic)" and the "Salt Lake Tribune"<sup>5</sup> printed a telegram [in which it was said that] Mr. Klin(sic)<sup>6</sup> --that's what this Hungarian Jew is called--arrived in New York as the head of a great party of Russian Jews for Utah. The New York Jewish papers said that this Klien consulted with the superintendent of the New York port [to see if] he would allow 2400 Russian Jews, whom the Baron Hirsch intends to send to Utah, to land in the New York port. He [the superintendent] promised him this with a few conditions. In a word, the speculators are apparently close to their goal.

I must say a few more words about the land itself. Having returned not long ago from the Great American Desert (Great American Desert) where I was on my own business, I purposely dropped in on Millard County and here is what I discovered from neighboring farmers and from the workers toiling on the construction of the canal. The land itself would be tolerable, but it is very sandy in places. Summer there is very hot and windy. In summer the winds constantly bear masses of sand from the neighboring "Great American Desert". Almost all the workers working on the canal have

have contracted eye diseases and, to top it all off, winter there is unbearably cold. This is what I discovered about the new Promised Land. And here is where our philanthropists want to settle 2400 people.

7  
--O. Morison

1  
Mormons, the religious sect that predominates in Utah. For a history of the Jews of Utah see Juanita Brooks, The History of the Jews in Utah and Idaho (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1973).

2  
A county in Utah.

3  
Baron Maurice De Hirsch (1831-1896) was a German financier and philanthropist who originated the Jewish Colonization Association (the ICA). The ICA's goal was to establish colonies in various parts of North and South America and other countries for agricultural, commercial and other purposes.

4  
Unable to identify.

5  
Unable to identify.

6  
Possibly Moses Klein, an early advocate of agricultural settlements for Jewish immigrants to the United States.

7  
Unable to identify.

Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda October 9, 1888

New York, 5 August, 1888

Yesterday at four in the afternoon when Mister Norman,<sup>1</sup> the manager of the "Folk Theater"<sup>2</sup> was busy looking over the cloakroom, he suddenly noticed through an open window clouds of smoke and fire escaping from the window of the third floor of the neighboring six-story house, standing deep in the liveliest street, the Bowery, whose population is almost entirely Russian Jews. Having raised the fire signal, Norman gazed on a terrible picture: from all the windows of the five upper floors, deathly-pale figures of men, women and children looked out, filling the air with their screams for help. Behind them moved a fiery wall, above them hot ceilings, before them were the balconies of fire escapes (fire escapes), embraced by tongues of fire. Having torn off the stairs from the roof of the theater, Norman threw them into the window of the third floor and shouted to the dwellers who were scared to death to make their way through the four-foot distance into the theater building. Men set out first. When a dozen had safely crossed the stairs, a woman with two infants approached, blackened with smoke and soot. She had scarcely placed one foot on the ladder when the mad

crowd trampled her. Norman instantly moved to the window, grabbed the woman by the hand and began to forcefully drag her to himself, and it was just in time: fire embraced the end of the ladder, and all was wrapped up in caustic smoke...As a consequence of fear or pressure of the unfortunates surrounding her, her hand slipped out and the half-burned saviour hurried back with empty hands...

At this point the fire company performed a miracle and in the course of an hour the fire was extinguished. The firemen then began to search through all the corners of the building. The lower floor was occupied by Stevenson,<sup>3</sup> a candy peddler, his wife and old father. They were all saved although as they say, the fire started in their kitchen in which a kerosene oven burst. On the second floor was a factory of men's clothes of Solomon Kogen<sup>4</sup> who was saved with ten of his workers. The third floor was occupied by Haimon Gruft,<sup>5</sup> his wife and three young children. There was also a workshop in his dwelling in which women's burnooses were prepared and 8 men and 3 women worked there. When the smoke and fire rushed from the first floor into the Gruft's workshop, he grabbed his young child and took him out to the street. When he hurried back, his dwelling was enveloped in flames. These were the first victims that the valiant Norman did not succeed in saving. Harris Wolf,<sup>6</sup> whose women's burnoose workshop was on the fourth floor, saved one of his workers through the roof and

then followed his example. The five others were found incinerated. Klein and Marks,<sup>7</sup> who occupied the fifth floor with a workshop in which 10 people worked on women's coats, were saved by the fire escapes with their workers, a few of whom received sever burns. The sixth floor<sup>8</sup> was occupied by Herman Levin in a workshop for men's clothes in which 17 men and 13 women worked. Except for five, all of them were saved. In all, the remains of 20 people were collected by the firemen. Two died in the hospital from serious wounds received when they leapt from windows in the third and fourth floors to the earth. In the narrow alley which served as the only entrance into the burning house, bloody men and women with broken arms and legs were picked up by ambulance wagons and carefully taken to hospitals.

