

ONE

THE POSITION OF THE JEWS IN THE TSARIST EMPIRE, 1881–1905

What you write about the Yids is quite correct. They fill everything up, they undermine everything, and they embody the spirit of the century. They are at the root of the revolutionary-social movement and regicide. They control the periodical press, the financial markets are in their hands, the popular masses fall into financial slavery to them, they guide the principles of present-day science, seeking to place it outside Christianity. And besides this, no sooner does a question about them arise than a chorus of voices speaks out for them in the name of ‘civilization’ or ‘toleration’ (by which is meant indifference to faith). As in Romania and Serbia, as with us—nobody dares say a word about the Jews taking over everything. Even our press is become Jewish. *Russkaya pravda*, *Moskva*, *Golos*, if you please—are all Jewish organs . . .

Letter from KONSTANTIN POBEDONOSTSEV TO
FEDOR DOSTOEVSKY, August 1879

THE YEARS BETWEEN 1881 and 1905 saw a significant deterioration in the situation of the Jews in the tsarist empire, who now constituted by far the largest Jewish community in the world with a population in 1897, when the first modern census was taken, of over 5.2 million out of a total 126 million (see Map 1). During this period the crisis caused by the deteriorating position of Russian Jewry was the motor which drove world Jewry. The crisis was partly the result of the growing disillusionment of the tsarist government with what it saw as the negative consequences of the ‘integrationist’ policies vis-à-vis the Jews which it had pursued, particularly during the reign of Alexander II. Its leading bureaucrats, mainly noble in origin, with aristocratic and rural prejudices against Jews, became increasingly subject to an anti-Jewish psychosis, attributing all the ills of the empire to Jewish machinations. More and more they came to see the Jews, rather than the disruptive effects of industrialization and modernization, as the source of their difficulties. Tsarist policy had always had a dual character: on the one hand, its aim was to ‘civilize’ the Jews and transform them into useful subjects of the tsar; on the other, it sought to minimize their ‘harmful’ effect on the rest of the society. Now most stress was placed on the latter goal. It is true that government policy in this period was marked by ignorance, glaring inconsistencies, and a

lack of coherence, but its general hostility to the Jews as a group can hardly be denied, a fact which calls into question the assertion that 'selective integration' remained a 'cornerstone of official policy across the entire late imperial period'.¹

The increasingly hostile policy towards the Jews went along with the second aspect of the crisis. The forced modernization of Russia, which the government had been pursuing since Peter the Great and which gathered pace when the Balkan crisis of 1876–8 revealed the gap between Russia's foreign policy ambitions and its ability to realize them, created escalating social and political tensions which exploded in the revolution of 1905. Although this threat was contained and led to the establishment of a semi-constitutional system, the problems which the regime faced were not effectively confronted, and in the last years before the war, with the fall of the reformist Stolypin government and the resurgence of large-scale labour unrest, the revolutionary challenge again became threatening. This led to heightened social conflict, the polarization of the society between left and right, and increased insecurity for the Jews.

One of the main consequences of the deterioration of the position of Jews in the tsarist empire was the growing disillusionment within broad sections of the Jewish elite with the policy of integration and the transformation of the community through education and Russification. It is true that protagonists of integration remained a significant element within the Jewish community until 1914 and beyond, and that there were also clear signs before 1881 of a rejection of the policy of 'selective integration'. (On this, see Volume I, Chapter 12.) This has led some scholars to argue that historians, overly influenced by a 'crisis paradigm', have exaggerated the importance of the events of 1881 and have ignored 'the subtler forms of change as well as continuities that bridge the moment of crisis'.² What does seem indisputable is that in the tsarist empire in the last decades before the outbreak of the First World War, ethnicity, rather than religion, came increasingly to be seen as the main marker of Jewish identity. The Jews here were clearly becoming a proto-nation, like the other proto-nations whose emergence dates from these years, the Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Latvians, and this change affected all aspects of Jewish political life. From the tsarist empire this 'new Jewish politics' spread to the Kingdom of Poland and to Galicia, where integrationist policies, though more successful than in the tsarist empire, had also encountered considerable resistance and were now increasingly discredited among both Jews and non-Jews. It even had an impact in Prussian Poland, the one area of former Poland–Lithuania where integration had seemed successful.

¹ Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, 372.

² *Ibid.* 9.

THE WAVE OF POGROMS OF 1881–2
AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The new reign of Alexander III began inauspiciously. Within six weeks of the assassination of his father on 1 March 1881 by a band of revolutionary terrorists, a pogrom broke out in Elizavetgrad, in the province of Kherson in the south. It was followed by others in Kiev and Odessa, where many of those involved were displaced peasants. Soon, however, the rioting spread to the countryside. Of 259 pogroms, 219 took place in villages, four in Jewish agricultural colonies, and only thirty-six in cities and small towns.³ The violence continued intermittently until March 1882, with outbreaks occurring in Balta and Podolia. In the final pogrom, which occurred in Nizhny Novgorod on 7 June 1884 and was accompanied by an accusation of ritual murder, ten Jews were hacked to death with axes. Altogether perhaps forty-five Jews lost their lives in these events, thirty-five in 1881–2 as well as the ten in Nizhny Novgorod in 1884. Many more were injured, and there was also considerable material damage.⁴ It was certainly the worst outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Europe since the Haydamak revolts of the late 1760s.

Earlier historians of Russian Jewry, notably Simon Dubnow and Ilya Orshansky, were convinced that the pogroms had been planned by the central authorities in order to divert revolutionary sentiments to a less dangerous target. More recently the work of Hans Rogger, John Klier, and Shlomo Lambroza has demonstrated that the pogroms were largely spontaneous in character and were above all a response to the growing stratification in the countryside which followed the abolition of serfdom. Most Jews did not benefit from the commercialization of Russian agriculture, but some did, and a small number, such as the sugar refiner Israel Brodsky in Kiev, became very wealthy. The apparent prosperity of the Jews provided an easy explanation for those who could not understand why the abolition of serfdom had not been followed by an improvement in the peasants' lot. Moreover, as Orshansky had already pointed out in his analysis of the 1871 pogrom in Odessa, anti-Jewish violence was provoked by the contrast between the Jews' inferior legal status and the perception of their economically privileged position. As he wrote prophetically in that year, 'Until such time as the divergence between the Jews' actual and juridical position in Russia is permanently removed by eliminating all existing limitations on their rights, hostility to the Jews will not only persist, but in all likelihood will increase.'⁵

³ On this, see Aronson, 'Geographical and Socio-economic Factors in the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia'.

⁴ I am indebted to John Klier for these figures.

⁵ Orshansky, *Evrei v Rossii*, 164, quoted in Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, 321. As Nathans points out, the article in which this passage appeared was originally written for the Odessa Jewish newspaper *Den* in 1871, but was cut by the censor. On this, see Klier, 'The Jewish *Den* and the Literary Mice, 1869–1871'. On the pogrom wave, see Klier and Lambroza (eds.), *Pogroms*, 39–134; Berk, 'The Russian Revolutionary Movement and the Pogroms of 1881–1882'; id., *Year of Crisis, Year of Hope*; Aronson, *Troubled Waters*; and Klier, 'The Concept of "Jewish Emancipation" in a Russian Context'.

