

Chapter 12

During the War (1914-1916)

The First World War was undoubtedly the greatest of the follies of the twentieth century. With no real motives or purposes, three major European powers—Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary—clashed in a deadly battle which resulted in the first two not recovering for the duration of the century, and the third disintegrating. As for the two allies of Russia, seemingly victors, they held out for another quarter of a century, and then lost their power of domination forever. Henceforth, the whole of Europe ceased to fulfil its proud mission of guiding humanity, becoming an object of jealousy and incapable of keeping in its weakened hands its colonial possessions.

None of the three emperors, and even less Nicholas II and his entourage, had realised in *what* war they were plunging, they could imagine neither its scale nor its violence. Apart from Stolypin and after him, Durnovo, the authorities had not understood the warning addressed to Russia between 1904 and 1906.

Let us consider this same war with the eyes of the Jews. In these three neighbouring empires lived three-quarters of the Jews of the planet (and 90% of the Jews of Europe¹) who were on top of that living in the area of future military operations, of the province of Kovno (then Livonia) up to Austrian Galicia (then Romania). And the war placed them before an interrogation as pressing as it was

¹ SJE, t. 2, 1982, pp. 313-314.

painful: could all, living on the front steps of these three empires, preserve their imperial patriotism under these conditions? For if, for the armies that were advancing, behind the front was the enemy, for the Jews established in these regions, behind the front lived neighbours and co-religionists. They could not want this war: could their mindset shift brutally towards patriotism? As for the ordinary Jews, those of the Pale of Settlement, they had even less reason to support the Russian army. We have seen that a century before, the Jews of western Russia had helped the Russians against Napoleon. But, in 1914, it was quite different: *in the name of what* would they help the Russian army? On behalf of the Pale of Settlement? On the contrary, did the war not give rise to the hope of a liberation? With the arrival of the Austrians and the Germans, a new Pale of Settlement was not going to be established, the *numerus clausus* would not be maintained in the educational establishments!

It is precisely in the western part of the Pale of Settlement that the Bund retained influence, and Lenin tells us that its members “are in their majority Germanophiles and rejoice at the defeat of Russia.”² We also learn that during the war, the Jewish autonomist movement *Vorwärts* adopted an openly pro-German position. Nowadays, a Jewish writer notes finely that, “if one reflects on the meaning of the formula ‘God, the Tsar, the Fatherland...’, it is impossible to imagine a Jew, a loyal subject of the Empire, who could have taken this formula seriously,” in other words, in the first degree.³

But, in the capitals, things were different. Despite their positions of 1904–1905, the influential Jewish circles, like the Russian liberals, offered their support to the autocratic regime when the conflict broke out; they proposed a pact. “The patriotic fervour which swept Russia did not leave the Jews aside.”⁴ “It was the time when, seeing the Russian patriotism of the Jews, Purishkevich* embraced the rabbis.”⁵ As for the press (not *Novoie Vremia*, but the liberal press, “half-Jewish” according to Witte, the same one who expressed and oriented the jolts of public opinion and who, in 1905, literally *demand*ed the capitulation of power), it was, from the first days of the war, moved by patriotic enthusiasm. “Over the head of little Serbia, the sword is raised against Great Russia, the guarantor of the inalienable right of millions of people to work and to life!” At an extraordinary meeting of the Duma, “the representatives of the different nationalities and different parties were all, on this historic day, inhabited by the same thought, a single emotion made all the voices tremble... That no one lay a hand on Saint Russia!... We are ready for all sacrifices to defend the honour and dignity of Russia, one and indivisible... ‘God, the

2 V. I. Lenin, Complete Works in 55 volumes [in Russian], 1958–1965, t. 49, p. 64.

3 A. Voronel, “22”, Tel Aviv, 1986, no. 50, p. 155.

4 SJE, t. 7, p. 356.

* Vladimir Purishkevich (1870–1920), monarchist, opponent of Rasputin, the assassination of whom he participated in. Arrested in 1917, then given amnesty, he participated in the White movement and died of typhus in Novorossiysk.

5 D. S. Pasmanik, *Rousskaya revoliutsia i ievreisstvo (Bolchevizm i Ioudaizm)* (The Russian Revolution and the Jews [Bolshevism and Judaism]), Paris, 1923, p. 143.

Tsar, the people'—and victory is assured... We, Jews, defend our country because we are deeply attached to it.”

Even if, behind this, there was a well-founded calculation, the expectation of a gesture of recognition in return—the attainment of equal rights, even if it was only once the war was over—the government had to, by accepting this unexpected ally, decide to assume—or promise to assume—its share of obligations.

And, in fact, did the achievement of equal rights necessarily have to come through the revolution? Moreover, the crushing of the insurrection by Stolypin “had led to a decline in interest in politics in Russian as well as Jewish circles,”⁶—which, at the very least, meant that there was a move away from the revolution. As Chulguine^{*} declared: “Combating the Jews and the Germans simultaneously was above the forces of power in Russia, it was necessary to conclude a pact with somebody.”⁷ This new alliance with the Jews had to be formalised: it was necessary to produce at least a document containing promises, as had been done for the Poles. But only Stolypin would have had the intelligence and the courage to do so. Without him, there was no one to understand the situation and take the appropriate decisions. (And, from the spring of 1915, even more serious mistakes were made.)

The liberal circles, including the elite of the Jewish community, also had in view another consideration that they took for a certainty. From the year 1907 (again, without urgent necessity), Nicholas II had allowed himself to be dragged into a military alliance with England (thus putting around his neck the rope of the subsequent confrontation with Germany). And, now, all the progressive circles in Russia were making the following analysis: the alliance with the democratic powers and the common victory with them would inevitably lead to a global democratisation of Russia at the end of the war and, consequently, the definitive establishment of equal rights for the Jews. There was, therefore, a sense for the Jews of Russia, and not only for those who lived in Petersburg and Moscow, to aspire to the victory of Russia in this war.

But these considerations were counterbalanced by the precipitated, massive *expulsion* of the Jews from the area of the front, ordered by the General Staff at the time of the great retreat of 1915. That the latter had the power to do so was the result of ill-considered decisions taken at the beginning of the war. In July 1914, in the heat of the action, in the agitation which reigned in the face of the imminence of conflict, the Emperor had signed without reflection, as a document of secondary importance, the provisional Regulation of the field service which gave the General

6 SJE, t. 7, p. 356.

* Basile Choulguine (1878–1976), leader of the right wing of the Duma with whom he breaks at the time of the Beilis affair. Participates in the Progressive Bloc. Collects with Guchkov the abdication of Nicholas II. Immigrated to Yugoslavia until 1944, he was captured there and spent twelve years in camps. Dies almost centenary.

7 V. V. Choulguine, “Chto nam v nikh ne nraivitsa...” Ob Antisemitism v rossii (“What we do not like about them...” On anti-Semitism in Russia), Paris. 1929, p. 67.

Staff unlimited power over all the neighbouring regions of the front, with a very wide territorial extension, and this, without any consultation with the Council of Ministers. At the time, no one had attached any importance to this document, because all were convinced that the Supreme Command would always be assured by the Emperor and that there could be no conflict with the Cabinet. But, as early as July 1914, the Emperor was persuaded not to assume the Supreme Command of the armies. As a wise man, the latter proposed the post to his favourite, the fine speaker Sukhomlinov, then Minister of Defence, who naturally declined this honour. It was the great prince Nicholas Nicolaevich who was appointed, and the latter did not consider it possible to begin by upsetting the composition of the General Staff, at the head of which was General Yanushkevich. But, at the same time, the provisional regulations were not altered, so that the administration of a third of Russia was in the hands of Yanushkevich, an insignificant man who was not even a military officer by profession.

From the very beginning of the war, orders were given locally for the expulsion of the Jews from the army areas.⁸ In August 1914, the newspapers read: “The rights of the Jews... Telegraphic instruction to all the governors of provinces and cities to stop the acts of mass or individual expulsion of Jews.” But, from the beginning of 1915, as testified the doctor D. Pasmanik, a medic on the front during the war, “suddenly, throughout the area of the front and in all circles close to power, spread the rumour that the Jews were doing espionage.”⁹

During the summer of 1915, Yanukhovich—precisely him—tried to mask the retreat of the Russian armies, which at that time seemed appalling, by ordering the mass deportation of the Jews from the front area, arbitrary deportation, without any examination of individual cases. It was so easy: to blame all the defeats on the Jews!

These accusations may not have come about without the help of the German General Staff, which issued a proclamation calling on the Jews of Russia to rise up against their government. But opinion, supported by many sources, prevails that in this case it was Polish influence that was at work. As Sliosberg wrote, just before the war, there had been a brutal explosion of anti-Semitism, “a campaign against Jewish domination in industry and commerce... When war broke out, it was at its zenith... and the Poles endeavoured by all means to tarnish the image of the Jewish populations in the eyes of the Supreme Command by spreading all sorts of nonsense and legends about Jewish espionage.”¹⁰—Immediately after the promises made by Nikolai Nikolaevich in the Appeal to the Poles of 14 August, the latter founded in Warsaw the “Central Committee of the Bourgeoisie”, which did not include a single Jew, whereas in Poland the Jews represented 14% of the population. In September, there was a pogrom against the Jews in Souvalki.¹¹—Then, during the retreat of

⁸ SJE, t. 7, p. 356.

