Chapter 6

In the Russian Revolutionary Movement

In the Russia of the 60–70s of the nineteenth century, when reforms moved rapidly, there were no economic or social motives for a far-reaching revolutionary movement. Yet it was indeed under Alexander II, from the beginning of his reforming work, that this movement was born, as the prematurely-ripened fruit of ideology: in 1861 there were student demonstrations in Saint Petersburg; in 1862, violent fires of criminal origin in Saint Petersburg as well, and the sanguinary proclamation of Young Russia* (Молодая Россия); in 1866, Karakozov’s** gunshot, the prodromes of the terrorist era, half a century in advance.

And it was also under Alexander II, when the restrictions on the rights of the Jews were so relaxed, that Jewish names appeared among the revolutionaries. Neither in the circles of Stankievich***, Herzen**** and Ogariov***** nor in that of Petrachevsky, there had been only one Jew. (We do not speak here of Poland.) But at

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** Dmitri Vladimirovich Karakozov (1840–1866) fired a shot at Alexander II on 4/16 April 1866: the first in a long series of attacks. Condemned to death and executed.
*** Nikolai Vladimirovich Stankevich (1813–1840): philosopher and poet, humanist. Founded in 1831 the “Stankevich circle” where great intellectuals such as Bielinsky, Aksakov, Granovsky, Katkov, etc. meet. Emigrated in 1837.
the student demonstrations of 1861 Mikhoels, Outine* and Guen will participate. And we shall find Outine in the circle of Nechayev”.

The participation of the Jews in the Russian revolutionary movement must get our attention; indeed, radical revolutionary action became a more and more widespread form of activity among Jewish youth. The Jewish revolutionary movement is a qualitatively important component of the Russian revolutionary movement in general. As for the ratio of Jewish and Russian revolutionaries over the years, it surprises us. Of course, if in the following pages we speak mainly of Jews, this in no way implies that there was not a large number of influential revolutionaries among the Russians: our focus is warranted by the subject of our study.

In fact, until the early 70s, only a very small number of Jews had joined the revolutionary movement, and in secondary roles at that. (In part, no doubt, because there were still very few Jews among the students.) One learns, for example, that Leon Deutsch at the age of ten was outraged about Karakozov’s gunshot because he felt “patriotic”. Similarly, few Jews adhered to the Russian nihilism of the 60s that, nevertheless, by their rationalism, they assimilated easily. “Nihilism has played an even more beneficial role in Jewish student youth than in Christian youth.”

However, as early as the early 70s, the circle of young Jews of the rabbinical school in Vilnius began to play an important role. (Among them, V. Yokhelson, whom we mention later; and the well-known terrorist A. Zundelevich—both brilliant pupils, destined to be excellent rabbis, A. Liebermann, future editor of La Pravda of Vienna, and Anna Einstein, Maxim Romm, Finkelstein.) This circle was influential because it was in close contact with the “smugglers”*** and permitted clandestine literature, as well as illegal immigrants themselves, to cross the border.

It was in 1868, after high school, that Mark Natanson entered the Academy of Medicine and Surgery (which would become the Academy of Military Medicine). He will be an organiser and a leading figure in the revolutionary movement. Soon, with

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** Sergei Gennadyevich Nechayev (1847–1882): revolutionary and Russian conspirator, author of the famous Catechism of the Revolutionary. Organised in 1869 the murder of the student Ivanov, supposedly a traitor to the Cause (which inspired Dostoevsky’s The Demons). Leaves abroad. Delivered by Switzerland to Russia, sentenced to twenty years of imprisonment. Dies in prison.

1 L. Deutsch, King evreiev v rousskom revoliutsionnom dvijenii (The role of the Jews in the Russian revolutionary movement), vol. 1, 2nd ed., M.L., GIZ, 1925, pp. 20–22.

*** People who succeed in passing, illegally through the borders, revolutionary writings banned in Russia.

the young student Olga Schleisner, his future wife (whom Tikhomirov calls “the second Sophia Perovskaya”, although at the time she was rather the first **), he laid the foundations of a system of so-called “pedagogical” circles, that is to say of propaganda (“preparatory, cultural and revolutionary work with intellectual youth”)3 in several large cities. (These circles were wrongly dubbed “Tchaikovskyists”, named after one of their less influential members, N.V. Tchaikovsky.) Natanson distinguished himself very quickly and resolutely from the circle of Nechayev (and he did not hesitate, subsequently, to present his views to the examining magistrate). In 1872 he went to Zurich with Pierre Lavrov, the principal representative of the “current of pacific propaganda”, which rejected the rebellion; Natanson wanted to establish a permanent revolutionary organ there. In the same year he was sent to Shenkursk in close exile and, through the intercession of his father-in-law, the father of Olga Schleiser, he was transferred to Voronezh, then Finland, and finally released to Saint Petersburg. He found there nothing but discouragement, dilapidation, inertia. He endeavoured to visit the disunited groups, to connect them, to weld them, and thus founded the first Land and Freedom organisation and spending hundreds of thousands of Rubles.

Among the principal organisers of Russian populism, Natanson is the most eminent revolutionary. It was in his wake that the famous Leon Deutsch appeared; As for the ironclad populist Alexander Mikhailov, he was a disciple of “Mark the Wise”. Natanson knew many revolutionaries personally. Neither an orator nor a writer, he was a born organiser, endowed with an astonishing quality: he did not regard opinions and ideology, he did not enter into any theoretical discussions with anyone, he was in accord with all tendencies (with the exception of the extremist positions of Tkachev, Lenin’s predecessor), placed each and everyone where they could be useful. In those years when Bakunin supporters and Lavrov supporters were irreconcilable, Natanson proposed to put an end to “discussions about the music of the future” and to focus instead on the real needs of the cause. It was he who, in the summer of 1876, organised the sensational escape of Piotr Kropotkin * on the “Barbarian”, that half-blood who would often be spoken of. In December of the same year, he conceived and set up the first public meeting in front of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan, at the end of the Mass, on the day of Saint Nicholas: all the revolutionaries gathered there and for the first time, the red flag of Land and Liberty was displayed. Natanson was arrested in 1877, sentenced to three years’ detention, then relegated to Yakutia and dismissed from revolutionary action until 1890.4

There were a number of Jews in the circle of “Tchaikovskyists” in Saint Petersburg as well as in its branches in Moscow, Kiev, Odessa. (In Kiev, notably, P.B.

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3 O. V. Aptekman, Dvc doroguiie teni (Two Dear Shadows); Byloie: newspaper Posviaschionnyi istorii osvoboditclnogo dvijeniia (Past: a review of the history of the liberation movement), M. 1921, No. 16, p. 9.
* Piotr Lavrovich Lavrov (1823–1900): famous theorist of populism. Emigrated in 1870. Published the magazine Vperiod (Forward).
Axelrod, whom we have already mentioned, the future Danish publisher and
diplomat Grigori Gurevitch, future teachers Semion Lourie and Leiser Lœwenthal,
his brother Nahman Lœwenthal, and the two Kaminer sisters.) As for the first
Nihilist circle of Leon Deutsch in Kiev, it was “constituted exclusively of young Jewish
students”\(^5\). After the demonstration in front of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan,
three Jews were tried, but not Natanson himself. At the trial of the “fifty”\(^*\) which took
place in the summer of 1877 in Moscow, several Jews were charged for spreading
propaganda among factory workers. At the trial of the “one hundred and ninety-
three”\(^**\), there were thirteen Jews accused. Among the early populists, we can also
cite Lossif Aptekman and Alexander Khotinsky, who were highly influential.\(^6\)

Natanson’s idea was that revolutionaries should involve the people
(peasants) and be for them like lay spiritual guides. This “march to the people”,
which has become so famous since then, began in 1873 in the “dolgushinian” circle
(Dolgushin, Dmokhovsky, Gamov, etc.) where no Jews were counted. Later, the Jews
also “went to the people.” (The opposite also happened: in Odessa, P. Axelrod tried to
attract Jeliabov\(^***\) in a secret revolutionary organisation, but he refused: at the time,
he was still a Kulturtrasser.) In the mid-70s, there were only about twenty of these
“populists”, all or almost all Lavrov and not Bakunin. (Only the most extreme were
listening to calls for the insurrection of Bakunin, such as Deutsch, who, with the help
of Stefanovitch, had raised the “Tchiguirine revolt”\(^****\) by having pushed the peasants
into thinking that the tsar, surrounded by the enemy, had the people saying: turn
back all these authorities, seize the land, and establish a regime of freedom!)

It is interesting to note that almost no Jewish revolutionary launched into the
revolution because of poverty, but most of them came from wealthy families. (In the
three volumes of the Russian Jewish Encyclopædia there is no shortage of examples.)
Only Paul Axelrod came from a very poor family, and, as we have already said, he had
been sent by the Kahal to an institution solely to supplement the established quota.
(From there, very naturally, he entered the gymnasium of Mogilev, then the high
school of Nejine.) Came from wealthy merchant environments: Natanson, Deutsch,
Aptekman (whose family had many Talmudists, doctors of the law—including all his
uncles. Khotinsky, Gurevitch, Semion Lourie (whose family, even in this milieu, was
considered “aristocratic”, “little Simon was also destined to be a rabbi”, but under the
influence of the Enlightenment, his father, Gerts Lourie, had entrusted his son to
college to become a professor); the first Italian Marxist, Anne Rosenstein
(surrounded from childhood by governesses speaking several languages), the tragic
figures of Moses Rabinovitch and Betty Kaminskaya, Felicie Cheftel, Joseph Guetsov,

\(^5\) Ibidem, pp. 20, 130, 139.
\(^*\) Held in March 1877, also said trial of “Muscovites”, of which sixteen women.
\(^**\) Held from October 1877 to February 1878: the most important political trial of Russia before 1917
(there were four thousand arrests among the populists of the “march to the people”).
\(^6\) Ibidem, pp. 33, 86–88, 185.
\(^***\) Andrei Ivanovich Jeliabov (1851–1881): one of the founders of The Will of the People. Named the
“Russian Robespierre”. Organiser of the attacks against Alexander II. Executed in April 1881.
\(^****\) In 1876–77. A group of revolutionary populists tried to raise a peasant insurrection in the
district of Tchiguirine in Ukraine.
member of the Black Repartition, among many others. And then again Khrystyna (Khasia) Grinberg, “of a wealthy traditionalist merchant family”, who in 1880 joined the Will of the People: her dwelling housed clandestine meetings, she was an accomplice in the attacks on Alexander II, and even became in 1882 the owner of a clandestine dynamite factory—then was condemned to deportation. Neither did Fanny Moreinis come from a poor family; she also “participated in the preparations of attacks against the Emperor Alexander II”, and spent two years in the prison of Kara. Some came from families of rabbis, such as the future doctor of philosophy Lioubov Axelrod or Ida Axelrod. There were also families of the petty bourgeoisie, but wealthy enough to put their children through college, such as Aizik Aronchik (after college, he entered the School of Engineers of Saint Petersburg, which he soon abandoned to embark in revolutionary activities), Alexander Bibergal, Vladimir Bogoraz, Lazarus Goldenberg, the Löwenthal brothers. Often, mention is made in the biographies of the aforementioned, of the Academy of Military Medicine, notably in those of Natanson, Bibergal, Isaac Pavlovsky (future counterrevolutionary *), M. Rabinovitch, A. Khotinsky, Solomon Chudnovsky, Solomon Aronson (who happened to be involved in these circles), among others. 