The government for its part was disconcerted by the wave of pogroms, which it saw initially as the work of revolutionaries. It feared that this was part of a larger insurrection which had begun with the assassination of Alexander II, but it soon became apparent that these fears were misplaced, although reports from affected areas did refer to the exploitation by revolutionary agitators of the mood of uncertainty provoked by the assassination. Major-General P. I. Kutaisov, the special emissary sent to investigate the disorders, drew attention rather to the lack of determination shown in a number of cases by both the police and the army in containing the disorders. Their principal cause, in his view, was economic oppression, primarily of the peasantry, by the Jews, especially Jewish moneylenders and tavern-keepers.⁶ Similar views were expressed by Prince Petr Danilovich Svyatopolk-Mirsky, the governor-general of Kharkov, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, now the civil and military governor of Odessa, and A. R. Drenteln, the governor-general of Kiev. In Svyatopolk-Mirsky's view, the abolition of serfdom had left the peasants powerless in the face of the Jews:

In a word, in all spheres of public life, the Jews are a sinister force directed against the Russian people and the existing order of things, a force against which, in the eyes of the people, neither individual citizens nor the state can prevail. This may be the root of the conviction which has taken hold in the public mind, that the authorities, unable to deal with them in other ways, have permitted the despoiling of the Jews.⁷

According to Drenteln, neither revolutionary agitation nor religious hatred was the key element in the disorders, which were the result of the 'deep hatred of the common people (*narod*), Great Russian and even more Little Russian, for the ruthless and deceptive business practices of the Jews who victimize a trusting people, seek easy gain, and evade their taxes and public duties'.⁸

These themes were taken up by the Judaeophobe press and accepted by the new minister of the interior, Count Nikolay P. Ignatev, who had replaced the more liberal Mikhail Tarielovich Loris-Melikov on 5 May 1881.⁹ Ignatev's attitude to the Jews was conditioned by his populist Slavophilism, which saw the Russian peasantry as both the repository of national wisdom and in need of protection from predatory forces like the Jews, and his aggressive Panslavism, which had developed during his twenty-five years in the Foreign Ministry. During this

⁶ For Kutaisov's views, see the summary of the findings and recommendations of the Pahlen Commission, *Obschaya zapiska Vysshei komissii dlya peresmotra deistvuyushchikh o evreyakh v Imperii zakonov*, 80-2, 86-91, quoted in Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 134-5.

⁷ Quoted in Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 134.

⁸ Quoted *ibid.* 135.

⁹ On Ignatev as Minister of the Interior and his treatment of Jewish issues, see Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 133-44; Gessen, 'Graf N. P. Ignat'ev i "Vremennye pravila" o evreyakh 3 maya 1882 goda'; *id.*, *Zakon i sbizn'*, 153-61; *id.*, *Istoriya evreiskogo naroda v Rossii*, ii. 215-27. See also Zaionchkovsky, *Krizis samodержaviya na rubezhe 1870-1880-kh godov*, 413-19; Peretts, *Dnevnik E. A. Perettsa (1880-1883)*, 130-3.

period he held the posts of head of the Foreign Ministry's Asiatic Department and ambassador to Constantinople, in which capacity he clashed with Bismarck and Disraeli at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. It was his conviction that the healthy part of the nation, organized in traditional estates, could buttress the throne if appropriately consulted. He explained the disturbances as follows in a report to the tsar on 21 August:

Having recognized how harmful to the Christian population of the country is the economic activity of the Jews, their tribal seclusion, and religious fanaticism, the government for the past twenty years strove by a whole series of measures to promote their assimilation and almost equalize their rights with those of the native inhabitants. In the meantime, the anti-Jewish movement which began this year in the south . . . has proved irrefutably that in spite of all the government's efforts, the abnormal relations between the Jews and the indigenous inhabitants continue as before . . . The main reason for behaviour so uncharacteristic of Russians lies in circumstances of an exclusively economic kind. In the last twenty years the Jews, little by little, have taken over not only trade and production but, through rent or purchase, significant amounts of landed property. Because of their clannishness and solidarity, all but a few of them have bent every effort not to increase the productive forces of the country but to exploit the native inhabitants, and primarily the poorer classes. This provoked the protest of the latter, finding such deplorable expression in acts of violence . . . Having energetically put down the disorders and stopped the people from taking the law into their own hands in order to safeguard the Jews from violence, an even-handed government must immediately take no less energetic steps to remove the abnormal conditions which now exist between Jews and natives and protect the latter from that pernicious activity which, according to the local authorities, was responsible for the disturbances.¹⁰

In order to achieve this, Ignatev proposed to set up commissions in the fifteen provinces of the Pale of Settlement and in the adjacent province of Kharkov, chaired by the provincial governors and made up of representatives of the nobility, peasantry, local governments, and the Jews. The questions he put to them were designed to confirm the views he had expressed to the tsar. The commissions were to identify those aspects of the Jewish role in the economy which were particularly harmful and the obstacles that lay in the way of enforcing the laws on leasing and buying land, on lending money, and on selling spirits. They were to suggest legislative and administrative remedies to end Jewish evasion of the laws and to neutralize Jewish influence in those branches of the economy which were threatened by their dominance.

Ignatev, who was often criticized by contemporaries for his excessive sympathy with the peasantry (*muzhikofil'stvo*), was determined to end what he saw as the Jews' oppression of the rural population. On 19 October 1881 he set up yet another Jewish Committee, chaired by his deputy, D. V. Gotovtsev. It was somewhat different from earlier committees in that both it and its chairman acknowledged an

¹⁰ Quoted in Gessen, 'Graf N. P. Ignat'ev i "Vremennye pravila" o evreyakh 3 maya 1882 goda', no. 30, 1632.

intellectual debt to the ‘anti-Jewish movement abroad’.¹¹ At its first meeting, before any reports from the commissions had been received, Ignatev placed before it a proposal to deal with ‘the Jewish question in its totality’. Its recommendations included proposals to suspend further admissions to the interior ‘until the definitive solution of the Jewish question’, to return to the Pale artisans who did not follow their trades, and to introduce a *numerus clausus* in education as well as in town and county councils and assemblies. In addition, it proposed the removal of Jews from villages at the request of the commune (by simple majority in the case of money-lenders), the banning of Jews from the liquor trade in the countryside, and the restriction of their involvement in it in the towns. Jews were no longer to lease or buy land and would no longer be allowed to conduct business on Sundays and Orthodox holy days or to sell in villages goods they had not made themselves; their buying and selling of foodstuffs was to be closely supervised. The grounds for halting suits brought by Jews against peasants to enforce the payments of debts were to be widened, and no Jew who was not a qualified lawyer could represent himself before Justices of the Peace or peasant courts. The Society for the Promotion of Culture among Jews, ‘a branch of the Alliance Israélite Universelle’, was to be banned.¹²

The following February the Jewish Committee also produced a set of emergency measures whose aim was to forestall any revival of unrest in the countryside by reassuring the peasants through ‘a visible demonstration of the government’s concern for their protection from Jewish exploitation’. These proposed forbidding Jews to live outside towns and shtetels, to build, buy, or rent houses there, to own, lease, use, or manage land, or to sell liquor. Peasants could vote for the removal of Jews from their midst or petition for their exclusion from landlords’ estates by a simple majority of the village meeting rather than the two-thirds vote normally required. In addition, Ignatev himself proposed the restriction of the right of residence of Jewish artisans outside the Pale of Settlement to the towns of the interior and the prohibition of Jews from doing business on Sundays and Orthodox holy days. He put the package of measures before the Committee of Ministers on 4 March 1882.

By now Ignatev had received the reports of the provincial commissions.¹³ Although their conclusions were for the most part for further restrictions on the Jews, they did not provide overwhelming support either for his long-term objectives or for the immediate measures he proposed. Most called for a prohibition on Jews selling liquor to peasants or acquiring land in the countryside. There was less

¹¹ Dubnow, ‘Anti-evreiskoe dvizhenie 1881–1882 gg.’, 266.

¹² On these proposals, see Rogger, ‘Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs’, 60–1.

¹³ For the provincial commissions, see Rogger, ‘Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs’, 139–42; Pahlen Commission, *Obschaya zapiska Vysshei komissii dlya peresmotra deistvuyushchikh o evreyakh v Imperii zakonov*, 97–206, 212–17, 228–39; and Dubnow, ‘Anti-evreiskoe dvizhenie 1881–1882 gg.’, 88–109.

agreement on the leasing of land: four commissions wanted a complete prohibition on Jewish leaseholding in the countryside; five wished to see it prohibited for peasant land alone; another four advocated certain lesser restrictions and conditions. There was also division on the question of whether Jews should be able to trade in the villages: three commissions were for a complete ban on Jewish small traders while eleven were for some limitation.

At the same time there were also voices defending the Jews and opposing more restrictive policies. According to Count A. K. Sievers, the governor of the province of Kharkov, the only way to avoid Jewish violations of the law was by the widest possible granting of rights, although this would have to be a gradual process, with care taken to protect the peasantry. Jews should be permitted to purchase but not lease land since, like all owners, they would then have a long-term interest in its proper management. A number of commissions called for the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, usually on the grounds that this would diminish the Jewish population of their province.