⁹ Pasmanik, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

¹⁰ G. B. Sliosberg, *op. cit.*, t. 3, pp. 316–317.

¹¹ I. G. Froumkine, *Iz istorii ruskovo ievreistava*, [Sb.] *Kniga o ruskom evreistve: Ot 1860 godov do Revolutsii 1917 g.* (Aspects of the History of Russian Jews), in BJWR, pp. 85–86.

1915, “the agitation which reigned in the midst of the army facilitated the spread of the calumnies made up by the Poles.”¹² Pasmanik asserts that he is “in a position to prove that the first rumours about the treason of the Jews were propagated by the Poles”, a part of which “was actively assisting the Germans. Seeking to avert suspicion, they hastened to spread the rumour that the Jews were engaged in espionage.”¹³ In connection with this expulsion of the Jews, several sources emphasised the fact that Yanukhevich himself was a “Pole converted to Orthodoxy”.¹⁴

He may have undergone this influence, but we consider these explanations insufficient and in no way justifying the attitude of the Russian General Staff.

Of course, the Jews in the front area could not break their ties with the neighbouring villages, interrupt the “Jewish post”, and turn into the enemies of their co-religionists. Moreover, in the eyes of the Jews in the Pale of Settlement, the Germans appeared as a European nation of high culture, much different from the Russians and the Poles (the black shadow of Auschwitz had not yet covered the earth or crossed the Jewish conscience...). At that time, the *Times* correspondent, Steven Graham, reported that as soon as the smoke of a German ship appeared on the horizon, the Jewish population of Libava “forgot the Russian language” and began to speak German. If they had to leave, the Jews preferred to go to the German side.—The hostility displayed by the Russian army, and then their deportation, could only provoke their bitterness and cause some of them to collaborate openly with the Germans.

In addition to the accusations against the Jews living in these areas, the Jews were accused of cowardice and desertion. Father Georges Chavelsky, chaplain of the Russian Army, was attached to the Staff, but often went to the front and was well informed of all that was going on there; he wrote in his memoirs: “From the first days of the war, it was repeated with insistence that the Jewish soldiers were cowards and deserters, and local Jews spies and traitors. There were many examples of Jews who had gone to the enemy or fled; or Jewish civilians who had given information to the enemy, or, in the course of their offensives, had delivered to them Russian soldiers and officers who had lingered on the spot, etc., etc. The more time passed, the more our situation deteriorated, the more the hatred and the exasperation against the Jews increased. rumours were spreading from the front to the rear... they created a climate that was becoming dangerous for all Jews in Russia.”¹⁵—Second Lieutenant M. Lemke, a Socialist who was then in Staff, recorded, in the newspaper he was secretly keeping, reports from the southwest Front, in December 1915; he noted in particular: “There is a disturbing increase in the number of Jewish and Polish defectors, not only in the advanced positions but also in

¹² Sliosberg, *op. cit.*, t. 3, p. 324.

¹³ Pasmanik, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

¹⁴ For example: SJE, t. 7, p. 357.

¹⁵ *Father Georgui Chavelsky, Vospominania poslednevo protopresvitera ruskoï armii i flota* (Memoirs of the last chaplain of the Russian Army and Russian Hood) v. 2-kh t, t. 1, New York, ed. Chekhov, 1954, p. 271.

the rear of the front.”¹⁶—In November 1915, one even heard during a meeting of the Progressive Bloc bureau the following remarks, noted by Milyukov: “Which people gave proof of its absence of patriotism?—The Jews.”¹⁷

In Germany and Austria-Hungary, the Jews could occupy high-level positions in the administration without having to abjure their religion, and this was also true in the army. While in Russia, a Jew could not become an officer if he did not convert to orthodoxy, and Jews with higher levels of education were most often completing their military service as simple soldiers. One can understand that they did not rush in to serve in such an army. (In spite of this, Jews were decorated with the cross of Saint-George.) Captain G. S. Doumbadze recalled a Jew, a law student, who received this decoration four times, but refused to enter the School of Officers in order not to have to convert, which would have caused his father to die of grief. Later he was executed by the Bolsheviks.¹⁸)

For all that, it would be unreliable and implausible to conclude that all these accusations were mere fabrications. Chavelsky writes: “The question is too vast and complex... but I cannot help saying that at that time there was no lack of motives for accusing the Jews... In times of peace, it was tolerated that they be assigned to civilian tasks; during the war... the Jews filled the combat units... During the offensives, they were often in the rear; when the army retreated, they were at the front. More than once they spread panic in their units... It cannot be denied that the cases of espionage, of going over to the enemy were not rare... We couldn’t avoid finding suspicious that the Jews were also perfectly informed of what was happening on the front. The ‘Jewish telephone’ sometimes worked better and faster than all the countryside’s telephones... It was not uncommon for the news of the front to be known in the small hamlet of Baranovichi, situated near the General Staff, even before they reach the Supreme Commander and his Chief of Staff.”¹⁹ (Lemke points out the Jewish origins of Chavelsky himself.²⁰)

A rabbi from Moscow went to the Staff to try to persuade Chavelsky that “the Jews are like the others: there are some courageous, there are some cowards; there are those who are loyal to their country, there are also the bastards, the traitors,” and he cited examples taken from other wars. “Although it was very painful for me, I had to tell him everything I knew about the conduct of Jews during this war,” “but we were not able to reach an agreement.”²¹

Here is yet the testimony of a contemporary. Abraham Zisman, an engineer, then assigned to the Evacuation Commission, recalled half a century later: “To my

16 *Mikhail Lemke*, 250 dnei v tsarskoy Stavke (25 sentences 1915—ioulia 1916) (250 days in the General Staff (25 Sept. 1915-July 1916), PG GIZ, 1920, p. 353.

17 *Progressivny blok v 1915-1916 gg* (The Progressive Bloc in 1915-1916), Krasny arkhiv: Istoricheskii Journal Tsentrarkhiva RSFSR, M. GIZ, 1922-1941, vol. 52, 1932, p. 179.

18 G. S. *Doumbadze* (Vospominania), Biblioteka-fond “Rousskoie Zaroubejie”, f / 1, A-9, p. 5.

19 *Father Chavelsky*, *op. cit.*, t. 1, p. 272.

20 *Lemke*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

21 *Father Chavelsky*, *op. cit.*, t. 1, pp. 272-273.

great shame, I must say that [the Jews who were near the front] behaved very despicably, giving the German army all the help they could.”²²

There were also charges of a strictly economic nature against the Jews who supplied the Russian army. Lemke thus copied the order to the General Staff signed by the Emperor on the very day of his taking office as Supreme Commander (this order had therefore been prepared by Yanushkevich): Jewish suppliers abused the orders for bandages, horses, bread given to them by the army; they receive from the military authorities documents certifying “that they have been entrusted with the task of making purchases for the needs of the army... but without any indication of quantity or place.” Then “the Jews have certified copies of these documents made and distributed to their accomplices”, thus acquiring the possibility of making purchases all over the Empire. “Thanks to the solidarity between them and their considerable financial resources, they control vast areas where are bought mainly horses and bread,” which artificially raises prices and makes more difficult the work of the officials responsible of supplies.²³

But all these facts cannot justify the conduct of Yanushkevich and the General Staff. Without making an effort to separate the good wheat from the chaff, the Russian High Command launched an operation, as massive as it was inept, for the expulsion of the Jews.

Particularly striking was the attitude towards the Jews of Galicia who lived in Austro-Hungarian territory. “From the beginning of the First World War, tens of thousands of Jews fled from Galicia to Hungary, Bohemia, and Vienna. Those who remained suffered greatly during the period of the Russian occupation of this region.”²⁴ “Bullying, beatings, and even pogroms, frequently organised by the Cossack units, became the daily lot of the Jews of Galicia.”²⁵ This is what Father Chavelsky writes: “In Galicia, hatred towards the Jews was still fuelled by the vexations inflicted under the Austrian domination of the Russian populations [in fact, Ukrainian and Ruthenian] by the powerful Jews”²⁶ (in other words, these same populations were now participating in Cossack arbitrariness).

“In the province of Kovno all the Jews were deported without exception: the sick, the wounded soldiers, the families of the soldiers who were at the front.”²⁷ “Hostages were required under the pretext of preventing acts of espionage,” and facts of this kind “became commonplace.”²⁸

22 *Novaya Zaria*, San Francisco, 1960, 7 May, p. 3.

23 *Lemke**, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

24 *SJE*, t. 2, p. 24.

25 *SJE*, t. 7, p. 356.

26 *Father Chavelsky*, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

27 *SJE*, t. 7, p. 357.

28 *Slisberg*, *op. cit.*, t. 3, p. 325.

This deportation of the Jews appears in a stronger light than in 1915—contrary to what would happen in 1941—there was no mass evacuation of urban populations. The army was withdrawing, the civilian population remained there, nobody was driven out—but the Jews and they alone were driven out, all without exception and in the shortest possible time: not to mention the moral wound that this represented for each one, this brought about the ruin, the loss of one's house, one's property. Was it not, in another form, always the same pogrom of great magnitude, but this time provoked by the authorities and not by the populace? How can we not understand the Jewish misfortune?