Therefore it was not material need that drove them, but the strength of their convictions.

It is not without interest to note that in these Jewish families the adhesion of young people to the revolution has rarely—or not at all—provoked a break between “fathers and sons”, between parents and their children. “The ‘fathers’ did not go after the ‘sons’ very much, as was then the case in Christian families. (Although Gesya Gelfman had to leave her family, a traditional Old Alliance family, in secret.) The “fathers” were often very far from opposing their children. Thus Guerz Lourie, as well as Isaac Kaminer, a doctor from Kiev: the whole family participated in the revolutionary movement of the 70s, and himself, as a “sympathiser..., rendered great service” to the revolutionaries; three of them became the husbands of his daughters. (In the 1990s, he joined the Zionist movement and became the friend of Achad-Haam. **)

Neither can we attribute anti-Russian motivations to these early Jewish revolutionaries, as some do in Russia today. In no way!

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8 RJE, t. 2, p. 309.
* Isaac Yakovlevich Pavlovsky, known as I. Yakovlev: journalist, one of the accused of the trial of the one hundred and ninety-three. Emigre, protected by Turgenev, became the correspondent in Paris of the New Times.
10 Deutsch, pp. 18, 149, 151, 154.
** Ahad-Haam (ie “One of his people”), says Asher Finzberg: Yiddish writer very involved in the Zionist movement.
It all began with the same “nihilism” of the 60s. “Having initiated itself to Russian education and to ‘goy’ culture”, having been imbued with Russian literature, “Jewish youth was quick to join the most progressive movement of the time”, nihilism, and with an ease all the greater as it broke with the prescriptions of the past. Even “the most fanatical of the students of a yeshiva, immersed in the study of the Talmud,” after “two or three minutes of conversation with a nihilist”, broke with the “patriarchal mode of thought”. “He [the Jew, even pious] had only barely grazed the surface of ‘goy’ culture, he had only carried out a breach in his vision of the traditional world, but already he was able to go far, very far, to the extremes.” These young men were suddenly gripped by the great universal ideals, dreaming of seeing all men become brothers and all enjoying the same prosperity. The task was sublime: to liberate mankind from misery and slavery!11

And there played the role of Russian literature. Pavel Axelrod, in high school, had as his teachers Turgenev, Bielinsky, Dobrolyubov (and later Lassalle* who would make him turn to the revolution). Aptekman was fond of Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Pissarev (and also Bukle). Lazare Goldenberg, too, had read and re-read Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, Pissarev, Nekrasov—and Rudin**, who died on the barricades, was his hero. Solomon Tchudnovsky, a great admirer of Pissarev, wept when he died. The nihilism of Semion Lourie was born of Russian literature, he had fed on it. This was the case for a very large number—the list would be too long.

But today, a century later, there are few who remember the atmosphere of those years. No serious political action was taking place in the “street of the Jews”, as it was then called, while, in the “Street of the Russians”, populism was rising. It was quite simple: it was enough to “sink, and merge into the movement of Russian liberation”12! Now this fusion was more easily facilitated, accelerated by Russian literature and the writings of radical publicists.

By turning to the Russian world, these young people turned away from the Jewish world. “Many of them conceived hostility and disdain to the Judaism of their fathers, just like towards a parasitic anomaly.”13 In the 70s “there were small groups of radical Jewish youths who, in the name of the ideals of populism, moved more and more away from their people..., began to assimilate vigorously and to appropriate the Russian national spirit.”14 Until the mid-70s, the socialist Jews did not consider it necessary to do political work with their fellow men, because, they thought, the Jews have never possessed land and thus cannot assimilate socialist ideas. The Jews never

11 Ibidem, pp. 17–18.
* Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864): philosopher, economist, jurist and famous German socialist.
** Rudin, the hero of Turgenev’s novel, Rudin (1856), whom the author put to death on the barricades in Paris in 1848.
had peasants of their own. “None of the Jewish revolutionaries of the 70s could conceive of the idea of acting for one’s own nation alone.” It was clear that one only acted in the dominant language and only for the Russian peasants. “For us... there were no Jewish workers. We looked at them with the eyes of russifiers: the Jew must assimilate completely with the native population”; even artisans were regarded as potential exploiters, since they had apprentices and employees. In fact, Russian workers and craftsmen were not accorded any importance as an autonomous class: they existed only as future socialists who would facilitate work in the peasant world.\textsuperscript{15}

Assimilation once accepted, these young people, by their situation, naturally tended towards radicalism, having lost on this new soil the solid conservative roots of their former environment.

“We were preparing to go to the people and, of course, to the Russian people. We deny the Jewish religion, like any other religion; we considered our jargon an artificial language, and Hebrew a dead language... We were sincere assimilators and we saw in the Russian education and culture salvation for the Jews... Why then did we seek to act among the Russian people, not the Jewish people? It comes from the fact that we had become strangers to the spiritual culture of the Jews of Russia and that we rejected their thinkers who belonged to a traditionalist bourgeoisie... from the ranks of which we had left ourselves... We thought that, when the Russian people would be freed from the despotism and yoke of the ruling classes, the economic and political freedom of all the peoples of Russia, including the Jewish people, would arise. And it must be admitted that Russian literature has also somewhat inculcated the idea that the Jewish people were not a people but a parasitic class.”\textsuperscript{16}

Also came into play the feeling of debt owed to the people of Great Russia, as well as “the faith of the populist rebels in the imminence of a popular Insurrection.”\textsuperscript{17} In the 70s, “the Jewish intellectual youth... ‘went to the people’ in the hope of launching, with its feeble hands, the peasant revolution in Russia.”\textsuperscript{18} As Aptekman writes, Natanson, “like the hero of the Mtsyri of Lermontov,

\textit{Knew the hold of only one thought,  
lived only one, but burning passion.}

This thought was the happiness of the people; this passion, the struggle for liberation.”\textsuperscript{19} Aptekman himself, as depicted by Deutsch, was “emaciated, of small

\textsuperscript{15} Deutsch, pp. 56, 67–68.  
\textsuperscript{16} Iohelson, Byloie, 1918, No. 13, pp. 56–57.  
\textsuperscript{17} Ibidem, pp. 61, 66.  
\textsuperscript{19} Aptekman. Byloie, 1921, No. 16, pp. 11–12.
stature, pale complexion,” “with very pronounced national features”; having become a village nurse, he announced socialism to the peasants through the Gospel.  

It was a little under the influence of their predecessors, the members of the Dolgouchin circle, whom inscribed on the branches of the crucifix: “In the name of Christ, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” and almost all preached the Gospel, that the first Jewish populists turned to Christianity, which they used as a support point and as an instrument. Aptekman writes about himself: “I have converted to Christianity by a movement from the heart and love for Christ.” (Not to be confused with the motives of Tan Bogoraz, who in the 80s had converted to Christianity “to escape the vexations of his Jewish origin.”) But, adds Aptekman, “in order to give oneself to the people, there is no need to repent”: with regard to the Russian people, “I had no trace of repentance. Moreover, where could it have come from? Is it not rather for me, the descendant of an oppressed nation, to demand the settlement of this dealing, instead of paying the repayment of some, I am not sure which, fantastic loan? Nor have I observed this feeling of repentance among my comrades of the nobility who were walking with me on the same path.”

Let us note in this connection that the idea of a rapprochement between the desired socialism and historical Christianity was not unconnected with many Russian revolutionaries at the time, and as justification for their action, and as a convenient tactical procedure. V. V. Flerovsky wrote: “I always had in mind the comparison between this youth who was preparing for action and the first Christians.” And, immediately after, the next step: “By constantly turning this idea into my head, I have come to the conviction that we will reach our goal only by one means—by creating a new religion... It is necessary to teach the people to devote all their forces to oneself exclusively... I wanted to create the religion of brotherhood”— and the young disciples of Flerovsky tried to “lead the experiment by wondering how a religion that would have neither God nor saints would be received by the people.”

His disciple Gamov, from the circle of Dolgouchine, wrote even more crudely: “We must invent a religion that would be against the tsar and the government... We must write a catechism and prayers in this spirit.”

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20 Deutsch, pp. 183–185
21 O. V. Aptekman, Flerovsky-Bervi i kroujok Dolgouchina (Bervi-Flerovsky and the circle of Dolgouchine), Byloie, 1922, No. 18, p. 63.
22 JE, t. 4, p. 714.
* Molokanes or “milk drinkers” (they consume milk during Lent) are a Russian sect that goes back to the eighteenth century. They were persecuted, exiled in 1800 north of the Sea of Azov, and some immigrated to the United States.
23 Aptekman, Byloie, 1922, No. 18, p. 63.
** Vassili Vasilievich Bervi-Flerovsky (1829–1918): Russian publicist, sociologist, economist. Participated in the populism of the 60s. In exile from 1862 to 1887. Wrote the Notes of a Revolutionary Utopian.
24 Ibidem*. 
The revolutionary action of the Jews in Russia is also explained in another way. We find it exposed and then refuted by A. Srebrennikov: “There is a view that if, through the reforms of the years 1860–1863, the ‘Pale of Settlement’ had been abolished, our whole history would have unfolded otherwise... If Alexander II had abolished the ‘Pale of Settlement’, there would have been neither the Bund nor Trotskyism!” Then he mentioned the internationalist and socialist ideas that flowed from the West, and wrote: “If the suppression of the Pale of Settlement had been of capital importance to them, all their struggle would have stretched towards it. Now they were occupied with everything else: they dreamed of overthrowing tsarism!”