Ignatev failed to persuade the Council of Ministers to accept all his proposals. Doubts were expressed about his claims that they were supported by the Jews themselves to increase their security, and about his mono-causal explanation of the pogroms. It was also argued that such a far-reaching change in policy could only be adopted by the normal legislative process in the Council of State. There was also opposition to the draconian nature of such a policy. In addition, M. K. Reutern, the chairman of the Committee of Ministers and former minister of finance, and the current minister of finance, N. K. Bunge, were alarmed at the impact the measures would have abroad and on economic stability in the empire. They were also impressed by the views expressed against more restrictive measures by Jewish lobbyists. The state comptroller, D. M. Solsky, was concerned by the way the government appeared to be giving in to mob pressure. The attack on the Jews would be followed by attacks on the so-called kulaks, the merchants, and landowners. 'In a word, if the authorities stand by passively, we can expect the development in the near future of the most terrible socialism.'¹⁴

At the same time, there was general support in the Council of Ministers for the view that the reason for the violence was the extensive indebtedness and dependence on the Jews of the Christian population, especially in the rural areas, a consequence of ignorance and illiteracy and of the Jewish success in exploiting the situation. This had enabled agitators to provoke violence, particularly in the face of insufficient firmness on the part of the authorities. The government should ensure that Jews had the protection of the law, but in order to defuse the situation some emergency measures were necessary. They thus proposed that future Jewish settlement in villages should be forbidden (this might help to forestall trouble),

¹⁴ Quoted by Peretts, *Dnevnik E. A. Perettsa (1880–1883)*, 133, who based his account of the meeting on what he was told by one or more participants.

and that Jews should be barred from buying or leasing rural land and from conducting business on Orthodox holy days. It was decided on fiscal and humanitarian grounds not to ban Jewish involvement in the liquor trade, although some restrictions were introduced. After receiving the assent of the tsar, these proposals became the Temporary Rules of 3 May 1882 and survived until 1917.¹⁵ The provisions were punitive, but could be circumvented in some cases by the bribery universal in the tsarist empire. Certainly the May laws gave considerable scope to arbitrariness on the part of government officials; from the late 1880s they seem to have been more stringently applied. They created a situation which has been described by Dubnow as a 'legislative pogrom'.

Perhaps as disappointing to the Russian Jewish intelligentsia was the response of Russian society to the pogroms. Many leading writers and intellectuals were inclined to blame the Jews for their own plight because of their 'oppression' of the peasantry, and to see the violence as potentially anti-government and revolutionary and therefore to be welcomed. Thus the radical *Otechestvennye zapiski* saw the pogroms solely as the manifestation of the inevitable conflict between the impoverished peasant and the urban middleman on whom he was dependent. Only two writers, Aleksey Nekrasov and the satirist Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin, expressed sympathy for the Jewish victims of the pogroms. Even writers with such impeccably liberal credentials as Leo Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev failed to raise their voices against the scourge of anti-Jewish violence.

These views were shared by the theorists of the developing Ukrainian national movement. The Ukrainian socialist Mykhailo Drahomanov highlighted the class divisions among Jews in Ukraine, seeing the majority of Jews there as 'unproductive', and warning before 1881 of the danger of anti-Jewish violence. He blamed the pogroms on the obsession of the Jewish intelligentsia with achieving equal rights, rather than dealing with the pressing social conflicts in Ukraine, which meant that they closed their eyes to the abnormal relationship between Christians and Jews in the countryside. He also found the Jewish socialists at fault, since they had turned their backs on the Jewish milieu and submerged themselves in the larger all-Russian movement. Even less sympathetic to the Jewish plight was the leading Ukrainian intellectual Nikolay Kostomarov, who had already asserted that 'some' Jews engaged in ritual murder. (On this, see Volume I, Chapter 12.) In 1883 he published *Kievskaya starina*, a Ukrainian historical journal, a fictionalized account of a Jewish ritual murder accusation in seventeenth-century Ukraine which led to a pogrom, which he clearly intended to be understood as an analogy of the events of the previous two years.¹⁶

¹⁵ Gessen, 'Graf N. P. Ignat'ev i "Vremennye pravila" o evreyakh 3 maya 1882 goda', no. 31, 1682; Komitet Ministrov, *Istoricheskii obzor deyatel'nosti Komiteta Ministrov*, iv. 183.

¹⁶ On Ukrainian attitudes, see Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855-1881*, 204-21; Horn, 'Problem żydowski w twórczości Dragomanowa'; and Rudnytsky, 'Mykhailo Drahomanov and the Problem of Ukrainian Jewish Relations'.

One of the reasons why the Council of Ministers had agreed to the Temporary Regulations was that there was a consensus that so complex a problem required a more thorough investigation than had been undertaken by Gotovtsev's Jewish Committee. Accordingly, they asked the tsar to appoint a High Commission for the Study of Existing Laws on the Jews, which would examine not only the proposals of the committee but the entire corpus of laws and regulations bearing on the Jews. This recommendation was taken up by the new minister of the interior, Dmitry Tolstoy, who succeeded Ignatev, dismissed in May 1882 when he proposed that the tsar summon a *zemskii sobor*, a national consultative assembly, an idea dear to the Slavophiles. L. S. Makov, the first chairman of the commission and a former minister of the interior, died shortly after his appointment, and for most of its life the commission was headed by Count Konstantin Ivanovich Pahlen, a member of the Council of State and minister of justice from 1867 to 1878, who spent five years thoroughly investigating the issue.

The Commission recognized the seriousness and complexity of the problem with which it had to deal. It began by making a thorough study of the size of the Jewish community in the tsarist empire, which had been greatly exaggerated by those convinced that the Jewish population was increasing enormously and that the Jews were concealing their true numbers. Its own investigations revealed that in 1881 the Jewish population had reached 4 million, 4 per cent of the total population of the empire. One million lived in the Kingdom of Poland, where they made up 13 per cent of the inhabitants; 2.9 million, or 12.5 per cent of the total population, lived in the fifteen Russian provinces of the Pale of Settlement, with the heaviest concentration in the nine former Polish provinces. Of that number, 1.19 million were to be found in the cities, 1.13 million in the small towns, (*mestechki*), and 580,000 in the villages. There were 164,000 Jews outside the Pale: 66,000 in the three Baltic provinces (3 per cent of the total, with 13,000 in the villages); 54,000 in thirty-two Great Russian provinces (2 per cent of the total, with 13,000 in the villages); 29,000 in the Caucasus (mostly non-Ashkenazim); 12,000 in Siberia; and 3,000 in central Asia.

The fears of a flood of Jews into the countryside were clearly misplaced. In the Pale of Settlement there was only one rural district (out of 151) where the percentage of Jews reached 15.7 per cent. Elsewhere it ranged from 5 to 10 per cent in twenty-seven districts and 1 to 5 per cent in 106 districts. There were also seventeen districts in which it was below 1 per cent. Jewish leaseholding and landowning were also on a much smaller scale than alarmists had claimed. In the twelve provinces for which reliable figures existed it was 3.9 per cent and 1.4 per cent respectively, although there were three provinces in which 10.6 per cent of the land was in Jewish hands, and five in which the percentage was between 5.3 and 7 per cent. These figures appeared to be falling as a result of the May laws.

The commission concluded that 'without doubt' the pogroms had been caused by the impact of Jewish economic activity on the Christian population. However,

it was willing to concede that the negative impact of economic developments in the countryside was not solely attributable to the Jews, and that in some cases their actions had positive consequences. Jewish over-representation in trade was the result of the lack of other opportunities, and meant that the Pale of Settlement had a better-developed retail network than the interior provinces. Jews made up only half of those engaged in petty retail trade and, although the number of Jewish shops was growing, these mostly dealt with items essential for the rural population. The Jewish role at local fairs and markets was also largely beneficial. The bitter competition between Jewish shopkeepers, and between them and others in this field—Armenians and Greeks in the south, Germans in the west, and Old Believers—outside the Pale of Settlement—meant that prices were kept low and also that most Jewish traders were increasingly impoverished. Jews were responsible for abuses in the liquor trade and in the provision of credit, but there was no conclusive evidence that these problems were better outside the Pale of Settlement. The abuses linked to Jewish economic activity were not unique and would disappear as the Russian economy became more developed and the Jews were absorbed in other fields of activity.