At around 7 o'clock in the evening the first wagon arrived at the morgue with seven corpses, six of which were in boxes. Then still more wagons began to arrive and 20 bodies were placed on the benches of the gloomy morgue, which soon became crowded with friends and relatives of the dead. It was terrible to see the mad faces of old men, women and youths who, repressing heartfelt sobbing, tried to recognize dear features in the fried, charred meat...The far-from-weak-nerved workers of the morgue could not stand before such immense grief and sobbed like children. One reporter fell senseless and I, barely conscious rushed out into

the street, cursing my responsibility, fate, poverty and the capitalistic greediness that produced so many innocent victims to Mammon.

Today at 12 o'clock, the 22 ill-fated immigrants who left a living grave--the Russian Pale--were finally buried and found peace in the seaside cemetery ("Bayside Cemetery")<sup>9</sup> of the free, new world. A high price indeed to pay for such "peace"!

The burnt-down house was bought not long ago by the Jewish lawyer Abraham Stern<sup>10</sup> for \$55,000. The Judicial Examining Magistrate Levy,<sup>11</sup> a Jew, declared that he will make the owner of the house, who didn't even worry about tolerable renovations of the apartment building, responsible before the law. From their side, the factory inspectors began a thorough investigation into the cause of the fire. Stern expressed the desire to bury the dead at his expense and to give monetary aid to the living!

The New York papers started a fund for the benefit of the families of the dead, the dying and the lightly wounded. The Christian population responded especially warmly to the call of the newspapers and donations showered down. In all the churches today, preachers invited their parishioners not to let the families of "green" Russo-Jewish immigrants perish (the majority of the dead had recently come to America). The Jewish population did not withhold (their funds) from the fund, of course.

--I. Petrovski

This article affords us the fascinating opportunity to compare the treatment of one specific event in the Russo-Jewish and American presses. The New York Times reported on this fire in three separate articles: August 4, 1888, page 1, "Many Lost Their Lives: A Most Disastrous Fire in Chrystie Street", August 5, 1888, page 12, "Swelling the Death Toll" and August 6, 1888, page 8, "Sad Scenes of Burial". The first article emphasizes that the building had proper fire escapes and that the tenants were unable or unwilling to use them. We see here many errors in reporting facts in the Russo-Jewish article. They are noted below.

1Mr. Charles Norman, a property man, not a manager, broke the glass of a fire alarm at 4:22 in the afternoon.

2

The Harry Miner's Peoples' Theatre, according to the New York Times.

3

Erna Stevenson was the janitress of the building located at 197 Bowery and 165 Chrystie Streets. She resided there with her husband John and her father.

4

The second floor was occupied by S. Korn, a clothing manufacturer.

5

Herman Gruft, a coat manufacturer, lived in the building with his wife Adele and children Joseph, 7, Jacob and Celia, 4.

6

According to the New York Times, Wolf occupied the fifth, not the fourth, floor.

7

According to the New York Times, Klein and Marks occupied the fourth, not the fifth, floor.

8

Harry Levien, not Herman Levin, according to the New York Times.

9

The funerals were arranged by the United Hebrew Charities and were conducted at the Bayside Cemetery.

10

Stern volunteered to bury the victims.

11

Levy is not mentioned in any of the New York Times articles.