To this we must add that Yanushkevich, like the high-ranking officers who were under his command, acted without any logical reflection, in disorder, precipitation, incoherence, which could only add to the confusion. There exists no chronicle nor account of all these military decisions. Only echoes scattered in the press of the time, and also in "The Archives of the Russian Revolution" by I. V. Hessen, a series of documents²⁹ collected at random, without follow-up; and then, as with Lemke, copies of documents made by individuals. This scattered data nevertheless allow us to form an opinion on what happened.

Some of the provisions foresee expelling Jews from the area of military operations "in the direction of the enemy" (which would mean: in the direction of the Austrians, across the front line?), to send back to Galicia the Jews originating from there; other directives foresee deporting them to the rear of the front, sometimes at a short distance, sometimes on the left bank of the Dnieper, sometimes even "beyond the Volga". Sometimes it is "cleansing the Jews of a zone of five versts from the front", sometimes we speak of a zone of fifty versts. The evacuation timeframes are sometimes five days, with authorisation to take away one's property, sometimes twenty-four hours, probably without this authorisation; as for the resisters, they will be taken under escort. Or even: no evacuation, but in the event of a retreat, take hostages among the significant Jews, especially the rabbis, in case Jews denounce either Russians or Poles who are well disposed in regard to Russia; in the event of execution of these by the Germans, carry out the execution of the hostages (but how can we know, verify that there were executions in German-occupied territory? It was truly an incredible system!). Other instruction: we do not take hostages, we just designate them among the Jewish population inhabiting our territories—they will bear responsibility for espionage in favour of the enemy committed by other Jews. Or even: avoid at all costs that the Jews be aware of the location of the trenches dug in the rear of the front (so that they cannot communicate it to the Austrians through their co-religionists,—it was known that Romanian Jews could easily cross the border); or even, on the contrary: oblige precisely civilian Jews to dig the trenches. Or even (order given by the commander of the military region of Kazan, General Sandetski, known for his despotic behaviour): assemble all the Jewish soldiers in marching battalions and send them to the front.

²⁹Dokoumenty o presledovanii ievreev (Documents on the persecution of the Jews), Arkhiv Rousskoi Revolutsii (Archives of the Russian Revolution), izdavayemy I.V. Gessenom, Berlin: Slovo, 1922–1937, t. 19, 1928, pp. 245–284.

Or, conversely: discontent provoked by the presence of Jews in the combat units; their military ineptitude.

There is a feeling that in their campaign against the Jews, Yanushkevich and the General Staff were losing their minds: what exactly did they want? During these particularly difficult weeks of fighting, when the Russian troops retreated, exhausted and short of ammunition, a flyer containing a “list of questions” was sent to the heads of units and instructed them to assemble information on “the moral, military, physical qualities of Jewish soldiers”, as well as their relations with local Jewish populations. And the possibility was considered of completely excluding Jews from the army after the war.

We also do not know the exact number of displaced persons. In *The Book of the Jewish Russian World*, we read that in April 1915, 40,000 Jews were expelled from the province of Courland, and in May 120,000 of them were expelled from Kovno.³⁰ In another place, the same book gives an overall figure for the whole period, amounting to 250,000³¹ including Jewish refugees, which means that the deportees would hardly have accounted for more than half of this digit. After the revolution, the newspaper *Novoie Vremia* published information according to which the evacuation of all the inhabitants of Galicia dispersed on the territory of Russia 25,000 persons, including nearly a thousand Jews.³² (These are numbers that, for the moment, are too weak to be probable.)

On 10–11 May 1915, the order was issued to put an end to the deportations, and these ceased. Jabotinsky drew the conclusion of the expulsion of the Jews from the zone of the front in 1915 by speaking of a “catastrophe probably unprecedented since the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella” in Spain in the fifteenth century.³³ But is there not also something of a move of History in the fact that this massive deportation—itsself, and the indignant reactions it provoked—would make a concrete contribution to the much desired suppression of the Pale of Settlement?

Leonid Andreyev had rightly observed: “This famous ‘barbarity’ of which we are accused of... rests entirely and exclusively on our Jewish question and its bloody outbursts.”³⁴

These deportations of Jews were resonant on a planetary scale. From Petersburg, during the war, Jews defending human rights transmitted information about the situation of their co-religionists to Europe; “Among them, Alexander

30 A. A. *Goldenweiser*, *Pravovoie polozenie ievreyev v Rossii* (The legal situation of Jews in Russia), BJWR-1, p. 135.

31 G. I. *Aronson*, *V borbe za grajdanskie i nalsionainyc prava Obchtchestvennyye tetchenia v rousskom evreistve* (The struggle for civil and national rights: the movements of opinion within the Jewish community of Russia), BJWR-1, p. 232.

32 *Novoie Vremia*, 1917, 13 April, p. 3.

33 *Sliosberg*, *op. cit.*, t. 1, Introduction by V. Jabotinsky, p. xi.

34 L. *Andreyev*, *Pervaya stoupen* (First Step), *Shchit* (the Shield), 1916, p. 5.

Isayevich Braudo distinguished himself by his tireless activity.”³⁵ A. G. Shlyapnikov relates that Gorky had sent him documents on the persecution of Jews in Russia; he brought them to the United States. All this information spread widely and rapidly in Europe and America, raising a powerful wave of indignation.

And if the best among the representatives of the Jewish community and the Jewish intelligentsia feared that “the victory of Germany... would only reinforce anti-Semitism... and, for that reason alone, there could be no question of sympathies towards the Germans or hopes for their victory,”³⁶ a Russian military intelligence officer in Denmark reported in December 1915 that the success of anti-Russian propaganda “is also facilitated by Jews who openly declare that they do not wish the victory of Russia and its consequence: the autonomy promised to Poland, for they know that the latter would take energetic measures with a view to the expulsion of Jews from within its borders”³⁷; In other words, it was Polish anti-Semitism that was to be feared, not German anti-Semitism: the fate which awaited the Jews in a Poland which had become independent would perhaps be even worse than that which they underwent in Russia.

The British and French Governments were somewhat embarrassed to openly condemn the attitude of their ally. But at that time, the United States was increasingly engaged in the international arena. And in the still neutral America of 1915, “sympathies were divided...; some of the Jews who came from Germany were sympathetic to the latter, even though they did not manifest it in an active manner.”³⁸ Their dispositions were maintained by the Jews from Russia and Galicia, who, as the Socialist Ziv testified, wished for (it could no longer be otherwise) the defeat of Russia, and even more so by the “professional revolutionists” Russian-Jews who had settled in the United States.³⁹ To this was added the anti-Russian tendencies in the American public: very recently, in 1911, the dramatic break-up of an eighty-year-old US-Russian economic agreement took place. The Americans regarded the official Russia as a country that was “corrupt, reactionary, and ignorant”.⁴⁰

This quickly translated into tangible effects. As early as August 1915, we read in the reports that Milyukov was holding meetings of the Progressive Bloc: “The Americans pose as a condition [of aid to Russia] the possibility for American Jews to have free access to Russian territory,”⁴¹—always the same source of conflict as in 1911 with T. Roosevelt.—And when a Russian parliamentary delegation went to London and Paris in early 1916 to apply for financial aid, it was faced to a categorical refusal. The episode is told in detail by Shingaryov*, in the report he presented on 20 June 1916 to the Military and Maritime Commission of the Duma after the return of

35 Sliosberg, *op. cit.*, t. 3, pp. 343–344.

36 *Ibidem*, p. 344.

37 Lemke, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

38 Sliosberg, *op. cit.*, t. 3, p. 345.

39 G. A. Ziv, Trotsky: Kharakteiistika. Po litchym vospominaniyam (Trotsky: a characteristic, personal memories), New York. Narodopravstvo, 1921, 30 June, pp. 60–63.

40 German Bernsrein, Retch, 1917, 30 June, pp. 1–2.

41 Progressivny blok v 1915–1917 gg., Krasny arkhiv, 1932, vol. 50–51, p. 136.

the delegation. In England, Lord Rothschild replied to this request: “You are affecting our credit in the United States.” In France, Baron Rothschild declared: “In America, the Jews are very numerous and active, they exert a great influence, in such a manner that the American public is very hostile to you.” (Then “Rothschild expressed himself even more brutally”, and Shingaryov demanded that his words not be included in the record.) This financial pressure from the Americans, the rapporteur concludes, is a continuation of a policy that has led them to break our trade agreement in 1911 (but, of course, to that was added the massive deportations of Jews undertaken in the meantime). Jakob Schiff, who had spoken so harshly of Russia in 1905, now declared to a French parliamentarian sent to America: “We will give credit to England and France when we have the assurance that Russia will do something for the Jews; the money you borrow from us goes to Russia, and we do not want that.”⁴²—Milyukov evoked the protests at the Duma tribune of “millions and millions of American Jews... who have met a very wide echo in American opinion. I have in my hands many American newspapers that prove it... Meetings ending with scenes of hysteria, crying jags at the evocation of the situation of the Jews in Russia. I have a copy of the provision made by President Wilson, establishing a ‘Jewish Day’ throughout the United States to collect aid for the victims.” And “when we ask for money to American bankers, they reply: Pardon, how is that? We agree to lend money to England and France, but on condition that Russia does not see the colour of it... The famous banker Jakob Schiff, who rules the financial world in New York, categorically refuses any idea of a loan to Russia...”⁴³

The *Encyclopædia Judaica*, written in English, confirms that Schiff, “using his influence to prevent other financial institutions lending to Russia..., pursued this policy throughout the First World War”⁴⁴ and put pressure on other banks to do the same.