The commission found that economic conflict was not the whole explanation for anti-Jewish violence. There was a much longer history of hostility, and the pogroms had escalated because of poor policing. This was shown by the success of Governor-General E. I. Totleben of the north-western provinces in preventing their spread to his area. The government was obliged both to protect the Jews against mob violence and to intervene in defence of the peasants in cases where they were obviously exploited. At the same time, a long-term solution was required. This could not be achieved by excessive paternalism in relation to the peasants, who needed to learn how to protect their own interests, as many of them were doing—a reflection of the commission's faith in the largely benevolent operation of the market. This faith was qualified to the extent that the commission believed that some safeguards of peasant interests, as in the prohibition of the leasing of land to Jews, were still needed. Some relaxation of the legislation restricting Jews was necessary, in part because of the need to avoid totally alienating a population concentrated on the empire's western border. Not only had the restrictions led to massive evasion, but the failure to make it possible for Jewish young people educated in Russian schools to find an appropriate place in Russian society was responsible for the large-scale participation of Jews in the revolutionary movement. Accordingly, the majority of the commission held that the government should attempt to weaken Jewish particularism and exploitation by the gradual removal of exceptional legislation. This would ultimately bring the Jews together with other Russian subjects in the framework of the common legal system, although the goal of this gradual emancipation should not be 'merging', which had not occurred anywhere 'because of the too sharply pronounced characteristics of the Semitic race'. Rather, the aim should be the coexistence of the

various nationalities of the empire and the inculcation in them of a desire to serve its interests.¹⁷

The recommendations of the commission were rejected by the tsar, probably on the advice of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, from 1880 the director-general of the Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. Both he and Alexander had a more hostile view of the Jews than the majority of the commission. Alexander accepted Ignatev's position that Jewish exploitation was the principal cause of the pogroms. Since they constituted a dangerous threat to public order, action needed to be taken to remove the root cause. In addition, the tsar was prey to older prejudices. When advised to end the repression of the Jews, he had observed, 'But we must never forget that the Jews crucified our Lord and shed his precious blood.'¹⁸ Like Pobedonostsev, he took a much more paternalistic and romantic view of the peasantry than the commission and saw the principal danger to the empire in the developments which had followed the emancipation of the serfs: the beginnings of an industrial revolution and the emergence of a more urban and mobile society. These years saw a tightening of government controls over the peasantry. Laws adopted in 1886 and 1893 made it more difficult to leave the village commune, while the creation in 1889 of the office of land captain, to whom the peasants were answerable, subordinated them still more firmly to state control.

Pobedonostsev, who had been Alexander's tutor and to whom he entrusted the education of his son and successor, Nicholas II, had an enormous influence on him.¹⁹ Originally a supporter of the reforms of the 1860s, Pobedonostsev had quickly become disillusioned, and linked what he saw as the negative developments of the 1860s and 1870s with growing Jewish influence. In his eyes, the Jews were responsible for the revolutionary movement and the ruin of the old nobility, whose estates they were buying up, and were increasing their power through their control of financial institutions and the press. They were flooding the school system and using the rights enjoyed by high school graduates in order to spread across the whole empire. They were particularly dangerous to the emancipated peasants, who, with the removal of the close supervision they needed, had taken to drink and fallen prey to usurers and Jews. The state needed to take firm action to create a stable and prosperous peasant class and avoid the disruptive effects of the industrialization which the empire required if it was to remain a great power.

Pobedonostsev opposed the use of violence against the Jews, although he permitted anti-Jewish sentiments to be expressed in the synodal press. Instead, he wanted actions to restrict what he saw as their harmful activity, which would also

¹⁷ For the findings and recommendations of the Pahlen Commission, *Obschchaya zapiska Vysshei komissii dlya peresmotra deistvuyushchikh o evreyakh v Imperii zakonov; Evreiskaya entsiklopediya*, v. 862–3; Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 144–51; and id., 'Russian Ministers and the Jewish Question, 1881–1917', 62–6.

¹⁸ Pobedonostsev, *Pis'ma Pobedonostseva k Aleksandru III*, i. 344, quoted in Rogger, 'The Beilis Case', 49.

¹⁹ On Pobedonostsev, see Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*.

have the effect of preventing mob attacks on them. The reign of Alexander III saw a great extension of such restrictions. Many of them limited Jewish opportunities for employment. In 1882 the Ministry of War set a quota of 5 per cent on medical assistants and doctors, and the latter were forbidden to have Christian orderlies (feldshers) because of their 'corrupting' influence. The ministers of transport and of state domains limited the number of Jews (and Poles) in their departments, while in 1886 a quota for the number of Jews who could be licensed as brokers by commodity exchanges or serve on their boards of directors was introduced first in Baku and subsequently in at least eight other cities. The Jewish right to lease or own land was further restricted in the nine formerly Polish provinces and was extended to the Kingdom of Poland. From 1887 strict limitations were introduced on Jewish ownership and exploitation of mines and oil wells and were further tightened after 1892, while the statutes of savings and loan associations were screened to make sure that they were not dominated by Jews.²⁰

Other restrictions affected the right of permanent residence. In 1887 the Ministry of the Interior interpreted the May laws to apply to changes of domicile from one village to another, and closed Rostov-on-Don and Taganrog to Jewish newcomers who did not hold higher academic degrees. There were frequent expulsions from the border zone, and many small towns were declared villages, thus excluding Jews. In addition, new laws on local government in 1890 and 1892 denied the vote and elective office to Jews in the cities of the Pale. The authorities could nominate Jewish councillors, but they could not exceed 10 per cent of the total. In 1891, 20,000 Jews were summarily expelled from Moscow, while in that and the following year the rights of Jewish veterans of the army of Nicholas I to reside in the city and its province were abolished. There were also expulsions from other cities. In 1893 a ministerial circular of 1880 which had exempted Jews who had illegally taken up residence outside the Pale before that date was revoked. In 1895 former merchants of the first guild and their descendants were forced back into the Pale, and in 1896 Jewish soldiers registered in communities of the Pale were kept from spending their leave outside it. After 1899 merchants of the first guild wishing to move to Moscow required special permission from the minister of finance and the governor-general.

The position of the Jews in the army also deteriorated. In 1882 they were refused assignment to the fleet and to certain military units such as fortress artillery, border guards, and quarantine guards. In the same year a norm of 5 per cent of total staff was set for Jewish military doctors and feldshers. In 1886 restrictions were placed on the movement of Jews from one recruitment district to another, and fines were levied on the families of those who failed to report for service. In 1887 Jewish volunteers were denied the right to take the entry examin-

²⁰ For these and subsequent restrictions, see Rogger, 'Russian Ministers and the Jewish Question, 1881-1917', 68-9.

ation for officer rank. In 1888 Jewish pharmacists who were called up from the reserves were forbidden assignment to pharmaceutical duties in the service.²¹

Educational opportunities were particularly affected. In 1883 the St Petersburg Mining Institute restricted Jewish admissions to 5 per cent, while two years later a quota of 10 per cent was established at the Kharkov Technological Institute. In 1884 the country's only Jewish vocational school was shut down, and in 1887 educational quotas for secondary schools and universities were established by ministerial order: 10 per cent in the Pale, 5 per cent in the rest of the country, 3 per cent in Moscow and St Petersburg. In the following years the doors of a number of specialized schools and institutes were closed altogether. In 1889 the minister of justice suspended new admissions of Jews and Muslims to the Bar; the suspension remained in effect—for Jews only—for fifteen years. Some measures were merely punitive. In 1893 the regulations forbidding the adoption of Christian first names were tightened and more stringently enforced.

Some members of the government thought these measures inadequate to control the Jewish threat. In 1890 Vyacheslav Plehve, the assistant minister of the interior and head of the conference which had been entrusted with the work of the Pahlen Commission after its dissolution, drafted a proposal for further restrictive legislation.²² This appears to have called for the establishment of ghettos in a number of large cities, the reduction of Jewish commerce, and the return to the Pale of the Jews who had formerly had the right to leave it. Those whom the May laws had allowed to remain in the villages were to be removed in stages. Young people would have to leave rural localities, even if they were born there, once they came of age, while anyone who had temporarily absented himself from the village in which he was registered was not to be readmitted. Criminal proceedings would be brought against those who concluded informal or oral rental agreements with Jews, and controls over Jewish moneylenders, tavern-keepers, traders, and artisans would be made more stringent.