Razsvet July 19, 1909

Letters from New York (from our correspondent)

"William Williams!"<sup>1</sup> This is the name which is now on the lips of all of New York Jewry and which has not left the columns of the Jewish papers in the last few days. With the usual fire of the American press which [calls him] such names as "rotseach" [murderer] and "New Haman", the [actual] name of the new immigration commissioner might soon be forgotten. The broad Jewish masses consider W. Williams the main culprit in the constant growth of oppressions and cavils against immigrants. You, of course, already know about the new "interpretations" of the 1907 law by which all immigrants must now bring twenty-five dollars (fifty rubles)<sup>2</sup> with them. As a result of this new "gzeira" there is daily news of amazing incidents [in which] immigrants are denied entry at Ellis Island. It was decided to deny 58 immigrants from the steamship<sup>3</sup> "Estonia". At this, one quite energetic Jewess--a Sara Gopberg--<sup>4</sup> declared that until they would let her get in touch with her sister she would not depart. They were forced to drag her by force to the ship and such a mighty noise and scandal were raised that the representatives of the Russo-American line interfered. And it turned out that the resolutions about 22 of the banished immigrants were so "legal" that these 22

immigrants were admitted into the city. But still and all, that day up to 100 immigrants were sent back. By the calculation of the newspaper "Warheit"<sup>5</sup> from June 26 to July 6, 668 immigrants were not admitted and lately the number of refused ones is approaching 80-90 a day. And this is happening despite the fact that telegrams have recently been sent to Europe to all the points of immigration and to all the shipping societies about the growing strictness [of the enforcement of the law]. In places they very carefully filter those setting out for America.

Local Jews are very upset. In Washington hundreds of petitions have already been sent to the standing Commission;<sup>6</sup> protest meetings go on which are mostly attacks on William Williams. There is no doubt that he plays the first fiddle in this affair and by the way he does not hide this. Williams became famous as an opponent of immigration in general and Jewish immigration especially, five years ago at the time of the Kishinev pogrom,<sup>7</sup> when he already worked in immigration. But at that time Roosevelt<sup>8</sup> compelled him to resign because of his attitude toward Jews. Williams left but he continued to carry on anti-alien agitation and appeared everywhere protesting against the former Commissioner Wotchorn's<sup>9</sup> liberal attitude toward immigrants. Having now received power, he will carry out that policy which he has already preached for so many years. "I want," he said openly to one

interviewer, "as few immigrants as possible to come to us--especially in the overflowing, large centers and I will strive with all my strength to bring about the strictest application of our immigration laws in order to halt immigration."

But all the same, the slogan "Down with Williams!" heard in the Jewish quarters of New York is more an expression of anger and insult than the slogan of a real battle for immigration rights. Alas, it's not just Williams who's the problem. In "The Forward"<sup>10</sup> from the 8th of July, is a highly interesting and incisive letter by the famous and honorable Jewish social and immigration activist Alexander Harkavy<sup>11</sup> concerning this subject. Harkavy, having worked so long in the Jewish immigrant aid institutions which turned out to be positive angels, guardians and saviors of "greenhorn" immigrants, is a great expert on this question. In the aforementioned paper, he welcomes the battle for the interests of immigrants which is now beginning. "The situation on Ellis Island is serious, more serious than is thought. The problem isn't what the new commissioner W. Williams has done up to now." Harkavy asserts that the twenty-five-dollar decree is only a prologue to the upcoming drama. The goal of the campaign is to close the doors of America. By "interpretations" of the laws of immigration, they wish to make further restrictive legislation unnecessary. Harkavy fully characterizes

Williams as the most dangerous enemy of immigration, but much worse than Williams himself is the mood which brought him to power. In Washington, in the Department of Immigration, the mood is more than fixed. The government appointed Williams knowing whom it appointed, since the head of the Immigration Department, Kif,<sup>12</sup> the Secretary of Labor (yes, and even the Secretary of Commerce and Industry,<sup>13</sup> Nagel ) are opponents of immigration. They are afraid to openly come out with new laws against immigration, but they are ready to carry out everything mutely; to close the doors of America with the help of "interpretations".

In view of the seriousness of the situation there must be a serious battle. Having been called to this battle, Harkavy says that we can get results if we come forward in an organized and vocal way before all America. To this end, he is calling for the organized, unified work of the representatives of all the interested elements: Jews, Poles, Germans, Italians, Hungarians and so forth. Only a unified, concerted battle will achieve results.