For all these upheavals provoked by the deportations, both in Russia and abroad, it was the Council of Ministers who had to pay for the broken pots even though the Staff did not consult it and gave no attention to its protests. I have already quoted a few snippets of the passionate debates that were agitating the Cabinet on this subject.⁴⁵ Here are a few others. Krivoshein** was in favour of temporarily granting the Jews the right to settle in all the cities of Russia: “This favour granted to the Jews will be useful not only from a political point of view, but also from an economic point of view... Up to now, our policy in this field made one

* Andrei Shingaryov (1869–1918), one of the leaders of the Cadet party, was a member of the first Provisional Government in 1917. Arrested by the Bolsheviks and massacred in his prison.

42 *Mejdunarodnoïe polojenie tsarskoi Rossii vo vremia mirovoï voiny* (The international situation of tsarist Russia during the world war), Krasny arkhiv, 1934, vol. 64, pp. 5–14.

43 *Doklad P. N. Milioukova v Voïenno-morskoi komissii Gosoud. Doumy 19 iounia 1916g.*, Krasny arkhiv, 1933, t. 58, pp. 13–14.

44 *Encyclopædia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1971, vol. 14, p. 961.

45 A. *Solzhenitsyn*, *Krasnoye Koleso* (The Red Wheel), t. 3, M. Voïenizdat, 1993, pp. 259–263, (French translation: March seventeen, t. 1, Paris: Fayard).

** Close collaborator of Stolypin, Minister of Agriculture (1906–1915), dies in emigration (1857–1921).

think of this sleeping miser on his gold, which does not benefit from it and does not allow others to do so.” But Roukhlov replied: this proposal “constitutes a fundamental and irreversible modification of legislation which has been introduced throughout History with the aim of protecting the Russian heritage from the control of the Jews, and the Russian people of the deleterious influence of the neighbouring of the Jews... You specify that this favour will be granted only for the duration of the war..., but we must not be in denial”: after the war, “not one government will be found” to “send the Jews back to the Pale of Settlement... The Russians are dying in the trenches and meanwhile the Jews will settle in the heart of Russia, benefit from the misfortunes endured by the people, of general ruin. What will be the reaction of the army and the Russian people?”—And again, during the following meeting: “The Russian population endures unimaginable hardships and suffering, both on the front and in the interior of the country, while Jewish bankers buy from their co-religionists the right to use Russia's misfortune to exploit tomorrow this exsanguinated people.”⁴⁶

But the ministers acknowledged that there was no other way out. This measure was to be “applied with exceptional speed”—“in order to meet the financial needs of the war.”⁴⁷ All of them, with the exception of Roukhlov, signed their name at the bottom of the bulletin authorising the Jews to settle freely (with the possibility of acquiring real estate) throughout the Empire, with the exception of the capitals, agricultural areas, provinces inhabited by the Cossacks and the Yalta region.⁴⁸ In the autumn of 1915 was also repealed the system of the annual passport, which had hitherto been compulsory for the Jews who were now entitled to a permanent passport. (These measures were followed by a partial lifting of the *numerus clausus* in educational establishments and the authorisation to occupy the functions of litigator within the limits of the representation quotas.⁴⁹) The opposition that these decisions met in the public opinion was broken under the pressure of the war.

Thus, after a century and a quarter of existence, the Pale of Settlement of the Jews disappeared forever. And to add insult to injury, as Sliosberg notes, “this measure, so important in its content..., amounting to the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, this measure for which had fought in vain for decades the Russian Jews and the liberal circles of Russia, went unnoticed!”⁵⁰ Unnoticed because of the magnitude assumed by the war. Streams of refugees and immigrants were then overwhelming Russia.

46 Tiajelye dni. Sekretnye zasedania soveta ministrov. 16 ioulia–sentiabria 1915 (The difficult days, the secret meetings of the Council of Ministers, 16 July–September 1915). Sost. A. N. Yakhontov, Archives of the Russian Revolution, 1926, vol. 18, pp. 47–48, 57.

47 *Ibidem*, p. 12.

48 SJE, t. 7, pp. 358–359.

49 *Ibidem*, p. 359.

50 Sliosberg, t. 3, p. 341.

The Refugee Committee, set up by the government, also provided displaced Jews with funds to help settlements.⁵¹ Until the February revolution, “the Conference on Refugees continued its work and allocated considerable sums to the various national committees,” including the Jewish Committee.⁵² It goes without saying that were added to this the funds contributed by many Jewish organisations that had embarked on this task with energy and efficiency. Among them was the Union of Jewish Craftsmen (UJC), created in 1880, well-established and already extending its action beyond the Pale of Settlement. The UJC had developed a cooperation with the World Relief Committee and the “Joint” (“Committee for the distribution of funds for aid to war-affected Jews”). All of them provided massive aid to the Jewish populations of Russia; “The ‘Joint’ had rescued hundreds of thousands of Jews in Russia and Austria-Hungary.”⁵³ In Poland, the UJC helped Jewish candidates for emigration or settled as farmers—because “during the war, Jews who lived in small villages had been driven, not without coercion by the German occupier, to the work of the land.”⁵⁴ There was also the Jewish Prophylactic Society (JPS), founded in 1912; it had given itself for mission not only to direct medical aid to the Jews, but also the creation of sanatoriums, dispensaries, the development of sanitary hygiene in general, the prevention of diseases, “the struggle against the physical deterioration of Jewish populations” (Nowhere in Russia there existed yet organisations of this kind). Now, in 1915, these detachments were organising for Jewish emigrants, all along their route and at their place of destination, supply centres, flying medical teams, countryside hospitals, shelters and pædiatric consultations.⁵⁵—Also in 1915, appeared the Jewish Association for the Assistance of War Victims (JAAWV); benefiting of support from the Committee for Refugees and the so generously endowed by the State “Zemgor” (association of the “Union of Zemstvos” and the “Union of Cities”), as well as credit from America, the JAAWV set up a vast network of missionaries to help the Jews during their journey and their new place of residence, with rolling kitchens, canteens, clothing distribution points, (employment agencies, vocational training centres), childcare establishments, schools. What an admirable organisation!—let us remember that approximately 250,000 refugees and displaced persons were taken care of; according to official figures, the number of these was already reaching 215,000 in August 1916.⁵⁶—and there was also the “Political Bureau” near the Jewish Deputies of the fourth Duma, which resulted from an agreement between the Jewish Popular Group, the Jewish People's Party, the Jewish Democratic Group and the Zionists; during the war, it deployed “considerable activity”.⁵⁷

51 I. L. Teitel, *Iz moiii jizni za 40 let* (Memories of 40 years of my life), Paris: I. Povolotski i ko., 1925, p. 210.

52 Sliosberg, t. 3, p. 342.

53 SJE, t. 2, p. 345.

54 D. Lvovitch, *L. Bramson i Soiouz ORT* (L. Bramson and the UJC), JW-2, New York, 1944, p. 29.

55 I. M. Troitsky, *Samodeiatetnost i camopomochtch evreiev v Rossii* (The spirit of initiative and mutual help among the Jews of Russia), BJWR-1, pp. 479–480, 485–489.

56 Aronson, BJWR-1, p. 232; I. Troitsky, *ibidem*, p. 497.

57 Aronson, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

In spite of all the difficulties, “the war gave a strong impulse to the spirit of initiative of the Jews, whipped their will to take charge.”⁵⁸ During these years “the considerable forces hidden hitherto in the depths of the Jewish consciousness matured and revealed to the open... immense reserves of initiative in the most varied fields of political and social action.”⁵⁹—In addition to the resources allocated by the mutual aid committees, the JAAWV benefited from the millions paid to it by the government. At no time did the Special Conference on Refugees “reject our suggestion” on the amount of aid: 25 million in a year and a half, which is infinitely more than what the Jews had collected (the government paid here the wrongs of the General Staff); as for the sums coming from the West, the Committee could retain them⁶⁰ for future use.