These proposals aroused the opposition of the minister of finance, Ivan Vyshnegradsky, who voiced his objections to the minister of the interior, I. N. Durnovo. As a result they were never discussed in the Council of State. Vyshnegradsky, who was not opposed to all restrictions on Jewish activity, may have felt that after the international outcry caused by the Moscow expulsions these measures would have an adverse effect on Russia's international economic position. Jewish lobbying may also have played a role in their rejection. When they heard of this proposal, a group of rabbis, members of an official advisory commission on religious affairs, sought the aid of the former minister of finance

²¹ This legislation is set out in Mysh (ed.), *Rukovodstvo k russkim zakonom o evreyakh*, 491–513.

²² For descriptions of the Plehve proposals, see Rogger, 'Russian Ministers and the Jewish Question, 1881–1917', 69–70; Zaionchkovsky, *Rossiiskoe samodержavie v kontse XIX v.*, 135; Sliozberg, *Dela minuvshikh dnei: Zapiski russkogo evreya*, ii. 165–8; Dubnow, 'Furor judophobicus v poslednie gody tsarstvovaniya Aleksandra III'.

Nikolay Bunge. He may have given them some support, since, although he was alarmed at what he saw as the growth of Jewish influence, which made limitations on Jewish activity necessary, he was against further restrictions.²³

Vyshnegradsky and his successor, Sergey Witte, the finance minister from 1892 to 1903, were less successful in opposing the restrictions introduced in the years 1892 and 1894 on mining and oil companies with Jewish or foreign shareholders or directors, since, with respect to them, the issue of national security could be invoked.²⁴ In his memoirs Witte stressed how strongly he had opposed the restrictions placed on the Jews. However, he had made an exception in the establishment of a state liquor monopoly in the Pale, which was approved by Alexander III on 11 July 1894, arguing that only in this way could the negative impact of the Jewish tavern be countered.²⁵

The accession of Nicholas II did not see any significant changes in Jewish policy. Nicholas, like his father, had little sympathy for the Jews, and extended the restrictive structure put in place after 1881. Bunge's cautious approach was confirmed when he became chairman of the Committee of Ministers. He continued to maintain, as he had during the discussions on Ignatev's proposals, that village Jews were essential to the peasants as artisans and suppliers of goods, but that their anomalous situation, in that they were not members of the peasant commune, was bound to create conflict. To alleviate this, he came to hold that they should be subject to the jurisdiction of peasant institutions and bear the same fiscal obligations and labour duties as peasants. At the same time, he believed that the ban on Jews leasing or buying land should be upheld.²⁶ This was clearly little more than a recipe for the gradual expulsion of the Jews from the villages, and it was at odds with a number of official studies stressing the importance of Jewish artisans and grain brokers and calling for the relaxation of the May laws.²⁷

In response, Nicholas, who had made clear his opposition to the ending of the Pale of Settlement and his concern about Jewish purchases of land outside the Pale, in December 1895 ordered the minister of the interior, I. L. Goremykin, to conduct an investigation into how far the regulations should be modified. Aware of Nicholas's views, Goremykin moved slowly. In February 1897 he told the Council of Ministers that more investigation was required, and it was only in 1899 that a commission was finally set up. It called for the end to the ban on Jews leasing or buying noble land and for granting Jews with the right to live outside

²³ Sliozberg, *Dela minuvshikh dnei*, ii, 128–9.

²⁴ On this, see Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 154–5.

²⁵ On this issue, see Vitte, 'Evreiskii vopros pri vvedenii piteinoi monopolii', and Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 155–6.

²⁶ Bunge set out his views in a long, unpublished memorandum which circulated in government circles after the death of Alexander III, for whom it was prepared. On the memorandum, see Snow, *The Years 1881–1894 in Russia*, and Rogger, 'Russian Ministers and the Jewish Question, 1881–1917', 70–4.

²⁷ On these, see Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 157.

the Pale of Settlement the right to live in the countryside, while at the same time proposing that villages should be entitled to expel 'undesirables'. In the end, no action was taken.²⁸

The need to do something remained. Thus on 27 March 1902 the minister of the interior, D. S. Sipyagin, who had succeeded Goremykin in 1899, submitted a memorandum to the Council of Ministers proposing that some localities in the Pale which had lost their rural character through the development of railways or industry should no longer fall under the May laws. This question was taken up by his successor, Vyacheslav Plehve.²⁹ Given his past record, his support for it may seem surprising. However, he told an acquaintance in May 1902 that he was not against some extension of Jewish rights, and that, when he had put forward his proposals in 1890, 'I was then the executor of another's orders.'³⁰ As a long-standing member of the Ministry of the Interior he was concerned, above all, with law and order, and seems to have been willing to make some concessions to the Jews to lessen their hostility to the government. Thus, on 10 May 1903, while prohibiting the acquisition by Jews of land outside the towns of the interior, he allowed Jewish settlement in over a hundred localities in the Pale which could be classed as towns. In December he added another fifty-seven localities to the list. In August of that year he informed governors of the provinces of the Pale that he intended to summon a New Commission for the Revision of Jewish Legislation, and invited them to submit their views. On 6 March 1904 he halted expulsions of Jews from localities where they did not have the right to live, and in June the prohibition on Jewish residence within 30 miles of the western border was abrogated, although the area was now subject to the May laws preventing Jews from living in the villages. In July the Committee of Ministers approved Plehve's request that certain categories of Jews be exempted from 'unnecessary' and 'impractical' provisions of the laws. At the same time the lower quotas at some higher educational institutions, introduced in the 1890s, were restored to the level of 1887. Nevertheless, further movement on this issue was forestalled by the growing revolutionary crisis and the outbreak of renewed and more brutal anti-Jewish violence.

JEWISH REACTIONS: EMIGRATION, ZIONISM, AUTONOMISM, SOCIALISM

The response of much of the educated Jewish elite to the deteriorating situation was to reject the basic principle, inherited by the integrationists of the 1860s from

²⁸ On Goremykin's handling of this issue, see *Komitet Ministrov, Osobyi zhurnal* (1906), no. 157, 1, and Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 157–8.

²⁹ On Plehve's actions and opinions, see Judge, *Plehve*; Mysh (ed.), *Rukovodstvo k russkim zakonam o evreyakh*, 120–3, 346, 354; Gessen, *Zakon i bizn'*, 172–3; Heilbronner, 'Count Aehrenthal and Russian Jewry, 1903–1907'; Rogger, 'Government, Jews, Peasants and Land after the Liberation of the Serfs', 159; and id., 'Russian Ministers and the Jewish Question, 1881–1917', 77–83.

³⁰ Beilin, 'Snosheniya prof. Yanzhula s Pleve po evreiskomu voprosu, 1902 g.', 329.

the maskilim, that Jews needed to reform themselves in order to make themselves acceptable to wider society. The new outlook was well expressed by the Hebrew writer Moses Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), who wrote in *Derekh teshuvah* (Path to Repentance):

The pogroms taught me their lesson . . . I became convinced that it was not lack of high culture that was the cause of our tragedy, but that we are aliens. We will still remain aliens when we are as fully stuffed with education as a pomegranate is full of seeds . . . We are aliens everywhere. We have to return home.³¹

This revelation gave him a sense of liberation:

The stony burden that had lain on my heart for so long has completely fallen away . . . My eyes shine, my spirit soars, I am another man. The dew of rebirth has fallen on me again and it has melted the fearful ice that covered my heart for so many years.³²

For others the rejection of Russification and acculturation was more painful. In the words of a young member of the Russian Jewish intelligentsia:

When I remember what has been done to us, how we have been taught to love Russia and the Russian speech, how we have been induced and compelled to introduce the Russian language and everything Russian into our families so that our children know no other language but Russian, and how we are now repulsed and persecuted, then our hearts are filled with sickening despair from which there seems to be no escape. This terrible insult gnaws at my vitals.³³

Under these circumstances the elitist politics of the Jews of St Petersburg and, to a lesser extent, of Odessa, expressed in the Society for the Promotion of Culture among Jews, had much less support and was challenged by a much more populist approach, which was less concerned to transform the Jews in the way sought by the tsarist authorities. Certainly the crisis of Russian Jewry provoked a series of new responses on the part of Jewish society. It led, firstly, to flight in the form of large-scale emigration. It saw the emergence of major new political movements which rejected integration and stressed peoplehood as the chief marker of Jewish identity. It also fostered a new literary climate, which involved an increased sense of the value of traditional Jewish life, which had been so bitterly attacked by the Haskalah, and gave a new dynamism to both Hebrew and Yiddish literature. (On this, see Chapter 7.) Finally, it stimulated the first development of a Jewish national historiography.