And, one after the other, driven by the same passion, they abandoned their studies (notably the Academy of Military Medicine) to “go to the people”. Every diploma was marked with the seal of infamy as a means of exploitation of the people. They renounced any career, and some broke with their families. For them, “every day not put to good use [constitutes] an irreparable loss, criminal for the realisation of the well-being and happiness of the disinherited masses.”

But in order to “go to the people”, it was necessary to “make oneself simple”, both internally, for oneself, and practically, “to inspire confidence to the masses of the people, one had to infiltrate it under the guise of a workman or a moujik.” However, writes Deutsch, how can you go to the people, be heard and be believed, when you are betrayed by your language, your appearance and your manners? And still, to seduce the listeners, you must throw jokes and good words in popular language! And we must also be skilful in the work of the fields, so painful to townspeople. For this reason, Khotinsky worked on the farm with his brother, and worked there as a ploughman. The Lœwenthal brothers learned shoemaking and carpentry. Betty Kamenskaya entered as a worker in a spinning mill to a very hard position. Many became caregivers. (Deutsch writes that, on the whole, other activities were better suited to these revolutionary Jews: work within factions, conspiracy, communications, typography, border-crossing.)

The “march to the people” began with short visits, stays of a few months—a “fluid” march. At first, they relied only on the work of agitation. It was imagined that it would suffice to convince the peasants to open their eyes to the regime in power and the exploitation of the masses, and to promise that the land and the instruments of production would become the property of all.

* The Bund (in Yiddish: the Union): the “General Union of Jewish Workers of Lithuania, Poland and Russia”, founded in Vilnius in 1897, related to the SD party in 1898–1903; then again in 1906–1918 close to the Mensheviks. Dissolved in 1921.
27 Iohelson, Byloie, 1918, No. 13, p. 74.
28 Deutsch, pp. 34–37, 183.
In fact, this whole “march to the people” of the populists ended in failure. And not only because of some inadvertent gunshot directed against the Tsar (Solovyov, 1879), which obliged them all to flee the country and to hide very far from the cities. But above all because the peasants, perfectly deaf to their preaching, were even sometimes ready to hand them over to the authorities. The populists, the Russians (hardly more fortunate) like the Jews, lost “the faith... in a spontaneous revolutionary will and in the socialist instincts of the peasantry”, and “transformed into impenitent pessimists.”

Clandestine action, however, worked better. Three residents of Minsk, Lossif Guetsov, Saul Levkov, and Saul Grinfest, succeeded in setting up a clandestine press in their city that would serve the country as a whole. It survived until 1881. It was there that was printed in gold letters the leaflet on “the execution of Alexander II”. It printed the newspaper *The Black Repartition*, and then the proclamations of The Will of the People. Deutsche referred to them as “peaceful propagandists”. Apparently, the term “peaceful” embraced everything that was not bombing—smuggling, illegal border-crossing, and even the call to avoid paying taxes (appeal to the peasants of Lazare Goldenberg).

Many of these Jewish revolutionaries were heavily condemned (heavily, even by the measures of our time). Some benefited from a reduction of their punishment—like Semion Lourie, thanks to his father who obtained for him a less severe regime in prison. There was also public opinion, which leaned towards indulgence. Aptekman tells us that in 1881—after the assassination of Alexander II—“they lived relatively freely in the prison of Krasnoyarsk” where “the director of the prison, a real wild beast, was suddenly tamed and gave us all kinds of permissions to contact the deportees and our friends.” Then “we were received in transit prisons not as detainees, but as noble captives”; “the prison director came in, accompanied by soldiers carrying trays with tea, biscuits, jam for everyone, and, as a bonus, a small glass of vodka. Was it not idyllic? We were touched.”

The biographies of these early populists reveal a certain exaltation, a certain lack of mental equilibrium. Leo Deutsch testifies: Leon Zlatopolsky, a terrorist, “was not a mentally balanced person”. Aptekman himself, in his cell, after his arrest, “was not far from madness, as his nerves were shaken.” Betty Kamenskaya, “... from the second month of detention... lost her mind”; she was transferred to the hospital, then her father, a merchant, took her back on bail. Having read in the indictment that she would not be brought before the court, she wanted to tell the prosecutor that she was in good health and could appear; but soon after, she swallowed poison and died. Moses Rabinovitch, in his cell, “had hallucinations... his nerves were exhausted”; he resolved to feign repentance, to name those whom the instruction

* *The Black Repartition*, a clandestine newspaper bearing the same name as the organisation, which knew five issues in 1880-1881 Minsk-Geneva.
30 *Aptekman*, Byloie. 1922, No. 18. pp. 73, 75.
31 *Deutsch*, pp. 38, 41, 94, 189.
was surely already acquainted with, in order to be liberated. He drew up a declaration promising to say everything he knew and even, upon his release from prison, to seek and transmit information. The result was that he confessed everything without being released and that he was sent to the province of Irkutsk where he went mad and died “barely over the age of 20.” Examples of this kind are not lacking. Leiser Tsukerman, immigrated to New York, and put an end to his life. Nahman Lœwenthal, after having immigrated to Berlin, “was sent into the dizzying downward spiral of a nervous breakdown,” to which was added an unhappy love; “he swallowed sulphuric acid and threw himself into the river”—at the age of about 19.32 These young individuals had thrown themselves away by overestimating their strength and the resistance of their nerves.

And even Grigori Goldenberg, who, in cold blood, had defeated the governor of Kharkov and asked his comrades, as a supreme honor, to kill by his own hand the Tsar (but his comrades, fearing popular anger, had apparently dismissed him as a Jew; apparently, this argument often prompted populists to designate most often Russians, to perpetrate attacks): after being arrested while carrying a charge of dynamite, he was seized by unbearable anguish in his cell of the Troubetskoj bastion, his spirit was broken, he made a full confession that affected the whole movement, petitioned that Aaron Zundelevich come share his cell (who showed more indulgence than others towards his actions). When it was refused, he committed suicide.33

Others, who were not directly involved, suffered, such as Moses Edelstein, who was by no means an ideologist, who had “slipped”, for a price, clandestine literature; he suffered much in prison, prayed to Yahweh for himself and his family: he repented during the judgment: “I did not imagine that there could be such bad books.” Or S. Aronson who, after the trial of the “one hundred and ninety-three”, disappeared completely from the revolutionary scene.34

Another point is worthy of noting; it was the facility with which many of them left that Russia which they had long ago intended to save. In fact, in the 70s emigration was regarded as desertion in revolutionary circles: even if the police seek you, go underground, but do not run away!35—Tan Bogoraz left to live twenty years in New York.—Lazar Goldenberg-Getroitman also “left to New York in 1885, where he gave classes on the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia”; he returned to Russia in 1906, after the amnesty, to leave again rather quickly to Britain, where he remained until his death.”36—In London, one of the Vayner brothers became the owner of a furniture workshop and Mr. Aronson and Mr. Romm became Clinical

33 Grigori Goldenberg v Petropavlovskoi kreposti (Grigori Goldenberg in prison Saint-Pierre-el-Saint-Paul); Krasnyi arkhiv: istoricheskiy journal Tsentrarkhiva RSFSR (The Red Archives: Historical Review of the FSSR Archives Center), M., 1922–1941, t. 10; 1925, pp. 328–331.
34 Deutsch*, pp. 85–86.
36 RJE, t. 1. p. 344.
Doctors in New York.—After a few years in Switzerland, I. Guetsov went to live in America, having radically broken with the Socialist movement.—Leiser Lœwenthal, emigrated to Switzerland, completed his medical studies in Geneva, became the assistant of a great physiologist before obtaining a chair of histology in Lausanne.—Semion Lourie also finished his studies in a faculty of medicine in Italy, but died shortly after.—Liubov Axelrod (“the Orthodox”) remained for a long time in immigration, where he received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Berlin (later he inculcated dialectical materialism to students of Soviet graduate schools.) A. Khotinsky also entered the Faculty of Medicine of Bern (but died the following year from a galloping consumption). Grigory Gurayev made a fine career in Denmark; he returned to Russia as the country’s ambassador in Kiev, where he stayed until 1918.37

All this also shows how many talented men there were among these revolutionaries. Men such as these, endowed with such lively intelligence, when they found themselves in Siberia, far from wasting or losing their reason, they opened their eyes to the tribes which surrounded them, studied their languages and their customs, and wrote ethnographic studies about them: Leon Sternberg on the Ghiliaks,** Tan-Bogoraz on the Tchouktches,*** Vladimir Yokhelson on the Yukaghirs,**** and Naoum Guekker on the physical type of the lakuts.38***** Some studies on the Buryats****** are due to Moses Krohl.

Some of these Jewish revolutionaries willingly joined the socialist movement in the West. Thus V. Yokhelson and A. Zundelevich, during the Reichstag elections in Germany, campaigned on the side of the Social Democrats. Zundelevich was even arrested for having used fraudulent methods. Anne Rosenstein, in France, was convicted for organising a street demonstration in defiance of the regulations governing traffic on the street; Turgenev intervened for her and she was expelled to Italy where she was twice condemned for anarchist agitation (she later married F. Turati,****** converted him to socialism and became herself the first Marxist of Italy). Abram Valt-Lessine, a native of Minsk, published articles for seventeen years in New York in the socialist organ of America Vorwarts and exerted a great influence on the formation of the American labour movement.39 (That road was going to be taken by many others of our Socialists...)

* Liubov Issaakovna Axelrod: philosopher, writer, member of the Menshevik party. His pen name is “the Orthodox” (in the non-confessional sense of the word).
** The Ghiliaks are a tribe of the north of the island of Sakhalin and the valley of the lower Amur.
*** The Tchouktches, a tribe of eastern Siberia occupying a territory ranging from the Sea of Behring to the Kolyma. Nomads and sedentary. Opposed the Russian conquest.
**** The Yukaghirs are a tribe of the north-east of Siberia, very small in number.
38 JE, t. 6, p. 284.
***** The lakuts are a people of northeastern Siberia, occupying both banks of the Lena, extending east to the Kolyma River, north to the Arctic Ocean, south to the Yablovoi mountains.
****** The Buryats, people of Siberia around Lake Baikal, partly repressed towards Mongolia.
39 RJE, t. 2, p. 166; t. 1, p. 205.
It sometimes happened that revolutionary emigrants were disappointed by the revolution. Thus Moses Veller, having distanced himself from the movement, succeeded, thanks to Turgenev’s intervention with Loris-Melikov, to return to Russia. More extravagant was the journey of Isaac Pavlovsky: living in Paris, as “illustrious revolutionary”, he had connections with Turgenev, who made him know Emile Zola and Alphonse Daudet; he wrote a novel about the Russian nihilists that Turgenev published in the Vestnik Evropy (The Messenger of Europe), and then he became the correspondent in Paris of Novoye Vremia “the New Times” under the pseudonym of I. Iakovlev—and even, as Deutsch writes, he portrayed himself as “anti-Semite”, sent a petition in high places, was pardoned and returned to Russia. 40

That said, the majority of the Jewish revolutionaries blended in, just like the Russians, and their track was lost. “With the exception of two or three prominent figures... all my other compatriots were minor players,” writes Deutsch. 41 A Soviet collection, published the day after the revolution under the title of “Historical and Revolutionary Collection”, 42 quotes many names of humble soldiers unknown to the revolution. We find there dozens, even hundreds of Jewish names. Who remembers them now? However, all have taken action, all have brought their contribution, all have shaken more or less strongly the edifice of the State.