It is thus that with all these movements of the Jewish population—refugees, displaced persons, but also a good number of volunteers—the war significantly altered the distribution of Jews in Russia; important settlements were established in towns far from the front, mainly Nizhny Novgorod, Voronezh, Penza, Samara, Saratov, but also in the capitals. Although the abolition of the Pale of Settlement did not concern Saint Petersburg and Moscow, these two cities were now practically open. Often, they would go there to join relatives or protectors who had settled there long ago. In the course of memoirs left by contemporaries, one discovers for example a dentist of Petersburg named Flakke: ten-room apartment, footman, servant, cook—well-off Jews were not uncommon, and, in the middle of the war, while there was a shortage of housing in Petrograd, they opened up opportunities for Jews from elsewhere. Many of them changed their place of residence during those years: families, groups of families that left no trace in history, except sometimes in family chronicles of a private nature, such as those of the parents of David Azbel: “Aunt Ida... left the coldness and somnolence of Chernigov at the beginning of the First World War to come and settle in Moscow.”⁶¹ The new arrivals were often of a very modest condition, but some of them came to influential positions, such as Poznanski, a clerk in the Petrograd Military Censorship Commission, who had the upper hand “over all secret affairs”.⁶²

Meanwhile, the General Staff mechanically poured out its torrents of directives, sometimes respected, sometimes neglected: to exclude Jews under the banner of all activities outside armed service: secretary, baker, nurse, telephonist, telegrapher. Thus, “in order to prevent the anti-government propaganda supposed to be carried out by Jewish doctors and nurses, they should be assigned not to hospitals or country infirmaries, but ‘to places not conducive to propaganda activities such as, for example, the advanced positions, the transport of the wounded

58 I. Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

59 Aronson, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

60 Sliosberg, *op. cit.*, t. 3, pp. 329–331.

61 D. Azbel, *Do, vo vremia i posle* (Before, during and after), *Vremya i my*, New York, Jerusalem, Paris. 1989, no. 104, pp. 192–193.

62 Lemke, *op. cit.*, p. 468.

on the battlefield.”⁶³ In another directive: expel the Jews out of the Union of Zemstvos, the Union of Cities and the Red Cross, where they concentrate in great numbers to escape armed service (as did also, we note in passage, tens of thousands of Russians), use their advantageous position for propaganda purposes (as did any liberal, radical, or socialist who respected themselves) and, above all, spread rumours about “the incompetence of the high command” (which corresponded to a large extent to reality⁶⁴). Other bulletins warned against the danger of keeping the Jews in positions that brought them into contact with sensitive information: in the services of the Union of Zemstvos of the western front in April 1916, “all the important branches of the administration (including those under the defence secrecy) are in the hands of Jews”, and the names of those responsible for the registration and classification of confidential documents are cited, as well as that of the Director of the Department of Public Information, who, “by his functions, has free access to various services of the army at the rear of the front or in the regions”.⁶⁵

However, there is no evidence that the ranting of the General Staff on the necessity of chasing the Jews from the Zemgor had any tangible results. Always well informed, Lemke observes that “the directives of the military authorities on the exclusion of the Jews” from the Zemgor “were not welcomed”. A bulletin was published stating that “all persons of Jewish confession who are dismissed by order of the authorities shall be reimbursed for two months with salary and travel allowances and with the possibility of being recruited prioritarly in the establishments of the Zemgor at the rear of the front.”⁶⁶ (The Zemgor was the darling of the influential Russian press. It is thus that it unanimously declined to reveal its sources of financing: in 25 months of war, on 1 September 1916, 464 million rubles granted by the government—equipment and supplies were delivered directly from state warehouses—compared with only nine million collected by Zemstvos, towns, collects.⁶⁷ If the press refused to publish these figures, it is because it would have emptied of its meaning the opposition between the philanthropic and charitable action of the Zemgor and that of a stupid, insignificant, and lame government.)

Economic circumstances and geographical conditions meant that among the army’s suppliers, there were many Jews. A letter of complaint expressing the anger of the “Orthodox-Russian circles of Kiev..., driven by their duty as patriots”, points to Salomon Frankfurt, who occupied a particularly high position, that of “delegate of the Ministry of Agriculture to the supply of the army in bacon” (it must be said that complaints about the disorganisation caused by these requisitions were heard all the way to the Duma). Also in Kiev, an obscure “agronomist of a Zemstvo of the region”, Zelman Kopel, was immortalised by History because of having ordered an excessive requisition just before Christmas 1916, he deprived of sugar a whole

63 SJE, t. 7, p. 357.

64 Archives of the Russian Revolution, 1928, t. XIX, pp. 274, 275.

65 Lemke, *op. cit.*, p. 792.

66 *Ibidem*, p. 792.

67 S. Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolai II (the reign of Emperor Nicholas II)*, t. 2, Munich, 1949, p. 192.

district during the holidays (In this case, a complaint was also lodged against the local administration of the Zemstvos⁶⁸).

In November 1916, the deputy N. Markov, stigmatising in the Duma “the marauders of the rear and trappers” of State property and National Defence, designated, as usual, the Jews in particular: in Kiev, once again, it was Cheftel, a member of the Municipal Council, who blocked the warehouses and let rot more than 2,500 tons of flour, fish, and other products that the town kept in reserve, while at the same time, “the friends of these gentlemen sold their own fish at grossly inflated prices”; it was V. I. Demchenko, elected from Kiev to the Duma, who hid “masses of Jews, rich Jews” (and he enumerates them) “to make them escape military service”; it was also, in Saratov, “the engineer Levy” who supplied “through the intermediary of the commissioner Frenkel” goods to the Military-Industrial Committee at inflated prices.⁶⁹ But it should be noted that the military-industrial committees set up by Guchkov^{*} were behaving in exactly the same way with the Treasury. So...

In a report of the Petrograd Security Department dated October 1916, we can read: “In Petrograd, trade is exclusively in the hands of Jews who know perfectly the tastes, aspirations, and opinions of the man in the street”; but this report also refers to the widespread opinion on the right according to which, among the people, “the freedom enjoyed by Jews since the beginning of the war” arouses more and more discontent; “it is true, there still exists officially some Russian firms, but they are in fact controlled by Jews: it is impossible to buy or to order anything without the intervention of a Jew.”⁷⁰ (Bolshevik publications, such as Kaiourov’s book⁷¹ at that time in Petrograd, did not fail to disguise reality by alleging that in May 1915, during the sacking of German firms and shops in Moscow, the crowd also attacked the Jewish establishments—which is false, and it was even the opposite that happened: during the anti-German riot, the Jews, because of the resemblance of their surnames, protected themselves by hanging on the front of their shop the placard: “This shop is Jewish”—and they were not touched, and Jewish trade was not to suffer in all the years of war.)

However, at the top of the monarchy—in Rasputin’s morbid entourage—, a small group of rather shady individuals played an important role. They not only outraged the right-wing circles—it is how, in May 1916, the French ambassador to

68 Iz zapisnooi knijki arkhivista, Soob. Mr. Paozerskovo (Notebooks of an Archivist, Comm. by M. Paozerski), Krasny Arkhiv, 1926, t. 18, pp. 211–212.

69 Gosudarstvennaya Duma—Tchetvërty sozvy (Fourth Duma of the Empire), transcript of the proceedings, 22 Nov. 1916, pp. 366–368.

* Alexander Guchkov (1882–1936), founder and leader of the Octobrist party, president of the third Duma (March 1910–March 1911), president of the All-Russia War Industry Committee, became Minister of War and Navy in the first temporary government. Emigrated in 1918. He died in Paris.

70 Politicsckoye polojenie Rossii nakanoune Fevral’skoi revoloutsii (Political situation in Russia on the eve of the February Revolution), Krasny arkhiv, 1926, t. 17, pp. 17, 23.

71 V. Kaiourov, Petrogradskie rabotchie v gody imperialisticheskoy vonny (Workers of Petrograd during the years of the imperialist war), M., 1930.

Petrograd, Maurice Paleologue, noted in his diary: “A bunch of Jewish financiers and dirty speculators, Rubinstein, Manus, etc., have concluded an agreement with him [Rasputin] and compensate him handsomely for services rendered. On their instructions, he sends notes to ministers, to banks or to various influential personalities.”⁷²

Indeed, if in the past it was Baron Ginzburg who intervened openly in favour of the Jews, this action was henceforth conducted secretly by the upstarts who had clustered around Rasputin. There was the banker D. L. Rubinstein (he was the director of a commercial bank in Petrograd, but confidently made his way to the entourage of the throne: he managed the fortunes of Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich, made the acquaintance of Rasputin through A. Vyrubova*, then was decorated with the order of Saint Vladimir, he was given the title of State Counsellor, and therefore of the “Your Excellency”.) But also the industrialist I. P. Manus (director of the Petrograd wagon factory, member of the Putilov factory board, the board of two banks and the Russian Transport Company, also a State Councillor).

Rubinstein attached to Rasputin a permanent “secretary”, Aron Simanovich, a rich jeweller, diamond dealer, illiterate but very skilful and enterprising (but what did Rasputin need of a “secretary”, he who possessed nothing? ...)

This Simanovich (“the best among the Jew”, would have scribbled the “starets” on his portrait) published in immigration a little book boasting about the role he had played at that time. We find in it all sorts of gossip without interest, of fabrications (he speaks of the “hundreds of thousands of Jews executed and massacred by order of the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich”⁷³); But, through this scum and those surges of boastfulness, one can glimpse real facts, quite concrete.

For example, the “dentists affair”—for most Jews—which had broken out in 1913: “a veritable dentist's diploma factory had been elaborated” which flooded Moscow,⁷⁴—their detention gave the right to permanent residence and dispensed of military service. There were about 300 of them (according to Simanovich: 200). The false dentists were condemned to one year in prison, but, on the intervention of Rasputin, they were pardoned.

⁷² *Maurice Paleologue*, *Tsraskaia Rossia nakanoune revolioutsii* (Imperial Russia on the eve of the revolution), M., Pd., GIZ, 1923, p. 136.