Emigration from the tsarist empire was not a new phenomenon. Before the 1880s it had been severely restricted by the authorities and had not taken place on a large scale. Under the provisions of the criminal code, leaving Russia for the purpose of settling abroad was a punishable offence, although the penalties imposed on those who returned were not very severe. The law remained on the books, however,

³¹ Lilienblum, *Path of Repentance* (Heb.), 46. ³² *Ibid.* 47.

³³ Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, ii. 326–7.

and had some deterrent effect on would-be emigrants.³⁴ The deterioration in the conditions of Jewish life in the Pale, and the improvements in transatlantic communication with the development of the steamship, made emigration a mass phenomenon. The government now seemed more willing to countenance it. When criticized for his approach to Jewish issues, the minister of the interior, Nikolay Ignatev, seemed, in January 1882, to invite those who objected to his policies to leave Russia: 'The western frontier is open to the Jews. They have already taken ample advantage of this right and their emigration has in no way been hindered.'³⁵

Indeed there was considerable debate in Jewish circles about the desirability of emigration. This was first expressed in the pages of *Rassvet* in August 1881.³⁶ On this occasion the established integrationist leaders of Russian Jewry, Horace Guenzburg and Leon Bakst, had the support of the traditional rabbinate in opposing emigration, which they saw as a desperate step which could have disastrous consequences for those who undertook it. They were convinced that Ignatev's outburst did not reflect government policy. Indeed, according to an Austrian diplomat writing to Vienna on 24 July 1881, the tsar had asked Guenzburg and his associate Abram Zak to use their influence to prevent emigration. At a meeting of Jewish notables in St Petersburg in April 1882, the financier Samuel Polyakov reported that Ignatev had denounced the encouragement of emigration as 'an incitement to sedition'. This led those present to reject 'the thought of organizing emigration as being subversive of the dignity of the Russian body politic and of the historical rights of the Jews to their present fatherland'.³⁷

They were opposed by the intellectuals, who were deeply shocked and outraged by the wave of pogroms. Typical of their reaction was that of the poet Judah Leib Gordon, who now called on Russian Jewry to emigrate, principally to the United States, where

the light of freedom
Shines on all men and brightens all souls
Where all creatures of God are loved the same.³⁸

Those who favoured emigration received support for their plans from international Jewish organizations, notably the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which provided assistance to emigrants to the town of Brody, across the Austrian frontier. By the following year the situation had changed. The new minister of the interior, Dmitry Tolstoy, took the wind out of the sails of those who favoured mass

³⁴ Mysh (ed.), *Rukovodstvo k russkim zakonam o evreyakh*, 336–40, 346; Yanovsky, 'Russkoe zakonodatel'stvo i emigratsiya'; and Rogger, 'Government Policy on Jewish Emigration', 177.

³⁵ M. Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety*, 38.

³⁶ On this, see Frankel, 'The Crisis of 1881–82 as a Turning-Point in Modern Jewish History'.

³⁷ Orbach, *The Pogroms of 1881–1882*, 24–8; Gelber, 'The Pogroms in Russia' (Yid.), ii, 487; Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, ii, 306–7; Rogger, 'Government Policy on Jewish Emigration', 178–9.

³⁸ J. L. Gordon, 'My Sister Ruhamah' (Heb.), in Gordon, *The Works of Judah Leib Gordon: Poetry*, 31.

emigration by declaring that he would take firm action against any further pogroms, making 'order' the watchword of his policy. In addition, in a circular of 21 June 1882 he ordered the local authorities to bring to strict account anyone who encouraged or assisted the emigration of Jews. He even made possible the repatriation of Jewish refugees in German and Austrian border towns, an initiative which was taken advantage of by as many as 3,000 of the 20,000 Jews who had fled in 1881 and 1882.³⁹ By now, both the Turkish and the United States governments had come out against mass Jewish immigration.

However, driven by the economic and political difficulties faced by Jews in the tsarist empire and the opportunity to relocate to the New World, the wave of emigration did not abate. There were also attempts to give it a more organized character. Thus, in 1892 the tsarist authorities were approached by the Austrian Jewish philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch, who asked them to permit the creation of emigration committees under the aegis of his newly created Jewish Colonization Association, which would furnish exit permits and provide free transportation to the border. From there they would emigrate to Argentina. On 8 May 1892 the tsar approved a set of rules governing the activities of the association which effectively legalized its activities. The hoped-for stream of emigrants to Argentina did not materialize, however, and in the next ten years barely 6,000 Jews moved there.⁴⁰ In July 1903 Plehve was even prepared to meet Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, in order to see whether Plehve could enable a large-scale Jewish exodus. In 1906 the government took the step of establishing an inter-ministerial commission at the Ministry of Trade and Industry to draft a new law to regulate emigration, which had now risen to perhaps 200,000 a year, many of whom were not Jewish. It proved a difficult task to reach agreement because of jurisdictional disputes between the Ministry of Trade and that of the Interior, and the final draft, which was accepted by the Council of Ministers in early 1914, was never ratified by the Duma.⁴¹

There was also large-scale movement of the population from the shtetls to the rapidly expanding towns of the tsarist empire, particularly Odessa, Warsaw, and Łódź, and from the impoverished north-eastern provinces to the Kingdom of Poland and Ukraine. In addition, emigration took place on a substantial scale from the impoverished province of Galicia and continued from Prussian Poland. It led to the emergence of new centres of east European Jewish life in Vienna, Berlin, and western Europe, and in North and South America and the Antipodes. The inter-

³⁹ Aronson, 'The Attitudes of Russian Officials in the 1880s toward Jewish Assimilation and Emigration', 13; Mysh (ed.), *Rukovodstvo k russkim zakonam o evreyakh*, 338.

⁴⁰ On this initiative and the JCA (Russian: *Evreiskoe kolonizatsionnoe obshchestvo*, EKO) in general, see *Evreiskaya entsiklopediya*, viii, 503–7; Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, ii, 414–21; Szajkowski, 'How the Mass Migration to America Began', 309; and Rogger, 'Government Policy on Jewish Emigration', 180–1.

⁴¹ On this, see Yanovsky, 'Russkoe zakonodatel'stvo i emigratsiya' (Eng. edn.), 263, and Rogger, 'Government Policy on Jewish Emigration', 181–2.

action of these centres with the east European *heyim* (homeland) was to become an increasingly important feature of the life of world Jewry, as was the transformative effect that the emigrants had on the communities to which they moved.

Emigration was on an enormous scale. Between 1880 and 1930 a total of 1,749,000 Jews left Russia for the United States, while the total number of Jewish emigrants from the tsarist empire in this period reached nearly 2,285,000. Table 1.1 shows the intensification of the process and its relation to the worsening situation in the tsarist empire.

Table 1.1 Emigration of Jews from the tsarist empire to the United States, 1871–1914 (average per year)

Years	No.
1871–80	4,100
1881–6	12,856
1886–90	44,829
1900–10	82,223
1911–14	75,144

Sources: Kaplun-Kogan, *Die jüdischen Wanderbewegungen in der neuesten Zeit, 1880–1914*, 19, 25; Joseph, *Jewish Immigration to the United States from 1881 to 1910*, 98–104, 162–3.

New ideologies, almost all based on the ideas of nationalism or socialism, now began to develop as more and more Jews began to reject integration both because it seemed impossible to achieve and because it seemed to require the abandonment of core Jewish values. It is perhaps not surprising that nationalism should have had a major impact on Jewish life at this time. It has, after all, become the dominant political movement of our times; the world today is divided into nations and all empires built on other principles have collapsed. As Theodore Weeks has pointed out:

Whereas in 1800 most Europeans derived their sense of identity from local, religious, and social categories (i.e. village X, Catholic, peasant), by 1914 nationality as a principle of self-definition had in most places overwhelmed these old defining characteristics. The combined effects of industrialization, railroads, state educational systems, military service, and simply a higher degree of personal mobility created a situation where large numbers of Europeans came to regard themselves primarily in ethnic and national terms.⁴²

This inevitably affected the tsarist empire, where Russian hegemony was increasingly challenged by national movements. The 1890s saw a revival of Polish nationalism and the crystallization of a Lithuanian and Ukrainian national consciousness in the eastern territories of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. It also saw other nationalities within the empire, such as the Finns, the Balts, the

⁴² Weeks, 'Assimilation, Nationalism, Modernization, Antisemitism', 20.