One may hope that this summons will find a response in the immigrant colonies. But it's hard to be optimistic about the sympathy of America's masses, American society...At a recent meeting of the central organ of workers' (A.F.L.),<sup>14</sup> the question of immigration was discussed again. And all the orators,<sup>15</sup> mainly with Gompers<sup>15</sup> and Mitchell,<sup>16</sup> categorically

expressed the necessity of battle with the immigration movement.

1

William Williams was appointed Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1901. See Thomas M. Pitkin, Keepers of the Gate: A History of Ellis Island (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 35-36.

2

The Immigrant Act of February 20, 1907 called for a head tax of \$4.00 per person. In 1909 immigration was at a high tide and the Congress sought to stem it by raising the head tax. Many figures for this tax were proposed in Congress, but none was accepted.

3

The Estonia landed in New York on July 3, 1909. It belonged to the Russian-American Line and its route was Rotterdam, Libau--New York.

4

Unable to identify.

5

Die Wahrheit, founded in 1905 by Louis Miller (pseudonym Louis E. Bandes). It had a socialist and Jewish nationalist perspective.

6

That is, the Dillingham Commission.

7

Kishinev, a city now located in Moldavia, formerly within Bessarabia. Two well-known pogroms took place in Kishinev, one on Easter, 1903 the other in October, 1905. These pogroms sparked increased waves of immigration from Russia by Jews.

8

Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), 26th President of the United States, 1901-1909.

9

Robert Watchorn replaced William Williams when he resigned as Commissioner of Ellis Island in early 1905. Watchorn was a career Immigration Service officer who had admired Williams' administration of the Island. For more see Thomas Pitkin, p. 41.

10

The Jewish Daily Forward was the leading U.S. Yiddish newspaper, established in 1897. The paper was edited by Abraham Cahan from 1903 to 1951.

11

Alexander Harkavy (1863-1939), Yiddish author. He came to the United States in 1881 with the Am Olam group.

12

Unable to identify.

13

Charles Nagel (1849-1940), the Secretary of Commerce and Labor under President Taft from 1909-1913. He was William Williams' superior in Washington.

14

See Chapter 3, Razsvet March 30, 1907, footnote 3.

15

See Chapter 3, loc cit., footnote 4.

16

John Mitchell (1870-1919) was a labor leader and favored immigration restrictions.

Razsvet January 31, 1910

A Letter from New York (from our correspondent)

Strong movement has been noted in the anti-alien camp. New bills of immigration laws which include harsh, restrictive resolutions are continually being presented in Congress.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the very fact that such legislation is being proposed does not in and of itself indicate anything dangerous. One of the local newspapers which, by the way, has decided to fight against the restrictive immigration legislation recently calculated that from December 15, 1905 to August, 1909, no less than 16 bills aimed at the restriction of immigration were brought to the American Congress and not one of them was passed. Ten of them were proposed during the five months from December, 1905 to April, 1906; at the time when the Congress was busy working out a new law on the entrance of aliens into America to replace the insufficiently-strict law of 1903.<sup>2</sup> And these bills exerted only the most minimal influence on the text of the new law. The only suggestion that was accepted concerned a stricter medical examination of new arrivals, but all the other suggestions were rejected, including a demand for a higher head tax of \$20-\$40 per person, a literacy test, medical statements about immigrants at the ports of departure and finally a demand for admission into the country only of immigrants

who supplied official papers testifying to good conduct.

Proponents of restrictive laws, "restrictionists" however were not discouraged by their failure. By the end of 1907, they had again renewed their efforts. By<sup>3</sup> that time there was the famous suggestion of Latimer for quotas of immigrants; that is, for the establishment of a maximum number of immigrants allowed into the country from each individual country in the course of a year. This suggestion, like all other similar<sup>4</sup> suggestions, failed. Oscar Straus then presided over the Commerce and Labor Department. And while he was Secretary, the restrictionists were unable to rely on a sympathetic governmental ear for their plans.