Let us add: this very first contingent of Jewish revolutionaries did not fully join the ranks of the Russian revolution, all did not deny their Judaism. A. Liebermann, a great connoisseur of the Talmud, a little older than his populist fellow students, proposed in 1875 to carry out a specific campaign in favour of socialism among the Jewish population. With the help of G. Gurevich, he published a socialist magazine in Yiddish called Emes (Pravda = Truth) in Vienna in 1877. Shortly before, in the 70s, A. Zundelevich “undertook a publication in the Hebrew language”, also entitled Truth. (L. Shapiro hypothesises that this publication was “the distant ancestor of Trotsky’s The Pravda.” 43 The tradition of this appellation was durable.) Some, like Valt-Lessine, insisted on the convergence of internationalism with Judaic nationalism. “In his improvised conferences and sermons, the prophet Isaiah and Karl Marx figured as authorities of equal importance.” 44 In Geneva was founded the Jewish Free Typography, 45 intended to print leaflets addressed to the Jewish working-class population.

* The Messenger of Europe: 1) a journal founded by Karamzin and published from 1802 to 1830; 2) a monthly magazine with a liberal orientation, which appeared from 1866 to 1918 in Saint Petersburg. ** The New Times: ultra-conservative Petersburg daily founded by the publicist Suvorin. Which appeared from 1868 to 1917.
40 Deutsch, pp. 84–85; Lohelsohn. Byloe, 1918, no. 13, pp. 53–75; L. Goumtch. Pervyie evreiskiie rabotchiie kroujki (The first Jewish workers’ circles), Byloie, 1907, n. 6/18, p. 68.
41 Deutsch, p. 231.
42 RHC, t. 1, 2.
44 JW-2*, p. 392.
45 JE, t. 13, p. 644.
Specifically Jewish circles were formed in some cities. A “Statute for the Organisation of a Social-Revolutionary Union of the Jews of Russia”, formulated at the beginning of 1876, showed the need for propaganda in the Hebrew language and even to organise between Jews of the western region “a network of social-revolutionary sections, federated with each other and with other sections of the same type found abroad”. “The Socialists of the whole world formed a single brotherhood,” and this organisation was to be called the Jewish Section of the Russian Social-Revolutionary Party.\(^{46}\)

Hessen comments: the action of this Union among the Jewish masses “has not met with sufficient sympathies”, and that is why these Jewish socialists, in their majority, “lent a hand to the common cause”, that is to say, to the Russian cause.\(^{47}\) In fact, circles were created in Vilnius, Grodno, Minsk, Dvinsk, Odessa, but also, for example, in Elts, Saratov, Rostov-on-Don.

In the very detailed founding act of this “Social-Revolutionary Union of all Jews in Russia”, one can read surprising ideas, statements such as: “Nothing ordinary has the right to exist if it has no rational justification”\(^{48}\) (!)

By the end of the 70s, the Russian revolutionary movement was already sliding towards terrorism. The appeal to the revolt of Bakunin had definitely prevailed over the concern for instruction of the masses of Lavrov. Beginning in 1879, the idea of populist presence among the peasants had no effect—the idea that dominated in The Will of the People—gained the upper hand over the rejection of terror by The Black Repartition. Terror, nothing but terror!!—much more: a systematic terror! (That the people did not have a voice in the matter, that the ranks of the intelligentsia were so sparse, did not disturb them.) Terrorist acts—including against the Tsar in person!—thus succeeded one another.

According to Leo Deutsch’s assessment, only ten to twelve Jews took part in this growing terror, beginning with Aron Gobst (executed), Solomon Wittenberg (prepared an attack on Alexander II in 1878, executed in 1879), Aizik Aronchik (was involved in the explosion of the imperial train, condemned to a penal colony for life) and Gregory Goldenberg, already named. Like Goldenberg, A. Zundelevich—brilliant organiser of terror, but who was not given the time to participate in the assassination of the Tsar—was arrested very early. There was also another quite active terrorist: Mlodetsky. As for Rosa Grossman, Krystyna Grinberg and the brothers Leo and Saveli Zlatopolsky, they played a secondary role. (In fact, Saveli, as of March 1\(^{st}\), 1881, was a member of the Executive Committee); As for Gesya Gelfman, she was part of the basic group of the “actors of March 1\(^{st}\)”\(^{49}\)

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\(^{46}\) Hessen, t. 2, pp. 213–214.
\(^{47}\) Ibidem, p. 214.
\(^{48}\) RHC, 1.1, p. 45.
* March 1\(^{st}\), 1881: day of the assassination of Alexander II.
Then it was the 80s that saw the decline and dissolution of populism. Government power took over; belonging to a revolutionary organisation cost a firm eight to ten years of imprisonment. But if the revolutionary movement was caught by inertia, its members continued to exist. One can quote here Sofia Ginzburg: she did not engage in revolutionary action until 1877; she tried to restore the Will of the People, which had been decimated by arrests; she prepared, just after the Ulyanov group**, an attack on Alexander III. So-and-so was forgotten in deportation, another was coming back from it, a third was only leaving for it—but they continued the battle.

Thusly was a famous deflagration described by the memorialists: the rebellion in the prison of Yakutsk in 1889. An important contingent of political prisoners had been told that they were going to be transferred to Verkhoyansk and, from there, even further, to Srednie-Kolymsk, which they wanted to avoid at all costs. The majority of the group were Jewish inmates. In addition, they were informed that the amount of baggage allowed was reduced: instead of five poods*** of books, clothes, linen, five poods also of bread and flour, two poods of meat, plus oil, sugar and tea (the whole, of course, loaded on horses or reindeer), a reduction of five poods in all. The deportees decided to resist. In fact, it had already been six months that they had been walking freely in the city of Yakutsk, and some had obtained weapons from the inhabitants. “While you’re at it, might as well perish like this, and may the people discover all the abomination of the Russian government—perishing so that the spirit of combat is revived among the living!” When they were picked up to be taken to the police station, they first opened fire on the officers, and the soldiers answered with a salvo. Condemned to death, together with N. Zotov, were those who fired the first shots at the vice-governor: L. Kogan-Bernstein and A. Gausman. Condemned to forced labour in perpetuity were: the memorialist himself, O. Minor, the celebrated M. Gotz*, and also “A. Gurevitch and M. Orlov, Mr. Bramson, Mr. Braguinsky, Mr. Fundaminsky, Mr. Ufland, S. Ratine, O. Estrovitch, Sofia Gurevitch, Vera Gotz, Pauline Perly, A. Bolotina, N. Kogan-Bernstein.” The Jewish Encyclopædia informs us that for this mutiny twenty-six Jews and six Russians were tried.51

That same year, 1889, Mark Natanson returned from exile and undertook to forge, in place of the old dismantled populist organisations, a new organisation called The Right of the People (Narodnoie Pravo). Natanson had already witnessed the emergence of Marxism in Russia, imported from Europe, and its competition with populism. He made every effort to save the revolutionary movement from

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49 Deutsch, pp. 38–39, Protseys dvadtsati narodovoltsev v 1882 g. (The trial of the members of The Will of the People in 1882), Byloie, 1906, no. 1, pp. 227–234.

** The “Ulyanov group”, named after Alexander Ilyich Ulyanov, Lenin’s elder brother. Faction of the Will of the People. Alexander Ulyanov prepared an attack on Alexander III in 1887. He was condemned to death and executed.

50 RJE, t. 1, p. 314.

*** One pood is equivalent to 16.38 kilos.


51 O.S. Minor, lakutskaia drama 22 marta 1889 goda (The drama of Yakutia of 22 March 1889), Byloie, 1906, no. 9, pp. 138–141, 144; JE, t. 5, p. 599.
decadence and to maintain ties with the Liberals (‘the best liberals are also semi-socialists’). Not more than before did he look at nuances of convictions: what mattered to him was that all should unite to overthrow the autocracy, and when Russia was democratic, then it would be figured out. But the organisation he set up this time proved to be amorphous, apathetic and ephemeral. Besides, respecting the rules of the conspiracy was no longer necessary. As Isaac Gurvitch very eloquently pointed out, “because of the absence of conspiracy, a mass of people fall into the clutches of the police, but the revolutionaries are now so numerous that these losses do not count—trees are knocked down, and chips go flying!”

The fracture that had occurred in the Jewish consciousness after 1881–1882 could not but be reflected somewhat in the consciousness of Jewish revolutionaries in Russia. These young men had begun by drifting away from Judaism, and many had returned to it. They had “left the ‘street of the Jews’ and then returned to their people”: “Our entire historical destiny is linked to the Jewish ghetto, it is from it that our national essence is forged.” Until the pogroms of 1881–1882, “absolutely none of us revolutionaries thought for a moment” that we should publicly explain the participation of the Jews in the revolutionary movement. But then came the pogroms, which caused “among… the majority of our countrymen an explosion of indignation.” And now “it was not only the cultivated Jews, but some Jewish revolutionaries who had no affinity with their nation, who suddenly felt obliged to devote their strength and talents to their unjustly persecuted brothers.” “The pogroms have awakened sleeping feelings, they have made young people more susceptible to the sufferings of their people, and the people more receptive to revolutionary ideas. Let this serve as a basis for an autonomous action of the Jewish mass”: “We are obstinately pursuing our goal: the destruction of the current political regime.”

But behold, the unexpected support to the anti-Jewish pogroms brought by the leaflets of The Will of the People! Leo Deutsch expresses his perplexity in a letter to Axelrod, who also wonders: “The Jewish question is now, in practice, really insoluble for a revolutionary. What would one do, for example, in Balta, where the Jews are being attacked? To defend them is tantamount to “arousing hatred against the revolutionaries who not only killed the Tsar, but also support the Jews”… Reconciliation propaganda is now extremely difficult for the party.”