Armenians, the Georgians, and the various Muslim groups, becoming much more self-conscious and assertive.

In recent years there has been considerable debate on the nature of nationalism. Nationalist ideologues have stressed the timeless and primordial character of national identity. In fact, it is clear that nationalism is, above all, a product of the political changes of the nineteenth century—the waning of supranational ideologies and the growing importance of popular sovereignty. What has marked the debate about the character of nationalism has been, rather, a difference of emphasis. On the one hand there are those, like Benedict Anderson, who see nationalism as a wholly new phenomenon and the nation as an ‘imagined community’ which emerged in response to the development of modern methods of communication and new political conditions. This position is disputed by people like Anthony Smith who accept the modern character of nationalism as a political movement, but emphasize the extent to which the national idea in different areas was built on an older core of ethnic self-consciousness—what he calls the ‘ethnie’.⁴³

In the case of the Jews, it is clear that, within the traditional Jewish identity, there were many elements, above all the call for the return to Zion and the constant emphasis on Jewish life in Erets Yisra’el, which provided nationalist ideologues with a firm foundation on which to build a modern national identity. Indeed, one of the reasons why the national idea proved rather more successful than its socialist rivals among the Jews of eastern Europe was because it harmonized so well with the traditional Jewish view of the world.

In the emergence of the Jewish national movement, one can distinguish three different components, which were often combined. There were those who became nationalists because of the persistence of antisemitism and what they perceived as the impossibility of Jewish integration. Then there were those who became nationalists because they believed integration was being bought at too high a price. Assimilation would lead to the disappearance of the Jewish people or, at best, to the loss of all that was authentically Jewish. Finally, there were those who attempted to fuse nationalism with another ideology, either with socialism or with some form of Jewish religious identity.

Among those who became Zionists because of their belief in the incurable Judaeophobia of the Christian world were the former integrationist and veteran of the Crimean War Leon Pinsker (1821–91) and the repentant maskil Moses Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910). Pinsker, a doctor in Odessa, had in the 1860s been one of the editors of the integrationist weekly *Sion*. In his pamphlet *Autoemancipation* (published in 1882) he argued that emancipation in Russian conditions was a chimera. Judaeophobia was too deeply ingrained. It resulted neither from the economic or social position of the Jews nor from the religious

⁴³ For Benedict Anderson’s views, see *Imagined Communities*; for those of Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, *The Nation in History*, and *Nationalism*. Some other important contributions to the debate are Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.

prejudices of Christianity. The Jews were incomprehensible to the larger society: were they a religious, a national, or a social group? They were seen as a ghost, an unnatural survival, and they aroused the panic which ghosts provoke. The answer was to 'normalize' the situation of the Jews, and through self-emancipation make them like the other nations which were coming to political maturity in nineteenth-century Europe. The Jewish 'ghost' should be transformed into a real being by establishing the Jewish people on a territory of their own, whether in Palestine or in America. In order to achieve this goal a general Jewish Congress should be called and entrusted with the preparation of a plan to achieve this.

Lilienblum had been a major figure in the earlier Hebrew revival and had advocated radical religious reform. From the autumn of 1881 he began in a series of articles to call for Jewish colonization in Palestine. The Jews were everywhere alien, because total assimilation was not possible. They were tenants, tolerated by the landlord as long as they were convenient. But at the first conflict between them the landlord will evict the tenant. In the Middle Ages this was justified on religious grounds; now national and economic factors were cited. Jewish suffering could only be ended if the Jews could find a country where they themselves could be the landlord. Such a country was Palestine, the ancient Jewish fatherland. 'We must undertake the colonization of Palestine on so comprehensive a scale that in the course of one century the Jews will be able to leave inhospitable Europe almost entirely and settle in the land of our forefathers to which we are legally entitled.'⁴⁴

Other people who fell into this category, believing integration to be impossible, were the founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, and his fellow-journalist Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), born in Odessa. Herzl, who worked for the liberal *Neue Freie Zeitung* in Vienna, became convinced in the 1890s that assimilation was a mirage. Jabotinsky distinguished between the 'antisemitism of people' and the 'antisemitism of things'. The former was the result of prejudice and could be minimized; the latter was the consequence of the inevitable economic conflict caused by the competition between Jewish middlemen and the rising middle class of nations like the Poles and Ukrainians and could not be avoided. He rejected liberalism as an illusion:

It is a wise philosopher who said, 'Man is a wolf to man' . . . Stupid is the person who believes in his neighbour, good and loving as that neighbour may be; stupid is the person who relies on justice. Justice exists only for those whose fists and stubbornness make it possible for them to realize it.⁴⁵

Among those who saw assimilation and the loss of the Jewish national substance as the principal dangers facing the Jewish people was Asher Ginsburg (1856–1927), who wrote under the pen-name Ahad Ha'am (One of the People). (For more on

⁴⁴ Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, ii. 329.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, 164.

Ahad Ha'am, see Chapter 7.) Ginsburg, educated at a yeshiva and subsequently at a Jewish high school, was the most brilliant Hebrew essayist of his generation. He was convinced that before large-scale colonization of Palestine could prove successful, the Jewish people would have to be transformed and permeated by the national idea. He saw this idea in elevated terms: 'We must propagate the national idea and convert it into a lofty moral ideal.'⁴⁶ This was his goal in establishing an elitist semi-masonic organization, the Benei Moshe, in 1890s. He believed that Palestine could never accommodate all of the Jewish people and opposed the 'negation of the diaspora' of Herzl, Nordau, and similar thinkers. The goal should be to establish a national centre on the historic soil from which the Jewish people had sprung, which would radiate its influence over the whole of the diaspora. Only in such a centre could the Hebrew language revive and Jewish culture develop freely and naturally. It was these ideas which he propagated tirelessly in his essays.

Similar views were held by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (pseudonym of Eliezer Yitshak Perelman, 1858–1922), the architect of the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language who in his youth had been close to the Russian Populists (Narodniki), and by the younger German Zionist Martin Buber (1878–1965).

Finally, there were those who combined Zionism with socialism or religion. Of the Zionist Socialists, the most important were Nahman Syrkin (1868–1924), Ber Borochov (1881–1927), and Aharon David Gordon (1865–1922). Syrkin had joined Hovevei Zion (the Lovers of Zion) but had also been close to the Russian revolutionary movement. After a brief imprisonment for revolutionary activity he moved to Germany and attended the first and subsequent Zionist conferences, where he attacked the dominance of 'bourgeois and clerical elements'. At the same time he denounced Jewish socialists for whom 'socialism meant first of all the abandonment of Jewishness just as the liberalism of the Jewish bourgeoisie led to assimilation'.⁴⁷ He thus called for Jewish communal settlement in Palestine and the creation of a Jewish society there in which workers would predominate. He set up a number of small Zionist-socialist groups in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and wrote pamphlets for distribution in the tsarist empire. He briefly returned to Russia between 1905 and 1907, settling subsequently in the United States, where he became the leading figure in Po'alei Zion (the Workers of Zion).

Ber Borochov was the main ideologue of the Po'alei Zion movement. He argued that the world was divided vertically into classes and horizontally into nations. The class struggle takes place in these horizontal groupings. If an entire nation is subjugated by another, the dominant group attempts to impose its values on those it has conquered. The conquered nation is therefore oppressed by the

⁴⁶ Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, iii. 49. On Ahad Ha'am, see the biography by Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*.

⁴⁷ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, xv. 653.

bourgeoisie of the victorious group and culturally subjugated. National liberation has to precede the class struggle in the nation. The specific problem of the Jews resulted from both national oppression and their unhealthy class structure. The Jewish people was like an inverted pyramid, with a narrow base and too large a summit. It needed to be transformed by making the majority workers and peasants. This could only be accomplished in Palestine, where socialism could be built on the basis of the toiling Jewish masses. In the diaspora one should seek cultural autonomy, as was advocated by the ideologists of Austro-Marxism, the supra-national socialist movement in the Habsburg empire, which had a considerable influence on Borochof and his followers.