An entirely different situation has arisen at the present time, since the entire administration has changed and Nagel has become the head of the Department. Until this time, one could only judge his views on the legislation restricting immigration indirectly. But basically, he has not hindered the notorious Williams from bringing his arbitrarily restrictive interpretation of the existing law to life. Nowadays, we can count him among the restrictionists on the basis of already-official evidence. In a just-published report of the Commerce and Labor Department<sup>5</sup> from 1909, the first report since Nagel's activity, the following attestations to Williams and his policy are given. "The state of affairs on Ellis Island since the new Commissioner (Williams) took office is that he has



supported the fair application of immigration law and the protection of immigrants' interests." If \$25 for a "muscular examination" and other such severe decrees, or "gzeiras" as the local Jewish press calls them, are considered fair interpretations of the law, then one must surely expect the very worst. True, in the abovementioned official report, the need to change or add to the law of 1907 is not mentioned. But this is soon explained by the fact that the minister considered it untimely to come out with his own legislative initiative just when the Special Commission on Immigration of the Congress<sup>6</sup> is finishing its own work, having dedicated more than two years and several hundreds of thousands of dollars to the study of the immigration question. It's hard to say what form the suggestions of the Commission will come out in. The three papers that have been submitted to the Senate are associated more with the area of theoretical questions.

But all the same, the restrictionists feel that the wind is now blowing in their direction and they are hastening to exploit the moment. Several bills have been brought forth by them in Congress one of which, the Hayes bill,<sup>7</sup> appears to be the "quintessence" of all the restrictionists' dreams. With this bill, the head tax would be raised from \$4 to \$10. Williams' demand for the presentation of \$25 when entering (the country) was changed into law. Further, each new arrival must know

how to read and write English or their own tongue (and here the equality of Hebrew and Yiddish with other languages was slandered)<sup>8</sup> if he is older than 16 years old. Girls younger than 20 years old are not to be admitted into the country at all unless they are accompanied by parents, even though they are with other relatives. All of today's restrictive rules of entry remain and are augmented so that the Secretary of Trade is granted the right to fine shipping societies \$300 for every immigrant who turns out to belong in the category "Undesirables". And finally, the crowning edifice: every immigrant must have an official paper from a competent organ of his country certifying that he has never been and is not now standing trial. When entering the country, every immigrant must secure a special visa for residency (if he does not belong to the liberal professions). And in the event that he commits a crime, he will be subject to expulsion from the country even if three years have elapsed since the day of his arrival.

The bill, authored by Hayes, is quite delicately called "The Bill for the Furthest Restriction of Immigration into the United States."<sup>9</sup> It is understood that [the bill] will not stand in all its volume of laws. But one may say with a great degree of certainty an addition to the immigration law of 1907 will come in the very near future and that the Hayes bill will then have had its effect. One attendant circumstance has

given the restrictionists a chance for success: the battle against the trade in women has become fashionable here.<sup>10</sup> Newspapers and magazines are filled with exaggerated descriptions of this vile trade and people plan to make a political career out of the battle with it. But "living goods" are acquired by forceful means among arrivals and, in many cases, are brought here with an admittedly criminal goal. Thus this question is united with the question of immigration in the most negative manner for the purposes of the proponents of free entry into the country. In general one must say in conclusion that for the latter--proponents of immigration--a period of battle is coming again. And a very serious and hard battle it will be.

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The prediction of the pessimists was justified. The House of Representatives of the American Congress approved the bill against prostitution which includes a painful restriction for immigrants.<sup>11</sup> This law instituted a constant surveillance over all immigrant women so that an immigrant woman may be sent from the country even many years after her arrival. During the discussion of the bill in the House, pathetic speeches were given against the trade in white slaves, but actually the orators did not go further than the sensational articles [found] in local newspapers and magazines. It's now up to the Senate, but after the

Special Immigration Commission recognized the bill as expedient, it is impossible to expect a veto of it in the Senate.