This perplexity, P. L. Lavrov himself, the venerated chief, expresses it in his turn: “I recognise that the Jewish question is extremely complex, and for the party, which intends to draw itself closer to the people and raise it against the government, it is difficult in the highest degree… because of the passionate state in which the

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52 Gounitch, Byloie. 1907, no. 6/18, p. 68.
54 Deutsch, pp. 3–4.
55 I. Iliachevich (I. Rubinovich), Chto delay evreiam v Rossii? (What can the Jews do in Russia?), Soblazn Sotsializma (The Temptation of Socialism), pp. 185–186.
people find themselves and the need to have it *on our side.*" He was not the only one of the Russian revolutionaries to reason this way.

In the 80s, a current reappeared among the socialists, advocating directing attention and propaganda to specifically Jewish circles, and preferably the ones of workers. But, as proletariat, there were not many people among the Jews—some carpenters, binders, shoemakers. The easiest was certainly to act among the most educated printers. Isaac Gurvitch recounts: with Moses Khourguine, Leon Rogaller, Joseph Reznik, “in Minsk we had set ourselves the task of creating a nucleus of educated workers.” But if we take, for example, Belostok or Grodno, “we found no working class”: the recruitment was too weak.

The creation of these circles was not done openly; it was necessary to conspire either to organise the meeting outside the city, or to hold it in a private apartment in the city, but then systematically beginning with lessons of Russian grammar or natural sciences... and then only by recruiting volunteers to preach socialism to them. As I. Martar explains: it was these preliminary lessons that attracted people to the revolutionary circles. “Skilled and wise,” capable of becoming their own masters, “those who had attended our meetings had received instruction there, and especially mastery of Russian, for language is a precious weapon in the competitive struggle of petty commerce and industry”; After that, our “lucky guys”, freed from the role of hired labourers and swearing to their great gods that they themselves would never employ hired labour, had to have recourse to it, due to the requirements of the market.” Or, once formed in these circles, “the worker abandoned his trade and went away to take examinations ‘externally.’”

The local Jewish *bourgeoisie* disliked the participation of young people in the revolutionary circles, for it had understood—faster and better than the police—where all of this would lead.

Here and there, however, things advanced; with the aid of socialist pamphlets and proclamations provided by the printing press in London, the young revolutionaries themselves drafted “social-democrat formulations on all programmatic questions”. Thus, for ten years, a slow propaganda led little by little to the creation of the Bund.

But, “even more than police persecution, it was the emerging immigration to America that hampered our work. In fact, we trained socialist workers for America.” The concise recollections of Isaac Gurvitch on the first Jewish workers’ circles are enameled by obiter dicta such as: Schwartz, a student who participated in

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revolutionary agitation, “subsequently immigrated to America; he lives in New York”.
— as well, at a meeting in Joseph Reznik’s apartment: “There were two workers present, a carpenter and a joiner: both are now in America.” And, two pages later, we learn that Reznik himself, after his return from exile, “went to live in America.” Conversely, a young man named Guirchfeld, who came from America to do revolutionary work, “is currently a doctor in Minneapolis” and was a Socialist candidate for the post of governor.— “One of the most active members of the first Abramovich circle, a certain Jacob Zvirine..., after serving his twelve months in the Kresty prison... immigrated to America and now lives in New York.”— “Shmulevich (“Kivel”)... in 1889... was forced to flee from Russia; he lived until 1896 in Switzerland where he was an active member of the social democratic organisations”, then “he moved to America... and lives in Chicago”. Finally, the narrator himself: “In 1890 I myself left Russia,” although a few years earlier “we were considering things differently. To lead a socialist propaganda among the workers is the obligation of every honest educated man: it is our way of paying our “historical debt” to the people. And since I have the obligation to make propaganda, it follows very obviously that I have the right to demand that I be given the opportunity to fulfil this obligation.” Arriving in New York in 1890, Gurvich found there a “Russian workers’ association of self-development,” consisting almost exclusively of artisans from Minsk, and in order to celebrate the Russian New Year they organised in New York “The Ball of the Socialists of Minsk.”61 In New York, “the local socialist movement... predominantly was Jewish.”62

As we can see, from that time the ocean did not constitute a major obstacle to the cohesion and the pursuit of the revolutionary action carried out by the Jews. This living link would have oh so striking effects in Russia.

Yet all Jewish young people had not abandoned the Russian revolutionary tradition, far from it; many even stood there in the 80s and 90s. As D. Schub shows, the pogroms and the restrictive measures of Alexander III only excited them even more strongly for combat.

Then it became necessary to explain as well as possible to the little Russian people why so many Jews participated in the revolutionary movement. Addressing uneducated people, the popular pamphlets gradually forged a whole phraseology that had its effects until 1917—including 1917. It is a booklet of this kind that allows us to reconstruct their arguments.

Hard is the fate of the Russian, the subject of the Tsar; the government holds him in his iron fist. But “still more bitter is the lot of the indigent Jew”: “the government makes fun of him, pressures him to death. His existence is only a life of famine, a long agony”, and “his brothers of misery and toil, the peasants and the Russian workers..., as long as they are in ignorance, treat him as a foreigner.” There followed, one after the other, didactic questions: “Are Jewish capitalists enemies of

62 J. Krepliak, Poslesloviie k statie Lessina (Postface to the article by Lessine), JW-2, p. 392.
the working people of Russia?” The enemies are all capitalists without distinction, and it is of little importance to the working people to be plundered by such and such: one should not concentrate their anger on those who are Jews.—“The Jew has no land... he has no means to prosper. If the Jews do not devote themselves to the labour of the land, it is because “the Russian government has not allowed them to reside in the countryside”; but in their colonies they are “excellent cultivators.” The fields are superbly enhanced... by the work of their arms. They do not use any outside labour, and do not practice any extra trade... they like the hard work of the land.”—“Are destitute Jews harming the economic interests of Russian workers? If the Jews do business, “it is out of necessity, not out of taste; all other ways are closed to them, and one has to live”; “they would cease with joy to trade if they were allowed to leave their cage.” And if there are thieves among them, we must accuse the Tsarist government. “The Jewish workers began the struggle for the improvement of their condition at the time when the Russian working people were subjected. The Jewish workers “before all the others have lost patience”; “And even now tens of thousands of Jews are members of Russian Socialist parties. They spread the hatred of the capitalist system and the tsarist government through the country”; they have rendered “a proud service to the Russian working people”, and that is why Russian capitalists hate them. The government, through the police, assisted in the preparation of the pogroms; it sent the police and the army to lend a helping hand to the looters”; “Fortunately, very few workers and peasants were among them.”—“Yes, the Jewish masses hate this irresponsible tsarist government”, because “it was the will of the government that the skull of Jewish children be smashed against walls... that Jewish women, elderly and children alike, be raped in the streets. And yet, “He lies boldly, the one who treats the Jews as enemies of the Russian people... And besides, how could they hate Russia? Could they have another country?”

There are amazing resurgences in the revolutionary tradition. In 1876, A. Biebergal had been convicted for taking part in the demonstration on the square in front of Our Lady of Kazan. And it was there that his eldest daughter, a student of graduate studies of Saint Petersburg, was apprehended on the same spot in Kazan on the anniversary of this demonstration, twenty-five years later, in 1901. (In 1908, Member of a group S.-R., she was condemned to the penal colonies for the attack on the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich.)

In fact, over the years, Russian revolutionaries increasingly needed the input of the Jews; they understood more and more what advantage they derived from them—of their dual struggle: against the vexations on the plane of nationality, and against those of an economic order—as a detonator for the revolution.

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In 1883, in Geneva, appears what can be considered as the head of the emerging social democracy: the “Liberation of Labour” group. Its founders were, along with Plekhanov and Vera Zasulich, L. Deutsch and P. Axelrod.\(^\text{64}\) (When Ignatov died in 1885, he was replaced by Ingerman.)

In Russia comes to life a current that supports them. Constituted of former members of the dismantled Black Repartition (they considerably exceeded those of the Will of the People), they will be called “liberationists” (освобожденты). Among them are a number of young Jews, among whom we can name the two best known: Israel Guelfand (the future and famous Parvus) and Raphael Soloveitchik. In 1889 Soloveitchik, who had travelled through Russia to set up revolutionary action in several cities, was arrested and tried with other members of the Liberation of Labour group, which included several Jewish names.\(^\text{65}\) Others who belonged to this social revolutionary trend were David Goldendach, the future, well-known Bolshevik “Riazanov” (who had fled Odessa in 1889 and had taken refuge abroad to escape military service\(^\text{66}\)).

Nevertheless, what remained of the Will of the People after its collapse was a fairly large group. Among them were Dembo, Rudevitch, Mandelstam, Boris Reinchtein, Ludwig Nagel, Bek, Sofia Chentsis, Filippeo, Leventis, Cheftel, Barnekhovsky, etc.\(^\text{67}\)

Thus a certain amount of energy had been preserved to fuel the rivalries between small groups—The Will of the People, The Black Repartition, Liberation of Labour—and theoretical debates. The three volumes of the “Historical and Revolutionary Collection” published in the (Soviet) 20s, which we use here, offer us, in an interminable and tedious logorrhea, an account of the cut and thrust, allegedly much more important and sublime than all the questions of universal thought and history. The detail of these debates constitute a deadly material on the spiritual fabric of the Russian revolutionaries of the years 80–90, and it still awaits its historian.

But from the thirties of the Soviet era onwards, it was no longer possible to enumerate with pride and detail all those who had had their share in the revolution; a sort of taboo settled in historical and political publications, the role and name of the Jews in the Russian revolutionary movement ceased to be evoked—and even now, this kind of evocation creates uneasiness. Now, nothing is more immoral and dangerous than to silence anything when History is being written: it only creates a distortion of opposite meaning.

\(^{64}\) Deutsch, p. 136.  
\(^{65}\) RHC, t. 2, pp. 36, 38–40.  
\(^{66}\) Ibidem, t. 2, pp. 198–199.  
\(^{67}\) Ibidem, p. 36.
If, as can be read in the *Jewish Encyclopædia*, “to account for the genuine importance of the Jewish component in the Russian liberation movement, to express it in precise figures, does not seem possible,” one can nevertheless, based on various sources, give an approximate picture.

Hessen informs us that “of the 376 defendants, accused of crimes against the State in the first half of 1879, there were only 4% Jews,” and “out of the 1,054 persons tried before the Senate during the year 1880…, there were 6.5% of Jews.” Similar estimates are found among other authors.