* Anna Vyrubova (1884–1964), maid of honour of the Empress of which she was for a long time the best friend, fanatic admirer of Rasputin, permanent intermediary between the imperial couple and the starets. She was arrested in 1917, freed and re-arrested, and managed to escape to Finland where she would live for more than 45 years, completely forgotten about.

⁷³ A. *Simanovich*, *Rasputin i ievrei. Vospominania litchnovo sekretaria Grigoria Rasputin* (Rasputin and the Jews, Memoirs of the personal secretary of Grigory Rasputin), [Sb.] *Sviatoi tchërt. Taïna Grigoria Raspoutina: Vospom., Dokoumenty, Materialy sledstv. Komissii*. M. Knijnaya Palata, 1991, pp. 106–107.

⁷⁴ *Sliosberg*, *op. cit.*, t. 3, p. 347.

“During the war... the Jews sought protection from Rasputin against the police or the military authorities,” and Simanovitch proudly confides that “many Jewish young men implored his help to escape the army,” which, in time of war, gave them the possibility of entering the University; “There was often no legal way”—but Simanovich claims that it was always possible to find a solution. Rasputin “had become the friend and benefactor of the Jews, and unreservedly supported my efforts to improve their condition.”⁷⁵

By mentioning the circle of these new favourites, one cannot fail to mention the unparalleled adventurer Manassevich-Manoulov. He was, in turn, an official of the Ministry of the Interior and an agent of the Russian secret police in Paris, which did not prevent him from selling abroad secret documents from the Police Department; he had conducted secret negotiations with Gapon; when Stürmer* was appointed Prime Minister, he was entrusted with “exceptional ‘secret missions.’”⁷⁶

Rubinstein barged into public life by buying out the newspaper *Novoie Vremia* (see chapter 8), hitherto hostile to the Jews. (Irony of history: in 1876, Suvorin had bought this paper with the money of the banker of Warsaw Kroneberg, and at the beginning, well oriented towards the Jews, he opened its columns to them. But, at the beginning of the war between Russia and Turkey, *Novoie Vremia* suddenly changed course, “went to the side of the reaction,” and, “as far as the Jewish question was concerned, no longer put a stop to hatred and bad faith.”⁷⁷) In 1915, Prime Minister Goremykin** and the Minister of the Interior Khvostov, Junior*** in vain prevented Rubinstein's buyback of the newspaper;⁷⁸ he achieved his aims a little later,—but we were already too close to the revolution, all that did not serve much. (Another newspaper on the right, the *Grajdantin* was also partially bought by Manus).

S. Melgounov nicknamed the “quintet” the small group which treated his affairs in the “antechamber”⁷⁹ of the tsar—through Rasputin. Given the power of the latter, it was no small matter: dubious characters were in the immediate vicinity of

⁷⁵ *Simanovitch*, pp. 89, 100, 102, 108.

* Rasputin's *protégé*, became President of the Council of Ministers (2 February–23 November 1916), with his duties as Minister of the Interior (16 March–17 July) and Foreign Affairs (20 July–23 November). After February, he was arrested and imprisoned at the Pierre-et-Paul fortress where he died on 2 September 1917.

⁷⁶ *S. Melgunov*, *Legenda o separatnom mire. Kanoun revolioutsii* (The Legend of the Separated Peace, The Eve of the Revolution), Paris, 1957, pp. 263, 395, 397.

⁷⁷ JE, t. 11, pp. 758, 759.

** Ivan Goremykin (1839–1917), Prime Minister first in April–July 1906, then from January 1914 to January 1916.

*** Alexis Khvostov, Junior (1872–1918), leader of the rights in the fourth Duma, Minister of the Interior in 1915–1916. Shot by the Bolsheviks.

⁷⁸ Pismo ministra vnoutrennikh del A. N. Khvostova Predsedateliou soveta ministrov I. L. Goremykinou ot 16 dek. 1915 (Letter from the Minister of the Interior A. N. Khvostov to the President of the Council of Ministers I. L. Goremykin, dated 16 December 1915), *Delo naroda*, 1917, 21 March, p. 2.

⁷⁹ *Melgunov*, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

the throne and could exert a dangerous influence on the affairs of the whole of Russia. Britain's ambassador, Buchanan, believed that Rubinstein was linked to the German intelligence services.⁸⁰ This possibility cannot be ruled out.

The rapid penetration of German espionage into Russia, and its links with the speculators of the rear, forced General Alekseyev* to solicit from the emperor, during the summer of 1916, the authorisation to carry out investigations beyond the area of competence of the General Staff,—and thus was constituted the “Commission of Inquiry of General Batiushin”. Its first target was the banker Rubinstein, suspected of “speculative operations with German capital”, financial manipulation for the benefit of the enemy, depreciation of the ruble, overpayment of foreign agents for orders placed by the General Stewardship, and speculative operations on wheat in the region of the Volga. On the decision of the Minister of Justice, Rubinstein was arrested on 10 July 1916 and charged with high treason.⁸¹

It was from the empress in person that Rubinstein received the strongest support. Two months after his arrest, she asked the Emperor “to send him discreetly to Siberia, not to keep him here, so as not to annoy the Jews”—“speak of Rubinstein” with Protopopov**. Two weeks later, Rasputin sent a telegram to the emperor saying that Protopopov “implores that no one come to disturb him”, including counter-espionage...; “he spoke to me of the detainee with gentleness, as a true Christian.”—Another three weeks later, the Empress: “About Rubinstein, he is dying. Send immediately a telegram [to the northwest Front]... for him to be transferred from Pskov under the authority of the Minister of the Interior”—that is, of that good and gentle Christian of Protopopov! And, the following day: “I hope you sent the telegram for Rubinstein, he's dying.” And the next day: “Have you arranged for Rubinstein to be handed over to the Minister of the Interior? If he stays in Pskov, he will die,—please, my sweet friend!”⁸²

On 6 December, Rubinstein was released—ten days before the assassination of Rasputin, who had just enough time to render him a last service. Immediately afterwards, the Minister Makarov***, whom the Empress detested, was dismissed. (Shortly thereafter, he will be executed by the Bolsheviks.)—It is true that with the

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 402.

* Mikhail Alekseyev (1857–1918), then Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander. Will advise the tsar to abdicate. Supreme Commander until 3 June 1917. After October, organiser of the first White army, in the Don.

⁸¹ V. N. Semennikov, *Politika Romanovykh nakanoune revolioutsii. Ot Antanty—k Guermanii* (Politics of the Romanovs on the Eve of the Revolution: From the Agreement to Germany), M., L., GIZ, 1926, pp. 117, 118, 125.

** Last tsarist Minister of the Interior. Accused of intelligence with Germany (perpetrated in Sweden during the summer of 1916 on the occasion of a trip to England of a delegation of the Duma). Imprisoned by the Provisional Government. Executed by the Bolsheviks.

⁸² Pisma imperatritsy Aleksandry Fëdorovny k Imperatorou Nikolaiou II / Per. S angi. V. D. Nabokoa (Letters of the Empress Alexandra Fecorovna to the Emperor Nicholas II / trad. from English by V. D. Nabokov), Berlin Slovo, 1922, pp. 202, 204, 211, 223, 225, 227.

*** Minister of Justice from 20 July 1916 to 2 January 1917. Executed by the Cheka in September 1918.

liberation of Rubinstein, the investigation of his case was not finished; he was arrested again, but during the redeeming revolution of February, along with other prisoners who languished in the tsarist gaols, he was freed of the Petrograd prison by the crowd and left ungrateful Russia, as had the time to do so Manassevich, Manus, and Simanovich. (This Rubinstein, we will still have the opportunity to meet him again.)

For us who live in the 90s of the twentieth century,* this orgy of plundering of State property appears as an experimental model on a very small scale... But what we find in one case or another, it is a government both pretentious and lame that leaves Russia abandoned to its destiny.

*

Educated by the Rubinstein case, the General Staff had the accounts of several banks checked. At the same time, an investigation was opened against the sugar producers of Kiev—Hepner, Tsekhanovski, Babushkin, and Dobry. They had obtained permission to export sugar to Persia; they had made massive shipments, but very little merchandise had been reported by the customs and had reached the Persian market; the rest of the sugar had “disappeared”, but, according to some information, it had passed through Turkey—allied to Germany—and had been sold on the spot. At the same time, the price of sugar had suddenly risen in the regions of the South-West, where Russia's sugar industry was concentrated. The sugar deal was conducted in an atmosphere of rigour and intransigence, but the Batiushin commission did not carry out its investigation and forwarded the file to an investigative judge of Kiev, who began by expanding the accused, and then they found support alongside the throne.

As for the Batiushin Commission itself, its composition left much to be desired. Its ineffectiveness in investigating the Rubinstein case was highlighted by Senator Zavadski.⁸³ In his memoirs, General Lukomski, a member of the Staff, recounts that one of the chief jurists of the commission, Colonel Rezanov, an indisputably competent man, was also found to be quite fond of menus, good restaurants, boozy dinners; another, Orlov, proved to be a renegade who worked in the secret police after 1917, then went to the Whites and, in emigration, would be marked by his provocative conduct. There were probably other shady figures on the committee who did not refuse bribes and had capitalised on the release of the detainees. Through a series of indiscriminate acts, the commission drew the attention of the Military Justice of Petrograd and senior officials of the Ministry of Justice.