The restriction of rights of entry into the United States is thus proceeding from the realm of draft-legislation into the realm of reality. The seriousness of the moment has finally been comprehended by the official representatives of American Jewry. At the yearly meeting of the "Jewish Education Union",<sup>12</sup> two men came out with vast speeches on the question of immigration laws. Edward Lauterbach<sup>13</sup> said that the tendency toward restriction of immigration is much stronger in the Congress itself. During a recent vote in the Immigration Commission of the Congress, the majority vote was by only one vote for the freedom of immigration. Only this one voice need fall away due to this or that cause and the Commission will be ready to accept the most extreme measures against immigration. Then Lauterbach explained the meaning of the Hayes bill. He announced that the bill would raise the head tax on immigrants to \$10. This cannot be justified by any kind of budgetary reasons since this tax already not only defrays all the government expenses for immigration, but it puts a large surplus at the Treasury's disposal. The demand for literacy, brought against all adult immigrants, is directed mainly against immigrants from southern countries of Europe. But Jewish interests suffer from it, since the majority of Jewish women are

rarely able to satisfy this demand. Having then explained other points of Hays' bill, Lauterbach suggested that all proponents of free immigration redouble their efforts, because the restrictionists are now [trying] not just to regulate and not just to restrict immigration, but to actually forbid it completely.

14

Jacob Schiff appeared after him and announced that one agitation for free entry into the country was not enough. It is necessary to take steps toward a more uniform distribution of new arrivals. "The ports of North America on the Atlantic Ocean, and especially New York," he said, "cannot hold all the new arrivals. Truly--and we will emphasize this fact in every way possible--if New York has become one of the strongest commercial centers in the world, then it is obligated in no small way to Russian Jews for this. It's also true that the American nation also owed some kind of debt to the Russian Jews in the area of ideals. The facts are such that these poor people have brought ideals with them which we, with our materialistic and commercial tendencies, have great need of. But besides this for the Jews, both in New York and in other places, it is not good [that they] compose 25% of the entire population. It is not enough to demand unhindered admission into the country for all immigrants. If we demand greater privileges for ourselves then we must

also remember our responsibilities."

While expectations of new restrictive laws grow, there is also a small, albeit too small, easing which appeared in Congress's acceptance of a law easing the formality of naturalization in New York. Until this time, the procedure of naturalization was surrounded by such hardships that the working person was often overcome by them. There were only three bureaus in the whole city where petitions for naturalization were accepted and documents were given out. But the number of bureaucrats in these bureaus was so limited that those who wished to be naturalized had, and still have, to come and wait whole days for their turn. According to the demands of the law, a petition of naturalization had to be done in the presence of witnesses and even if the person who wished to be naturalized himself already agreed to waste his work time waiting in line, then it would be very hard to persuade the witnesses to do so: they are also busy people. Now Congress has approved a law by which the Managing Bureau of Naturalization in New York is obliged to enlarge its Department and is empowered to spend all the matriculation fees of those wishing to be naturalized for that purpose.

15

--A. Wise

1  
For a complete history of immigration legislation see E.P. Hutchinson, Legislative History of American Immigration Policy (1798-1965) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

2

The Immigration Act of March 3, 1903. Hutchinson characterizes it as, "A long codification of immigration law in thirty-nine sections, the act reaffirmed the contract labor law and the prior immigration laws, made the several additions to the excludable classes noted above, repeated the manifesting requirements, levied a head tax of two dollars on every arriving alien passenger, with the exceptions noted, set the two-year period of deportability according to the first part of the Penrose amendment, and contained strengthened sections against alien anarchists as added by the Senate." (p. 133).

3

Senator Asbury C. Latimer of South Carolina was appointed to the Immigration Commission on February 22, 1907 and was a consistent supporter of restrictionist legislation.

4

Oscar Straus (1850-1926) was a diplomat, author, public servant and jurist. He served as Secretary of Commerce and Labor under Roosevelt from 1906 to 1909, and was the first Jew to hold a cabinet post.

5

Charles Nagel, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, supervised William Williams in his role as Commissioner of Ellis Island. Williams was violently attacked in the press for mistreating immigrants at Ellis Island. Nagel defended him when his administration was investigated by the House Rules Committee which could recommend that Williams be investigated by the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. See Pitkin, pp. 51-52.

6

The recommendations of the Dillingham Commission were presented to the 61st Congress at the opening of the third session, on December 5, 1910. It was basically a restrictionist document. Hutchinson lists the details of its recommendations on p. 148.

7

Everis Hayes of California proposed several bills restricting the entrance of Asiatics into the United States. See Hutchinson, p. 143.