However, from decade to decade, the number of Jews participating in the revolutionary movement increases, their role becomes more influential, more recognised. In the early years of Soviet rule, when it was still a matter of pride, a prominent communist, Lourie-Larine, said: “In tsarist prisons and in exile, Jews usually constituted nearly a quarter of all prisoners and exiles.” Marxist historian M. N. Pokrovsky, basing himself on the workforce of the various congresses, concludes that “the Jews represent between a quarter and a third of the organisations of all the revolutionary parties.” (*The modern Jewish Encyclopædia* has some reservations about this estimate).

In 1903, in a meeting with Herzl, Witte endeavoured to show that, while representing only 5% of the population of Russia, i.e. 6 million out of 136 million, the Jews had in their midst no less than 50% of revolutionaries.

General N. Sukhotin, commander-in-chief of the Siberian region, compiled statistics on January 1st, 1905 of political prisoners under surveillance for all of Siberia and by nationality. This resulted in 1,898 Russians (42%), 1,678 Jews (37%), 624 Poles (14%), 167 Caucasians, 85 Baltic and 94 of other nationalities. (Only the exiles are counted there, prisons and penal colony convicts are not taken into account, and the figures are only valid for the year 1904, but this, however, gives a certain overview.) There is, moreover, an interesting precision in connection with those who “went into hiding”: 17% of Russians, 64% of Jews, 19% of other nationalities.

Here is the testimony of V. Choulguine: in 1889, the news relating to the student demonstrations of Saint Petersburg reached Kiev. “The long corridors of the university were teeming with a crowd of young people in effervescence. I was struck by the predominance of the Jews. Were they more or less numerous than the Russians, I could not say, but they ‘predominated’ incontestably, for it was they who

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68 JE, t. 13, p. 645.  
69 Hessen, t. 2, p. 212.  
70 I. Larine, Evrei i Anti-Semitism v SSSR (The Jews and Anti-Semitism in the USSR), ML, 1929, p. 31.  
71 SJE, t. 7*, 1994, p. 258.  
73 Iz islorii borby s revolioutsici v 1905 g. (Fragments of the History of the Fight with the Revolution of 1905), Krasnyi archiv (Red Archives), 1929, vol. 32, p. 229.
were in charge of this tumultuous melee in jackets. Some time later, the professors and the non-striking students began to be chased out of lecture halls. Then this 'pure and holy youth' took false photographs of the Cossacks beating the students; these photographs were said to have been taken 'on the fly' when they were made from drawings: “Not all Jewish students are left-wingers, some were on our side, but those ones suffered a lot afterwards, they were harassed by society.” Choulguine adds: “The role of the Jews in the revolutionary effervescence within universities was notorious and unrelated to their number across the country.”

Milyukov described all this as “legends about the revolutionary spirit of the Jews... They [government officials] need legends, just like the primitive man needs rhymed prose.” Conversely, G. P. Fedotov wrote: “The Jewish nation, morally liberated from the 80s onwards, like the Russian intelligentsia under Peter the Great, is in the highest degree uprooted, internationalist and active... It immediately assumed the leading role in the Russian revolution... It marked the moral profile of the Russian revolutionary with its incisive and sombre character.” From the 80s onwards, the Russian and Jewish elites merged not only in a common revolutionary action, but also in all spiritual fads, and especially in the passion for non-rootedness.

In the eyes of a contemporary, simple witness to the facts (Zinaida Altanskaya, who corresponded from the town of Orel with Fyodor Kryukov*), this Jewish youth of the beginning of the century appeared as follows: “…with them, there is the art and the love of fighting. And what projects!—vast, bold! They have something of their own, a halo of suffering, something precious. We envy them, we are vexed” (that the Russian youth is not the same).

M. Agursky states the following hypothesis: “Participation in the revolutionary movement was, so to speak, a form of assimilation [more] ‘suitable’ than the common assimilation through baptism”; and it appears all the more worthy because it also meant a sort of revolt against one’s own Jewish bourgeoisie—and against one’s own religion, which counted for nothing for the revolutionaries.

However, this “proper” assimilation was neither complete nor even real: many of these young men, in their haste, tore themselves from their own soil without really taking root in Russian soil, and remained outside these two nations.

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75 Duma State, 4th Legislature, Transcripts of Meetings, Session 5, Meeting 18, 16 Dec. 1916, p. 1174.
* Fyodor Dmitrievich Kryukov (1870–1920): writer of the Gift, populist, died of typhus during the civil war. He has been attributed the true paternity of the Peaceful Gift of the Cholokov Nobel prize.
and two cultures, to be nothing more than this material of which internationalism is so fond of.

But as the equal rights of the Jews remained one of the major demands of the Russian revolutionary movement, these young people, by embarking in the revolution, kept in their hearts and minds, the idea they were still serving the interests of their people. This was the thesis that Parvus had adopted as a course of action during his entire life, which he had formulated, defended and inculcated to the young people: the liberation of the Jews from Russia can only be done by overthrowing the Tsarist regime.

This thesis found significant support for a particular layer of Jewish society—middle-aged people, well-off, set, incredibly estranged from the spirit of adventure, but who, since the end of the nineteenth century, fed a permanent irritation against the Russian mode of government. It was in this ideological field that their children grew up before they even received the sap of Judaism to subsist from. An influential member of the Bund, Mr. Raies, points out that at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries “the Jewish bourgeoisie did not hide the hopes and expectations it placed in the progress of the revolutionary movement... it, which it once rejected, now had the bourgeoisie's favours.”

G. Gershuni explained to his judges: “It is your persecutions that have driven us to the revolution.” In fact, the explanation is to be found both in Jewish history and in Russian history—at their intersection.

Let us listen to G. A. Landau, a renowned Jewish publicist. He wrote after 1917: “There were many Jewish families, both small and middle-class, in which the parents, bourgeois themselves, saw with their benevolent eyes, sometimes proud, always quiet, their offspring being marked by the seal in fashion of one of the social-revolutionary ideologies in vogue.” They also, in fact, “leaned vaguely in favour of this ideology which protested against the persecutors, but without asking what was the nature of this protest or what were these persecutions.” And it was thus that “little by little, the hegemony of socialism took root in Jewish society...”—the negation of civil society and of the State, contempt for bourgeois culture, and of the inheritance of past centuries, an inheritance from which the Jews had less difficulty to tear themselves away from since they already had, by Europeanising themselves, renounced their own inheritance.” The revolutionary ideas “in the Jewish milieu... were... doubly destructive,” and for Russia and for themselves. But they penetrated the Jewish milieu much more deeply than the Russian milieu.”

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78 M. Rafes, Natsionalistitcheskii “ouklon” Bund (The nationalist “tendency” of the Bund), Soblazn Sotsializma (The temptation of socialism), p. 276.
A jeweller from Kiev, Marchak (who even created some pieces to decorate the churches of the city), testifies that "while I was frequenting the bourgeoise, I was contaminated [by the revolutionary spirit]."80 Moreover, this is what we see with the young Bogrov*: that energy, that passion which grows in him during his youth spent in the bosom of a very rich family. His father, a wealthy liberal, gave full liberty to his young terrorist son.—And the Gotz brothers, also terrorists, had for grandfathers two Muscovites rich as Croesus, Gotz on the one hand, and on the other, Vyssotsky, a multi-millionaire tea maker; and these, far from retaining their grandchildren, paid to the S.-R. hundreds of thousands of rubles.

"Many Jews have come to swell the ranks of the Socialists," continues Landau.81 In one of his speeches in the Duma (1909), A. I. Guchkov quotes the testimony of a young S.-R.: among other causes of her disenchantment, "she said that the revolutionary movement was entirely monopolised by the Jews and that they saw in the triumph of the revolution their own triumph."82

The enthusiasm for the revolution has seized Jewish society from the bottom to the top, says I. O. Levin: “It is not only the lower strata of the Jewish population of Russia that have devoted themselves to the revolutionary passion,” but this movement “could not fail to catch a large part of the intellectuals and semi-intellectuals of the Jewish people” (semi-intellectuals who, in the 20s, constituted the active executives of the Soviet regime). “They were even more numerous among the liberal professions, from dentists to university teachers—those who could settle outside the Pale of Settlement. Having lost the cultural heritage of traditional Judaism, these people were nonetheless foreign to Russian culture and any other national culture. This spiritual vacuum, hidden under a superficially assimilated European culture, made the Jews, already inclined to materialism, by their trades as tradesmen or craftsmen, very receptive to materialistic political theories... The rationalist mode of thought peculiar to the Jews... predisposes them to adhere to doctrines such as that of revolutionary Marxism.”83

The co-author of this collection, V. S. Mandel, remarks: "Russian Marxism in its purest state, copied from the original German, was never a Russian national movement, and Jews in Russia, who were animated by a revolutionary spirit, for which nothing could be easier than assimilating a doctrine exhibited in books in

* Dmitry Grigoryevich Bogrov: young secret service agent. Shot and killed the minister A. Stolypine in Kiev (1911). Condemned to death and executed.
German, were naturally led to take an important part in the work of transplanting this foreign fruit on Russian soil.”

F. A. Stepun expressed it thus: “The Jewish youth boldly discussed, quoting Marx in support, the question of the form in which the Russian moujik should possess the land. The Marxist movement began in Russia with the Jewish youth inside the Pale of Settlement.”

Developing this idea, V. S. Mandel recalls “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”. ..., this stupid and hateful falsity.” Well, “these Jews see in the delusions of the ‘Protocols’ the malicious intention of the anti-Semites to eradicate Judaism,” but they themselves are “ready, in varying degrees, to organise the world on new principles, and believe that the revolution marks a step forward towards the establishment of the heavenly Kingdom on earth, and attribute to the Jewish people, for its greatest glory, the role of leader of the popular movements for freedom, equality and justice—a leader who, of course, does not hesitate to break down the existing political and social regime.” And he gives as an example a quotation from the book of Fritz Kahn, *The Hebrews as a Race and People of Culture*: "Moses, one thousand two hundred and fifty years before Jesus Christ, proclaimed the rights of man... Christ paid with his life the preaching of Communist manifestos in a capitalist state", then “in 1848, the star of Bethlehem rose for the second time... and it rose again above the roofs of Judea: Marx.”

Thus, “of this common veneration for the revolution emerge and distinguish certain currents of opinion in Jewish society—all desperately unrealistic, childishly pretentious, thereby irresistibly aspiring to a troubled era, and not in Russia alone, but encompassing the entire century.”