* Time when the writing of this present volume was completed, and allusion to the state of Yeltsinian Russia.

83 S. V. Zavadski, *Na velikom izlome* (The Great Fracture), Archives of the Russian Revolution, 1923, t. 8, pp. 19–22.

However, there was not only the Staff to deal with the problem of speculators, in relation to the activities “of the Jews in general”. On 9 January 1916, Acting Director of the Police Department, Kafafov, signed a classified defence directive, which was addressed to all provincial and city governors and all gendarmerie commands. But the “intelligence service” of public opinion soon discovered the secret, and a month later, on 10 February, when all business ceased, Chkheidze^{*} read out this document from the tribune of the Duma. And what could be read there was not only that “the Jews make revolutionary propaganda”, but that “in addition to their criminal activity of propaganda... they have set themselves two important objectives: to artificially raise the price of essential commodities and withdraw from circulation common currency”—they thus seek “to make the population lose confidence in the Russian currency”, to spread the rumour that “the Russian government is bankrupt, that there is not enough metal to make coins.” The purpose of all this, according to the bulletin, was “to obtain the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, because the Jews think that the present period is the most favourable to achieve their ends by maintaining the trouble in the country.” The Department did not accompany these considerations with any concrete measure: it was simply “for information”.⁸⁴

Here is the reaction of Milyukov: “The method of Rostopchin” is used with the Jews—they are presented to an overexcited crowd, saying: they are the guilty, they are yours, do what you want with them.”⁸⁵

During the same days, the police encircled the Moscow Stock Exchange, carried out identity checks among the operators and discovered seventy Jews in an illegal situation; a roundup of the same type took place in Odessa. And this also penetrated the Duma Chamber, causing a real cataclysm—what the Council of Ministers feared so much a year ago was happening: “In the current period, we can not tolerate within the Duma a debate on the Jewish question, a debate which could take on a dangerous form and serve as a pretext for the aggravation of conflicts between nationalities.”⁸⁶ But the debate really took place and lasted several months.

The most lively and passionate reaction to the bulletin of the Department was that of Shingaryov^{***}—he had no equal to communicate to his listeners all the indignation which aroused in his heart: “there is not an ignominy, not a turpitude which the State has not been guilty towards the Jew, it which is a Christian state... spreading calumny over a whole people without any foundation... Russian society

* Menshevik leader, deputy to the third and fourth Dumas; In February 1917, president of the Petrograd Soviet. Emigrated in 1921, committed suicide in 1926.

84 Archives of the Russian Revolution, 1925, vol. 19, pp. 267–268.

** Governor of Moscow at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was long believed that he had set fire to the city when the French armed there in 1812. Father of the Countess of Segur.

85 Stenographic record of the debates of the Fourth Duma. 10 February 1916, p. 1312.

86 Archives of the Russian Revolution, 1926, t. 18, p. 49.

*** Andrei Shingaryov (1869–1918), Zemstvo doctor, leader of the Cadet party, will be Minister of Agriculture in the first Provisional Government, and Finance in the second. Slaughtered in his hospital bed on 18 January 1918.

will be able to cure its evils only when you will withdraw that thorn, this evil that gangrenes the life of the country—the persecution of nationalities... Yes, we hurt for our government, we are ashamed of our State! The Russian army found itself without ammunition in Galicia—and the Jews would be responsible for it?” “As for the rise in prices, there are many complex reasons for this... Why, in this case, does the bulletin mention only the Jews, why does it not speak of the Russians and even others?” Indeed, prices had soared all over Russia. And the same goes for the disappearance of coins. “And it is in a bulletin of the Department of Police that one can read all this!”⁸⁷

Nothing to object.

Easy to write a bulletin in the back of an office, but very unpleasant to respond to a raging Parliament. Yet this was what its author, Kafafov, had to resolve. He defended himself: the bulletin did not contain any directive, it was not addressed to the population, but to local authorities, for information and not for action; it aroused passions only after being sold by “timorous” civil servants and made public from the rostrum. How strange, continued Kafafov: we are not talking here of other confidential bulletins which have also, probably, been leaked; thus, as early as May 1915, he had himself initialled one of this order: “There is a rise in hatred towards Jews in certain categories of the population of the Empire”, and the Department “demands that the most energetic measures be taken in order to prevent any demonstration going in this direction”, any act of violence of the population directed against the Jews, “to take the most vigorous measures to stifle in the bud the propaganda that begins to develop in certain places, to prevent it from leading to outbreaks of pogroms.” And even, a month earlier, at the beginning of February, this directive sent to Poltava: reinforce surveillance so as to “be able to prevent in time any attempt to pogrom against the Jews.”⁸⁸

And to complain: how is it that that bulletins such as *these* do not interest public opinion, that, those, they are allowed to pass in the utmost silence?

In his heated speech, Shingaryov immediately warned the Duma against the danger of “engaging in debates on the boundless ocean of the Jewish question.” But that was what happened because of the publicity reserved for this bulletin. Moreover, Shingaryov himself pushed clumsily in this direction, abandoning the ground for the defence of the Jews to declare that the real traitors were the Russians: Sukhomlinov*, Myasoedov, and General Grigoriev, who had shamefully capitulated at Kovno.⁸⁹

87 Stenographic Record of the Debates of the Fourth Duma, 8 March 1916, pp. 3037-3040.

88 *Ibidem*, pp. 3137-3141.

* Minister of War ineffective from 1909 to 1915, arrested on 3 May 1916, released in November through Rasputin.

89 *Ibidem*, pp. 3036-3037.

This provoked a reaction. Markov** objected that he had no right to speak of Sukhomlinov, the latter being for the moment only accused. (The Progressive Bloc was successful in the Sukhomlinov affair, but at the end of the Provisional Government, it itself had to admit that time had been wasted, that there had been no treason there.) Myasoedov had already been convicted and executed (but some facts may suggest that it was also a fabricated affair); Markov limited himself to adding that “he had been hanged in the company of six Jewish spies” (what I did not know: Myasoedov had been judged alone) and that, here is one to six, that was the report.⁹⁰

Among certain proposals contained in the programme that the Progressive Bloc had succeeded in putting together in August 1915, “the autonomy of Poland” seemed somewhat fantastical insofar as it was entirely in the hands of the Germans; “the equality of rights for peasants” did not have to be demanded of the government, because Stolypin had made it happen and it was precisely the Duma which did not endorse it, positing precisely as a condition the simultaneous equality of the Jews; so much so that “the gradual introduction of a process of reducing the limitations of rights imposed on Jews”—even though the evasiveness of this formulation was obvious—nevertheless became the main proposal of the programme of the Bloc. The latter included Jewish deputies⁹¹ and the Yiddish press reported: “The Jewish community wishes the Progressive Bloc a good wind!”

And now, after two years of an exhausting war, heavy losses on the front and a feverish agitation in the rear, the extreme right waved its admonitions: “You have understood that you must explain yourself before the people over your silence about the military superiority of the Germans, your silence about the fight against the soaring prices, and your excessive zeal to want to grant equal rights to the Jews!” That is what you are demanding “of the government, at the present moment, in the midst of war,—and if it does not meet these demands you blow it off and recognise only one government, the one that will give equality to the Jews!” But “we are surely not going to give equality now, just now that everyone is white-hot against the Jews; in doing so, you only raise public opinion against these unfortunates.”⁹²

Deputy Friedman refutes the claim that the people are at the height of exasperation: “In the tragic context of the oppression of the Jews, however, there is a glimmer of hope, and I do not want to ignore it: it is the attitude of the Russian populations of the interior provinces towards the Jewish refugees who arrive there.” These Jewish refugees “receive help and hospitality”. It is “the pledge of our future, our fusion with the Russian people.” But he insists that the responsibility for all the misfortunes of the Jews rests with the government, and he lays his accusations at the

** Nikolai Markov (1876-1945), called at the Duma “Markov-II” to distinguish him from homonyms. Leader of the extreme right. In November 1918, he went to Finland, then to Berlin and Paris where he directed a monarchist revue, *The Two Headed Eagle*. He moved to Germany in 1936, where he directed an anti-Semitic publication in Russian. Died in Wiesbaden.

90 *Ibidem*, p. 5064.

91 SJE, t. 7, p. 359.

92 Stenographic Record of the Debates of the Fourth Duma, February 1916, p. 1456 and 28-29 February 1916, p. 2471.

highest level: “There was never a pogrom when the government did not want it.” Through the members of the Duma, “I am addressing the 170 million inhabitants of Russia...: they want to use your hands to lift the knife on the Jewish people of Russia!”⁹³

To this was replied: do the deputies of the Duma only know what is thought of in the country? “The country does not write in Jewish newspapers, the country suffers, works... it is bogged down in the trenches, it is there, the country, and not in the Jewish newspapers where work John Does obeying mysterious guidelines.” It was even said, “That the press is controlled by the government is an evil, but there is an even greater evil: that the press is controlled by the enemies of the Russian State!”⁹⁴

As Shingaryov had sensed, the liberal majority of the Duma was, now, no longer interested in prolonging the debate on the Jewish question. But the process was on and nothing could stop it. And it was a never-ending series of speeches that came in the middle of the other cases to be dealt with for four months until the end of the fall session.