8

Henry Cabot Lodge, a Congressman and later Senator from Massachusetts, was the champion of the literacy test in Congress. For a complete history of the literacy test legislation see Hutchinson, pp. 465-468.

9

H.R. 2215, introduced by Everis Hayes of California. It was directed against Chinese, Japanese and other immigrants. The bill was introduced in the 61st Congress (1909-1911).

10

This battle against prostitution was reflected in the immigration legislation of the day. See Hutchinson, pp. 452-453 for a summary of this legislation. Also see

Edward J. Bristow, Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery (1870-1939) (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), pp. 146-180.

11

H.R. 12315 by Mann of Illinois prohibited the transportation of women for immoral purposes in interstate or foreign commerce. It passed the Senate and President Taft signed it into law. It was known as the White Slave Traffic Act of June 25, 1910, or more popularly as the Mann Act.

12

Unable to identify.

13

Edward Lauterbach (1844-1923) was a lawyer, business executive and politician. He was a chairman of the committee of public charities and a longtime trustee of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and President of the National Liberal Immigration League.

14

Schiff was committed to an even distribution of the immigrants to the United States. He advocated a redistribution plan by which immigrants would enter the United States through the Gulf ports, especially Galveston, instead of New York. See Cyrus Adler's Jacob Schiff, His Life and Letters (New York: Doubleday, 1928), pp. 98-114.

15

Unable to identify.



Razsvet May 23, 1910

A Letter from New York (From our Correspondent)

The enemies of immigration have not yet succeeded in bringing about the proposed strict laws against immigration. Evidently, the "House Committee"<sup>1</sup> on immigration has presently decided not to carry out any new steps until the presentation of the Immigration Commission's full report.

As many know, the "House Committee's" decision was greeted joyfully. The enemies of immigration were especially active this year. Never before have such shocking anti-immigration bills been proposed as during the present session of Congress. This strengthening of activity shown by the enemies of immigration resulted in a natural increase of activity from the opposite side. Protests were heard from everywhere. They have begun to receive petitions in Congress; members of Congress are literally snowed under by letters and telegrams, urging that they vote against bills hostile to immigration. Different deputations have been sent to the President and to members of Congress--urging the "House Committee" on immigration to put off the discussion of the new bills until the next session of Congress because properly, they must wait until the Immigration Commission submits its full report.

All who are familiar with that part of the

report already published may easily understand what is to be expected from the full report of the Immigration Commission. The opponents of immigration are now manifesting exactly that activity in which they engaged before and they are preparing intensely for the coming battle with those who have command of resources: bills about a new capitation tax, literacy tests and so forth.

In the next session of Congress which begins in December, the battle against immigration and immigrants will be renewed with still greater bitterness than before. In order to repulse the dangerous enemy, it is necessary to organize now so that the enemy will find himself before a force which he is unable to conquer.

This extraordinarily important and difficult task is fulfilled by the "Liberty Emigration Society (sic)" [Liberal Immigration Society].<sup>2</sup> This society is still in the organizational stage, but it already has many members, many prominent people among them, representing all the nationalities who live in America. The above-mentioned organization is trying to rally all the proponents of immigration and to prepare them for the forthcoming battle which will probably flare up this winter.

"The Liberty Emigration Society(sic)" is trying to influence public opinion by means of the so-called "alien" organs of the press, that is, those which are printed in a foreign language. Through these

newspapers, the organization brings immigrants' attention to the danger which threatens their brothers and sisters or their relatives who intend to immigrate to America. This, properly speaking, is the most correct way, since nobody is as interested in legislation against immigrants as those who themselves came here relatively recently. Nobody is as able to understand their situation as well as these people. To wit, they must begin the battle against the enemies of immigration and only with their assistance will this battle be carried out more-or-less successfully.

Not long ago the "Liberty Emigration Society (sic)" produced a proclamation summoning all like-minded people to unity and organization. By the way, included in this proclamation are the following lines: "Immigration is in danger. her enemies are many and mighty and the false conviction that immigration is harmful for the country is widespread. They use every possible means to show aliens in the most unflattering light since they often unabashedly exaggerate the degree of delinquency among aliens and they do not stop until their efforts to reestablish the general opinion against immigration have succeeded."