With what casualness and what gravity at the same time, with what beautiful promises Marxism penetrates into the consciousness of cultivated Russia! Finally, the revolution has found its scientific foundation with its cortège of infallible deductions and inevitable predictions!

Among the young Marxists, there is Julius Tsederbaum; Martov, the future great leader of the Mensheviks, who, together with his best friend Lenin, will first found the “Union for the Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class” (of all Russia)—only he will not enjoy the same protection as Lenin, exiled in the merciful country of Minousine: he will have to serve his three years in the tough region of Tourukhan. It was he, too, who, together with Lenin, designed the *Iskra* and set up a whole network for its dissemination.

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84 V. S. Mandel, *Konservativnyie i razrouchitelnyie idei v evreistyche* (Conservative ideas and destructive ideas in Jewish society), *ibidem*, p 199.
86 I. M. Biekerman, *Rossiya i rouskoie evreistvo* (Russia and the Jews of Russia), *ibidem*, p. 34.
* The *Iskra* (The Spark) is the first Marxist newspaper created by Lenin abroad. Was published from 1900 to 1903. Was resumed by the Mensheviks and was published until 1905.
But even before collaborating with Lenin to found the All-Russian Social-Democratic Party, Martov, then exiled to Vilnius, had set up the ideological and organisational foundations of a “Jewish Joint Labour Union for Lithuania, Poland and Russia”. Martov’s idea was that, from now on, propaganda within the masses should be favoured as work within the circles, and, for this, make it “more specifically Jewish”, and, in particular, translate it into Yiddish. In his lecture, Martov described the principles of the new Union: “We expected everything from the movement of the Russian working class and considered ourselves as an appendix of the pan-Russian workers’ movement... we had forgotten to maintain the link with the Jewish mass who does not know Russian. But at the same time, “without suspecting it, we hoisted the Jewish movement to a height unmatched by the Russians.” Now is the time to free the Jewish movement “from the mental oppression to which the [Jewish] bourgeoisie has subjected it,” which is “the lowest and lowest bourgeoisie in the world”, “to create a specifically Jewish workers’ organisation, which will serve as guide and instructor for the Jewish proletariat.” In the “national character of the movement,” Martov saw a victory over the bourgeoisie, and with this “we are perfectly safe... from nationalism.”

In the following year, Plekhanov, at the Congress of the International Socialist, described the Jewish Social-Democratic movement as “the vanguard of the working-class army in Russia.” It was the latter which became the Bund (Vilnius, 1897), six months before the creation of the Social-Democratic Party of Russia. The next stage is the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, which takes place in Minsk (where the Central Committee of the Bund was located) in 1898. The Jewish Encyclopædia tells us that “out of eight delegates, five were Jewish: the envoys of a Kiev newspaper, The Workers’ Gazette, B. Eidelman, N. Vigdorchik, and those of the Bund: A. Kremer, A. Mutnik, S. Katz [were also present Radchenko, Petruyvitch and Vannovsky] . Within the Central Committee of the party (of three members) which was constituted at this Congress entered A. Kremer and B. Eidelman.” Thus was born the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Russia, in a close relationship with the Bund. (Let us add: even before the creation of Iskra, it was to Lenin that the direction of the newspaper of the Bund had been proposed.)

The fact that the Bund was created in Vilnius is not surprising: Vilnius was “the Lithuanian Jerusalem”, a city inhabited by a whole cultivated Jewish elite, and through which transited, in provenance of the West, all the illegal literature heading to Saint Petersburg and Moscow.

But the Bund, despite its internationalist ideology, “became a factor of national unity of Jewish life,” even though “its leaders were guarding against

87I. Martov, Povorotnyi punkt v istorii evreiskoago rabotchego dvijeniia (A turning point in the history of the workers’ movement Soblazn Sotsializma (The temptation of socialism), pp. 249, 259–264, JE t. 5, p. 94.
88G. V. Plekhanov o sotsialistitcheskom dvijenii sredi evreiev (G. V. Plekhanov on the socialist movement among the Jews), Soblazn Sotsializma (The temptation of socialism), p. 266.
89SJЕ, t. 7, p. 396.
91Schub, JW-2, p. 137.
nationalism as if it were the plague” (like the Russian Social-Democrats who succeeded in watching out for it until the end). While subsidies flowed from abroad, consented by the wealthy Jewish milieus, the Bund advocated the principle that there is not a single Jewish people, and rejected the idea of a “universal Jewish nation,” claiming on the contrary, that there are exist two antagonistic classes within the Jewish people (the Bund feared that nationalistic dispositions might “obscure the class consciousness of the proletariat”).

However, there was hardly any Jewish proletariat in the strict sense of the term: the Jews seldom entered factories, as F. Kohn explains, “they considered it disgraceful not to be their own master”, albeit very modestly—as an artisan or even an apprentice, when one can nurture the hope of opening one’s own workshop. “To be hired in a factory was to lose all illusions as to the possibility of becoming one day one’s own master; and that is why working in a factory was a humiliation, a disgrace.” (Another obstacle was the reluctance of employers to hire workers whose day of rest was Saturday and not Sunday.) As a result, the Bund declared “Jewish proletariat” both the artisans, and small traders, and clerks (was not every employed worker a proletarian, according to Marx?), and even commercial intermediaries. To all these individuals the revolutionary spirit could be inculcated, and they had be joined to the struggle against the autocracy. The Bund even declared that the Jews “are the best proletariat in the world.” (The Bund never renounced the idea of “strengthening its work among Christian workers.”)

Not suspected of sympathy for socialism, G. B. Sliosberg writes in this regard that the enormous propaganda deployed by the Bund and some of its interventions “have done harm, and in particular an immediate damage to Jewish trade and their start-up industries.” The Bund was turning against the employing instructors the very young apprentices, kids of 14–15 years old; its members broke the tiles of “more or less opulent Jewish houses.” In addition, “on Yom-Kippur, young people from the Bund went into the great synagogue [in Vilnius], interrupted the prayer and started an incredible party, with beer flowing abundantly...”

But, in spite of its class fanaticism, the Bund was increasingly based on a universal current equally characteristic of bourgeois liberalism: “It was increasingly understood in the cultivated world that the national idea plays an essential role in the awakening of self-consciousness in every man, which obliged the theoreticians of the proletarian circles themselves to raise more broadly the national question”; thus,

92 Aronson, V borbe za... (In the fight for...), BJWR-1, p. 222.
93 Revolioutsionnoie dvijeniie sredi evreiev (The revolutionary movement among the Jews) Sb. 1, M.; Vsesioouznoie Obschestvo Politkatorjan i Ssylno poselentsev (Collection 1, M., Association for the Soviet Union of Prisoners and Political Exiles), 1930, p. 25.
94 S. Dimanstein, Revolioutsionnoie dvijeniie sredi evreiev (The Revolutionary Movement Among the Jews), Sb. 1905: Istoriiia rvolioutsionnogo dvijeniia v otdelnykh otcherakh (Collection 1905: History of the Revolutionary Movement, some separate studies), directed by N. Pokrovsky, T. 3, Book 1, M-L., 1927, pp. 127, 138, 156.
in the Bund, “assimilationist tendencies were gradually supplanted by national tendencies.” 96—This, Jabotinsky confirms: “As it grows, the Bund replaces a national ideology with cosmopolitanism.” 97 Abram Amsterdam, “one of the first important leaders of the Bund”, who died prematurely, “tried to reconcile the Marxist doctrine with the ideas of nationalism.” 98—In 1901, at a congress of the Bund, one of the future leaders of the year Seventeen, Mark Lieber (M. I. Goldman), who was then a young man of 20, declared: “so far we have been cosmopolitan believers. We must become national. Do not be afraid of the word. National does not mean nationalist.” (May we understand it, even if it is ninety years late!) And, although this congress had endorsed a resolution against “the exaltation of the national sentiment which leads to chauvinism”, he also pronounced himself for the national autonomy of the Jews “regardless of the territory inhabited by them.” 99

This slogan of national autonomy, the Bund developed it for a few years, both in its propaganda and its campaign of political banquets of 1904... although nobody knew exactly what could mean autonomy without territory. Thus, every Jewish person was given the right to use only his own language in his dealings with the local administration and the organs of the State... but how? (For should not this right also be granted to the nationals of other nations?)

It should also be noted that, in spite of its socialist tendencies, the Bund, “in its social-democratic programme”, pronounced itself “against the demand for the restoration of Poland... and against constituent assemblies for the marches of Russia.” 100 Nationalism, yes—but for oneself alone?

Thus, the Bund admitted only Jews in its midst. And once this orientation was taken, and although it was radically anticlerical, it did not accept the Jews who had denied their religion. The parallel Russian Social-Democratic organisations, the Bund, call them “Christian”—and, moreover, how could they be represented differently? But what a cruel offence for Lenin 101 to be so catalogued among the “Christians”!

The Bund thus embodies the attempt to defend Jewish interests, in particular against Russian interests. Here too, Sliosberg acknowledges: “The Bund's action has resulted in a sense of dignity and awareness of the rights of Jewish workers.” 102

Subsequently, the Bund's relations with the Russian Social-Democratic Party were not easy. As with the Polish Socialist Party, which at the time of the birth of the Bund had an “extremely suspicious” attitude towards it and declared that “the

96 JE, t. 3, p. 337.
97 V. Jabotinski, Vvedenie (Preface) to Kh. N. Bialik, Pesni i poemy (Songs and poems), Saint Petersburg, ed. Zaltsman, 1914, p. 36.
99 Aronson, V borbe za... (In the fight for...), BJWR-1*, pp. 220–222.
100 JE, t. 5, p. 99.
102 Sliosberg, t. 2, p. 258.
isolationism of the Bund places it in an adversarial position in relation to us.” Given its increasingly nationalistic tendencies, the Bund could only have conflicting relations with the other branches of Russian Social-Democracy.