The right accused the Progressive Bloc: no, the Duma was not going to tackle the problem of rising prices! “You are not going to fight with the banks, the unions, against strikes in the industry, because that would be tantamount to fighting against the Jews.” Meanwhile, the Reformist Municipality of Petrograd “gave the town supply to two Israelites, Levenson and Lesman: the first the meat supply, the second the food shops—although he had illegally sold flour to Finland. Other examples of suppliers artificially inflating prices are given.⁹⁵ (None of the deputies took it upon himself to defend these speculators.)

After that, it is impossible that the question not come up for discussion, so current during these years of war, of the *numerus clausus*! As we have seen, it had been re-established after the revolution of 1905, but was gradually mitigated by the common practice of day school in high schools and the authorisation given to Jews who had completed their medical studies abroad to pass the State diploma in Russia; other measures were taken in this direction—but not the abrogation pure and simple—in 1915, when the Pale of Settlement was abolished. P. N. Ignatiev, Minister of Public Instruction in 1915–1916, also reduced the *numerus clausus* in higher education institutions.

And in the spring of 1916, the walls of the Duma echoed the debate on this issue at length. The statistics of the Ministry of Education are examined, and Professor Levachev, deputy of Odessa, states that the provisions of the Council of Ministers (authorising the derogatory admission of children of Jews called up for military service) have been arbitrarily extended by the Ministry of Education to the

⁹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 1413–1414, 1421, 1422.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 1453–1454, 2477.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 4518.

children of Zemgor employees, evacuation agencies, hospitals, as well as persons declaring themselves [deceitfully] dependent on a parent called up for military service. Thus, of the 586 students admitted in 1915 in the first year of medicine at the University of Odessa, “391 are Jews”, that is to say two thirds, and that “only one third remain for the other nationalities.” At the University of Rostov-on-Don: 81% of Jewish students at the Faculty of Law, 56% at the Faculty of Medicine, and 54% at the Faculty of Sciences.⁹⁶

Gurevich replies to Levachev: this is proof that the *numerus clausus* is useless! “What is the use of the *numerus clausus*, when even this year, when the Jews benefited from a higher than normal arrangement, there was enough room to welcome all Christians who wanted to enter the university?” What do you want—empty classrooms? Little Germany has a large number of Jewish teachers, yet it does not die of it!⁹⁷

Markov's objection: “Universities are empty [because Russian students are at war, and they send [to the universities] masses of Jews.” “Escaping military service,” the Jews “have overwhelmed the University of Petrograd and, thanks to that, will swell the ranks of the Russian intelligentsia... This phenomenon... is detrimental to the Russian people, even destructive,” because every people “is subject to the power of its intelligentsia.” “The Russians must protect their elites, their intelligentsia, their officials, their government; the latter must be Russian.”⁹⁸

Six months later, in the autumn of 1916, Friedman harped on about this by asking the Duma the following question: “Thus it would be better for our universities to remain empty... it would be better for Russia to find itself without an intellectual elite rather than admit Jews in too great numbers?”⁹⁹

On the one hand, Gurevitch was obviously right: why should the classrooms have been left empty? Let each one do what he has to do. But, in asking the question in these terms, did he not comfort the suspicions and bitterness of the right: therefore, we do not work *together*? One group to make war, the other to study?

(My father, for example—he interrupted his studies at Moscow University and joined the army as a volunteer. It seemed at the time that there was no alternative: to not go to the front would have been dishonourable. Who, among these young Russian volunteers, and even among the professors who remained in the universities, understood that the future of the country was not only played on the battlefields? No one understood it neither in Russia, nor in Europe.)

In the spring of 1916, the debate on the Jewish question was suspended on the grounds that it provoked undesirable agitation in public opinion. But the

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 3360–3363.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3392.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 1456, 3421, 5065.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

problem of nationalities was put back on the agenda by an amendment to the law on township Zemstvos. The creation of this new administrative structure was discussed during the winter of 1916–17 during the last months of the existence of the Duma. And then one fine day, when the main speakers had gone for refreshments or had returned to their penates, and that there was little left for the sitting than half of the well-behaved deputies, a peasant of Viatka, named Tarassov, managed to sneak into the tribune. Timidly, he spoke, striving to make the members of the house understand the problem of the amendment: it provides that “everyone is admitted, and the Jews, that is, and the Germans, all those who will come to our township. And to those, what will be their rights? These people who are going to be registered [in our township]... but they are going to take places, and the peasants, no one takes care of them... If it is a Jew who runs the township administration and his wife who is secretary, then the peasants, them, what are their rights?... What is going to happen, where will the peasants be?... And when our valiant warriors return, what will they be entitled to? To stay in the back; but during the war, it was on the front line that they were, the peasants... Do not make amendments that contradict the practical reality of the peasant life, do not give the right to the Jews and the Germans to participate in the elections of the township zemstvos, for they are peoples who will bring nothing useful; on the contrary, they will greatly harm and there will be disorders across the country. We peasants, we are not going to submit to these nationalities.”¹⁰⁰

But in the meantime, the campaign for equal rights for Jews was in full swing. It now enjoyed the support of organisations that had not previously been concerned with the issue, such as the Gvozdev Central Workers' Group*, which represented the interests of the Russian proletariat. In the spring of 1916, the Workers' Group claimed to be informed that “the reaction [implied: the government and administration of the Ministry of the Interior] is openly preparing a pogrom against the Jews throughout Russia”. And Kozma Gvozdev repeated this nonsense at the Congress of Military-Industrial Committees.—In March 1916, in a letter to Rodzianko**, the Workers' Group protested against the suspension of the debate on the Jewish question in the Duma; And the same Group accused the Duma itself of complacency towards the anti-Semites: “The attitude of the majority at the meeting of 10 March is *de facto* to give its direct support and to reinforce the policy of anti-Jewish pogroms led by the power... By its support of the militant anti-Semitism of the ruling circles, the majority in the Duma is a serious blow to the work of national defence.”¹⁰¹ (They had not agreed, they had not realised that in the Duma it was precisely the left who needed to end the debate.)—The workers also benefited from the support of “Jewish groups” who, according to a report by the Security

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 1069–1071.

* Also said Kouzma Gvozdiou (born in 1883), a worker, a Menshevik leader, a defender, president of the Central Workers' Group; After February, member of the Central Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, Minister of Labour of the Fourth Provisional Government. In camp or in prison from 1930 onwards.

** President of the Duma from 1911 to 1917.

¹⁰¹ K istorii gvosdevchtchiny (Contribution to the history of the Gvozdev movement), Krasnyy arkhiv. 1934, t. 67, p. 52.

Department in October 1916, “have overwhelmed the capital and, without belonging to any party, are pursuing a policy violently hostile to the power.”¹⁰²

And the power in all this? Without direct evidence, it can be assumed that within the ministerial teams that succeeded each other in 1916, the decision to proclaim equal rights for the Jews was seriously considered. This had been mentioned more than once by Protopopov, who had already succeeded, it seems, in turning Nicholas II in this direction. (Protopopov also had an interest in going quickly to cut short the campaign that the left had set in motion against him.)—And General Globachev, who was the last to direct the Department of Security before the revolution, writes in his memoirs, in the words of Dobrovolsky, who was also the last Minister of Justice of the monarchy: “The bill on equal rights for the Jews was already ready [in the months that preceded the revolution] and, in all likelihood, the law would have been promulgated for the 1917 Easter celebrations.”¹⁰³

But in 1917, the Easter celebrations were to take place under a completely different system. The ardent aspirations of our radicals and liberals would then have come true.

“Everything for victory!”—Yes, but “not with that power!” Public opinion, both among the Russians and among the Jews, as well as the press, all were entirely directed towards Victory, were the first to claim it,—only, *not with this government! Not with this tsar!* All were still persuaded of the correctness of the simple and brilliant reasoning they had held at the beginning of the war: before it ends (because afterwards it would be more difficult) and by winning a victory over victory on the Germans, to throw down the tsar and change the political regime.

And that is when the equal rights for the Jews would come.

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We have examined in many ways the circumstances in which took place one hundred and twenty years of common life between Russians and Jews within the same State. Among the difficulties, some have found a solution over time, others emerged and increased in the course of the years prior to the spring of 1917. But the evolving nature of the processes in motion visibly taking over and promised a constructive future.

And it was at that moment that a blast disintegrated the political and social system of Russia—and thus the fruits of evolution, but also the military resistance to

102 Politikchkoye polojenie Rossii nakanoune Fevral'skoi revolioutsii (Political situation in Russia on the eve of the February Revolution), Krasny arkhiv, 1926, t. 17, p. 14.

103 K. I. Globatchev, Pravda o russkoi revoliutsii: Vospominania byvchevo Nachalnika Petrogradskovo Okhrannovo Otdelenia. Dekabr 1922 (The truth about the Russian revolution: memoirs of the former head of the Petrograd Security Department, December 1922), Khranenie Koloumbiiskovo ouniversiteta, machinopis, p. 41.

the enemy, paid for with so much blood, and finally the prospects for a future of fulfilment: it was the revolution of February.