"We may conquer and silence these enemies only by strong organization, knowledge and enlightenment. Any intelligent person will recognize that thanks to immigrants, our country has become the gem that she is now. Immigrants work on railroads, canals, farms and

mines, promoting the growth and welfare of our country. You can find an immigrant where the most difficult working conditions prevail, where he exposes his health and life to danger."

"Restrictive bills will again be placed before Congress this December. Consequently, we must actively prepare an opposition. You may join our great work which has appeared in the issues of the 'Liberty Emigration Society (sic).'"

A proclamation with similar contents also appeared in the publication of the Order of Independents, "Brith Abraham".<sup>3</sup> In it, all the members were urged to send petitions against anti-immigration bills to Congress.

<sup>4</sup>  
--O. Bloch

<sup>1</sup>  
The House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization through which immigration legislation was channeled. Altogether, about 37 bills aimed at restricting legislation were introduced during the 61st Congress (1909-1911).

<sup>2</sup>The National Liberal Immigration League was organized by foreign-born groups in 1906.

<sup>3</sup>  
"The Order of Independents, Brith Abraham" was founded by Jacob Schoen in 1887. In time, it became the largest Jewish fraternal order in the world. Its goals were to foster brotherhood, Jewish ideals and traditions, and concern for welfare of Jews. It provided fraternal benefits to its members as well. The group issued a publication called The Beacon.

<sup>4</sup>  
Unable to identify.

## CONCLUSION

The Russian-language Jewish press projected a biased view of America and immigrant life to its readers. In general, this bias tended to be a negative one. These papers reported that the journey to America was difficult, the welcome fairly cold, the economic conditions poor, the government hostile. Positive images of America are rare in this press. Several factors contributed to this tendency.

First of all, in all newspaper reporting there is a tendency to report bad news as news. This certainly affected what material the journalists decided to cover. A story on a fire next to a theater makes more sensational reading than a review of the play that was running in the theater at the time.

In the second place, the editorial policy of these papers mitigated against publishing any news items that would encourage immigration to the United States. The early Razsvet and Niedielnaya Khronika Voskhoda were both mildly assimilationist papers and advocated an adjustment to life in Russia. The later Razsvet was a Zionist journal and consequently recommended immigration to Palestine. Therefore, it would have been ideologically inconsistent for articles glorifying America to appear in these papers.

In the third place, the reporters and editors

were using their experiences as Russian citizens to interpret American events. Their reportage on the Grand Rabbi is a clear example of this. Powerful, corrupt rabbis who leveled taxes on their communities for their own benefit, or the government's, were rife in Russia. The author of the two articles on the Grand Rabbi used his experience of rabbis in Russia to interpret their role in America. He therefore doubted R. Jacob Joseph's veracity and good intentions from the beginning. Another instance of the projection of Russian patterns on American events is the press's attitude toward anti-semitism. Anti-semitism is pointed out frequently, and often characterized as officially sponsored, either by the U.S. government or some other institution. This sort of discrimination occurred frequently in Russia. Thus, their experience taught the reporters to watch vigilantly for its appearance in America.

A fourth reason for this press's negative view of America has to do with knowing what readers wanted to hear. How would the readers in Russia be able to justify their remaining in that country if America was described as the land of milk and honey? Rather these journals were compelled to detail the suffering their brethren were undergoing in the New World.

Finally, immigrant life in America was genuinely difficult. Immigrants were poor. The established Jewish community often rebuffed them. They were discriminated

against in some spheres of life. The events in the translated articles surely took place. It is the way they are presented that reveals the attitudes of these journals toward America.

If the news from America was so bad, why did people continue to immigrate there in droves? The Russian-language press, or any press for that matter, probably had a limited impact on people's decisions about immigrating to America. Personal letters from relatives and acquaintances who had immigrated and visits from those who'd been to America probably made a stronger impression on Jews in Russia than the reportage of any press. In addition, after 1903, the situation in Russia was so bad that no amount of bad press could stem the tide of immigration.

For all these reasons, we may only depend on the Russian-language Jewish press to show us a distorted view of immigration to America. However, that view is valuable, for it tells us what Russian Jews may have seen as the most negative features of American immigrant life.

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