Lenin thus describes the discussion he and Martov had with Plekhanov in Geneva in September 1900: “G. V. shows a phenomenal intolerance by declaring that [i.e. the Bund] is in no way a social-democratic organisation, but that it is simply an exploiting organisation that takes advantage of the Russians; he says that our aim is to drive this Bund out of the Party, that the Jews are all without exception chauvinists and nationalists, that the Russian party must be Russian and not turn itself in “bound hand and foot” to the tribe of Gad”... G. V. has stuck to his positions without wanting to reconsider them, saying that we simply lack knowledge of the Jewish world and experience in dealing with it.” (From what ear Martov, the first initiator of the Bund, must have heard this diatribe?!) In 1898 the Bund, despite its greater seniority, agreed to join the Russian Social-Democratic Party, but as a whole, with full autonomy over Jewish affairs. It therefore agreed to be a member of the Russian party, but on condition that it did not interfere in its affairs. Such was the agreement between them. However, at the beginning of 1902, the Bund considered that autonomy, so easily obtained at the 1st Congress of the Social Democratic Party, was no longer enough for it and that it now wanted to join the party on a federal basis, benefiting of full independence, even in programme matters. Regarding this it published a pamphlet against the Iskra. The central argument, Lenin explains, was that the Jewish proletariat “is a part of the Jewish people, which occupies a special place among the nations.”

At this stage, Lenin sees red and feels obliged to clash with the Bund himself. He no longer calls only “to maintain pressure [against autocracy] by avoiding a fragmentation of the party into several independent formations,” but he embarks on a passionate argument to prove (following, admittedly, Kautsky) that Jews are by no means a nation: they have neither common language nor territory (a flatly materialistic judgement: the Jews are one of the most authentic nations, the most united found on earth. United, it is in spirit. In his superficial and vulgar internationalism, Lenin could not understand the depth or historical roots of the Jewish question.) “The idea of a separate Jewish people is politically reactionary,” it justifies Jewish particularism. (And all the more “reactionary” were Zionists to him!) Lenin saw a solution for the Jews only in their total assimilation—which amounts to saying, in fact, to cease outright being Jewish.

103 JE*, t. 5, p. 95.
** Gad. One of the twelve sons of Jacob. One of the twelve tribes of Israel.
105 JE, t. 5, pp. 96–97.
107 Ibidem, t. 6, p. 300.
In the summer of 1903, at the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Congress of the Social-Democratic Party of Russia in Brussels, out of 43 delegates, there were only five of the Bund (however, “many Jews participated”). And Martov, “supported by twelve Jews” (among them Trotsky, Deutsch, Martynov, Liadov, to name but a few), spoke on behalf of the party against the “federal” principle demanded by the Bund. The members of the Bund then left the Congress (which permitted Lenin’s proposed statutes in paragraph 1 to prevail), and then also left the party.\textsuperscript{109} (After the split of the Social Democratic Party into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, “the leaders of the Mensheviks were A. Axelrod, A. Deutsch, L. Martov, M. Lieber, L. Trotsky,”\textsuperscript{110} as well as F. Dan, R. Abramovich—Plekhanov remaining on the sidelines.)

On the “Street of the Jews,” as it was then called, the Bund quickly became a powerful and active organisation. “Until the eve of the events of 1905, the Bund was the most powerful social-democratic organisation in Russia, with a well-established apparatus, good discipline, united members, flexibility and great experience in conspiring.” Nowhere else is there a discipline like in the Bund. The “bastion” of the Bund was the North-West region.\textsuperscript{111}

However, formidable competition arose with the “Independent Jewish Workers’ Party” which was created in 1901 under the influence and the exhortations of Zubatov\textsuperscript{*}: it persuaded the Jewish workers and all who would listen that it was not the social democratic ideology they needed but struggle against the bourgeoisie defending their economic interests to them—the government was interested in their success, they could act legally, their authority would a benevolent referee. The head of this movement was the daughter of a miller, the intrepid Maria Vilbouchevitch. “The supporters of Zubatov... enjoyed great success in Minsk with the (Jewish) workers”; they were passionately opposed to the members of the Bund and obtained much by organising economic strikes. They also acted, not without success, in Odessa (Khuna Shayevich). But just as, throughout the country, the frightened government (and Plehve\textsuperscript{**}) foiled Zubatov’s project, likewise with the “independents”: Shayevich was arrested in 1903, sentenced to a fairly short sentence—but then came the news of the Kishinev pogrom, and the “independents” had their hands tied.\textsuperscript{112}

Meanwhile, “the Bund was receiving help from foreign groups” from Switzerland first and then from Paris, London, the United States where “action

\textsuperscript{109}JE, t. 5, p. 97; SJE, I. 7, p. 397.
110SJE, t. 7, p. 397.
* Sergei Vasilyevich Zubatov (1864–1917): Chief of the Moscow Police and Special Police Department (1902–1905).
groups... had reached sizeable proportions.” Organised “clubs, Rotarian action groups, associations of aid to the work of the Bund in Russia. This aid was mainly financial.”  

From 1901, the Bund renounced “economic terror” (lashing out on employers, monitoring factories), because it “obscured the social-democratic consciousness of the workers”, and they pretended equally of condemning political terror.” This did not prevent Guirsh Lekkert, a cobbler who was a member of the Bund, from shooting at the governor of Vilnius—and to be hanged for it. The young Mendel Deutsch, still a minor, also fired shots whose significance marked “the apogee of the movement of the Jewish masses.” And already the Bund was wondering if it should not go back to terror. In 1902, the Berdichev Conference endorsed a resolution on “organised revenge”. But a debate broke out in the Bund, and the following year the Congress formally annulled this decision of the Conference. According to Lenin, the Bund, in 1903, went through “terrorist temptations, which it then got over.”  

Terror, which had already manifested itself more than once in Russia, enjoyed a general indulgence, an indulgence which was in the air of the time, and which, with the increasingly widespread custom of holding, “just in case,” a firearm (and it was easy to obtain one via smuggling) could not fail to arouse, in the minds of the youth of the Pale of Settlement, the idea of forming their own combat regiments.  

But the Bund had active and dangerous competitors. Is it a historical coincidence, or the time had simply come for the Jewish national consciousness to be reborn, in any case, it is in 1897, the year of the creation of the Bund, just a month prior, the First Universal Congress of Zionism took place. And it was in the early 1900s that young Jews pioneered a new path, “a public service path... at the crossroads between Iskra and Bne Moshe” (“the sons of Moses”), some turning right, the others heading left.” “In the programmes of all our groupings which appeared between 1904 and 1906, the national theme held its proper place.” We have seen that the Socialist Bund had not cut it off, and it now only had to condemn Zionism all the more firmly in order to excite national sentiment to the detriment of class consciousness.  

It is true that “the numbers of the Zionist circles among the youth gave way to the number of young people adhering to the revolutionary socialist parties.”

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114 JE, t.5, p.96.
116 JE*, t. 5, p. 97.
117 Lenin, 4th ed. 6, p. 288.
118 I. Ben-Tsvi.
119 S. M. Ginzburg, O roussko-evreiskoi intelligentsii (From the Russo-Jewish Intelligence), Sb. Evreisky mir; Ejegodnik na 1939 g. (Rcc. The Jewish World, Annual for the year 1939), Paris, Association of the Russo-Jewish Intelligence, p. 39.
120 Sliesberg, t. 3, p. 133.
(Although there were counter-examples: thus the publisher of the Jewish Socialist La Pravda of Geneva, G. Gurevitch, had re-converted to devote himself entirely to the issue of the Jews’ settlement in Palestine.) The ditch dug between Zionism and the Bund was gradually filled by such and such a new party, then another, then a third—Poalei-Tsion, Zeirei-Tsion, the “Zionist Socialists”, the serpovtsy (seimovtsy)—, each combining in its own way Zionism and socialism.

It is understandable that between parties so close to one other a fierce struggle developed, and this did not facilitate the task of the Bund. Nor did the emigration of the Jews from Russia into Israel, which gained momentum in those years: why emigrate? What sense does this have when the Jewish proletariat must fight for socialism side by side with the working class of all countries..., which would automatically solve the Jewish question everywhere?

The Jews have often been criticised in the course of history for the fact that many of them were usurers, bankers, merchants. Yes, the Jews formed a significant detachment, creator of the world of capital—and mainly in its financial forms. This, the great political economist Werner Sombart described it with a vigorous and convincing pen. In the first years of the Revolution this circumstance was, on the contrary, attributed to the Jews, as an inevitable formation on the road to socialism. And in one of his indictments, in 1919, Krylenko found it necessary to emphasise that “the Jewish people, since the Middle Ages, has taken out of their ranks the holders of a new influence, that of capital... they precipitated... the dissolution of economic forms of another age.”

Yes, of course, the capitalist system in the economic and commercial field, the democratic system in the political field are largely indebted to the constructive contribution of the Jews, and these systems in turn are the most favourable to the development of Jewish life and culture.

But—and this is an unfathomable historical enigma—these systems were not the only ones that the Jews favoured.

As V. S. Mandel reminds us, if we refer to the Bible, we discover that “the very idea of a monarchy was invented by no other people but the Hebrews, and they transmitted it to the Christian world. The monarch is not chosen by the people, he is the chosen by God. Hence the rite which the Christian peoples have inherited from the coronation and anointing of the kings.” (One might rectify by recalling that the Pharaohs long ago were also anointed, and also bearers of the divine will.) For his part, the former Russian revolutionary A. Valt-Lessine remembers: “The Jews did not accord great importance to the revolutionary movement. They put all their hopes in the petitions addressed to Saint Petersburg, or even in the bribes paid to the officials.

121 N. V. Krylenko, Za piat lct. 1918–1922: Obvinitelnuye retchi po naibolee kroupnym protsessam, zasluchannym v Moskovskom i Verkhovnom Revolioutsionnykh Tribounalakh (Over five years, 1918–1922: Submissions made in the highest trials before the Supreme Court and the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal), 1923, p. 353.
122 Mandel, Rossia i evrei (Russia and the Jews), op. Cit., p. 177.
of the ministries—but not at all in the revolution.”¹²³ This kind of approach to the influential spheres received, on the part of the impatient Jewish youth, the sobriquet, known since the Middle Ages and now infamous, of chtadlan. Someone like G. B. Sliosberg, who worked for many years in the Senate and the Ministry of the Interior, and who patiently had to solve Jewish problems of a private nature, thought that this avenue was the safest, with the richest future for the Jews, and he was ulcerated to note the impatience of these young people.

Yes, it was perfectly unreasonable, on the part of the Jews, to join the revolutionary movement, which had ruined the course of normal life in Russia and, consequently, that of the Jews of Russia. Yet, in the destruction of the monarchy and in the destruction of the bourgeois order—as, some time before, in the reinforcement of it—the Jews found themselves in the vanguard. Such is the innate mobility of the Jewish character, its extreme sensitivity to social trends and the advancement of the future.

It will not be the first time in the history of mankind that the most natural impulses of men will suddenly lead to monstrosities most contrary to their nature.

¹²³ A. Lessine, Epizody iz moei jizni (Episodes of My Life), JW-2, p. 388.