Aharon David Gordon was influenced by Russian Populism and Slavophile romanticism, and settled in Palestine in 1903. In his view the Jews were unhealthy because they had lost their connection with the land. For them to become a nation again, they needed to transform themselves into farmers in the ancient homeland. In his words:

We have as yet no national assets because our people have not paid the price for them. A people can acquire land only by its own effort, by realizing the potentialities of its body and soul, by unfolding and revealing its inner self. This is a two-sided transaction, but the people comes first—the people comes before the land. But a parasitical people is not a living people. Our people can be brought to life only if each one of us recreates himself through labour and a life close to nature.⁴⁸

Among those who sought to combine Zionism with religion were Isaac Jacob Reines (1839–1915) and Ze'ev Jawitz (1847–1924). Reines, who was born in Karolin, in Belarus, studied at the yeshiva in Volozhin before holding the post of rabbi in Šaukėnai (Shavkany), Švenčionys (Święciany), and Lida. He attempted while in Lida to found a modern yeshiva where secular subjects would be studied. His first attempt in 1891 was frustrated by Orthodox opposition, but after 1905 he succeeded in creating a thriving institution. He was one of the first supporters of Hovevei Zion and was immediately attracted to Herzl's political Zionism, participating in the first Zionist conferences. In 1902 he convened a meeting of a group of rabbis and traditional laymen who founded a religious–Zionist movement to which they gave the name Mizrahi (from *merkaz ruhani*, spiritual centre; the name also alluded to the fact that Jews were returning to the East (Mizrah)). Another of those involved in its foundation was the writer Ze'ev Jawitz, who was born in Kolno, in the western part of the Kingdom of Poland, and was a contributor to Perets Smolenskin's monthly journal *Hashbaḥar*. He set out his views in an article, 'Migdal hame'ah' (Tower of the Century, published in 1887), in which he united his support for a romantic version of the return to Zion with German-style religious orthodoxy.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 376.

⁴⁹ It was published in Rabinowitz (ed.), *The Assembly of Israel* (Heb.), i.

The emergence of Jewish nationalism was a phenomenon which took place on a wider stage than the tsarist empire. Indeed, one of its strengths was that it brought together Jews from the areas of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth who still retained strong links with their Jewish heritage with more acculturated Jews from central Europe. The latter were concerned both with the disruptive effect which the crisis of Russian Jewry would have on the position of the more integrated Jews of central and western Europe and with the unnecessary and humiliating compromises that had been made in pursuit of the goal of integration into their societies. The evolution of the Zionist movement owed much to the interaction between these two groups, and its development was encouraged by the movement to central Europe of east European Zionists, among them ideologists like Smolenskin, who established himself in Vienna, and the later generation of Russian Jewish university students who were compelled to study in the West because of restrictions in the tsarist empire.

There now began to emerge in the tsarist empire Zionist groups, such as *Ahavat Zion* (The Love of Zion), *Kibbutz Nidhei Yisrael* (The Ingathering of the Wanderers of Israel), and, most important, *Hovevei Zion*, the brainchild of Pinsker and Lilienblum. The organization held its initial meeting in November 1884 in Katowice, in German Silesia, just across the border from the Kingdom of Poland, in order to evade the surveillance of the tsarist police. By 1885 it had nearly 14,000 members and began to encourage agricultural colonization in Palestine. It was granted legal status in the tsarist empire in 1890 as the Society for the Support of Jewish Farmers and Artisans in Syria and Palestine. It never became a mass movement and was unsuccessful in its goal of obtaining the support of the Russian Jewish financial elite. However, it did create a new sort of Jewish settlement in Palestine. As a result of the waves of immigration which became known as the ‘first aliyah’, some fifteen agricultural colonies were established and 20,000 new settlers brought to Palestine, who differed strikingly in their nationalist ideology from the existing Jewish inhabitants, the ‘old Yishuv’. Some progress was also made in the creation of a Hebrew and national school system in Palestine and in reviving the Hebrew language.⁵⁰

Needless to say, these achievements, significant though they were to be for the later development of the Yishuv, could not significantly alleviate the growing crisis of Russian Jewry. A second wave of Zionist activity was sparked off by the development of political Zionism and the holding of the first International Zionist Congress in Basel in August 1897 organized by Theodor Herzl. Herzl’s call for a Jewish state, expressed in the pamphlet *Der Judenstaat*, which was published in 1896, echoed many of Pinsker’s ideas in its call for the concentration of the Jews in a separated territory, whether in Palestine or in Argentina. What was new about Herzl was his charisma as a repentant supporter of integration and a

⁵⁰ On these developments, see Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, and Vital, *Zionism*.

well-known columnist for the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse*, the strongest protagonist of the integrationist cause in the Habsburg monarchy. In addition, like Pinsker, Herzl had a clear, if oversimplified, political vision. The establishment of the Jewish homeland was to be achieved by the creation of Jewish representative bodies. These would enter into negotiations with governments who would cede to the Jews an appropriate territory under an international protectorate in which the Jewish masses could be resettled. The financial costs of this operation would be borne jointly by the governments concerned and by the international Jewish financial elite.

This bold plan, with its assertion that all that was necessary was the exercise of political will—‘If you only will it, then it is no dream’, in Herzl’s phrase—electrified the flagging Hovevei Zion movement in the tsarist empire. Representatives of both Western and Eastern Jewry assembled at the first Zionist Congress. Already the conflict between the two aspects of the movement—that which sought a haven for the threatened Jewish masses and that which was above all concerned with the creation of an authentic Jewish national culture—was clear. Of the four articles of the programme adopted at this conference, three dealt with the political and financial aspects of the attempt to settle the Jewish masses in Palestine and only one called for the ‘strengthening of Jewish national feeling and self-respect’.⁵¹

Generally speaking, the principal supporters of political Zionism were to be found in German-speaking central Europe, while the stronghold of cultural Zionism was located in the tsarist empire, as was evident in subsequent annual conferences, in Basel in 1898 and 1899, in London in 1900, and again in Basel in 1901. Great efforts were made on both the political and the cultural planes. On the political front, a Jewish Colonial Trust and a Jewish National Fund were created, and diplomatic negotiations were undertaken with the Turkish and other governments in order to obtain a ‘charter’ which would make possible the Jewish colonization of Palestine. On the cultural front, strong efforts were undertaken to promote Hebrew, to create a Jewish school system based on national principles, and to ‘conquer the communities’ for Zionism. When the Russian Zionists met at their conference in Minsk in 1902, they paid particular attention to cultural issues, establishing two educational committees, one Orthodox, the other progressive, which were to foster national principles in their respective school systems. Ahad Ha’am was also invited to submit a report on the ‘spiritual regeneration of Judaism’, and a resolution was adopted which called for the intensification of Zionist cultural activity. The rapid growth of Zionism in the tsarist empire after the first Zionist Conference can be gauged by the fact that, by the year of the Minsk conference, nearly 70,000 shekel payers (members) had been organized

⁵¹ Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, iii. 44.

into almost 500 societies. Religious Zionism also began to expand, and by its second conference in Lida in March 1903 Mizrahi had over 200 branches in the tsarist empire and had also established groups in central and western Europe.

On the larger political scene less was achieved. Herzl's negotiations with the Turkish sultan, the German emperor, and a number of other European governments in order to obtain a Zionist charter making possible the Jewish colonization of Palestine all proved abortive. The Jewish Colonial Trust proved unable to achieve its objective of raising \$10 million for its purposes, a sum which was in any event much less than would have been needed. The attempt to accelerate Jewish settlement in Palestine was also unsuccessful. Indeed, as Dubnow has pointed out, 'the strength of the movement lay, not in the political aims of the organization, which were mostly beyond reach, but in the very fact that tens of thousands of Jews were organized with a national end in view'.⁵²

In the tsarist empire cultural and political mobilization, which was described as *Gegenwartsarbeit* (work in the present), came to take precedence over the longer-term goal of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Certainly, the Zionists achieved an impressive degree of political mobilization in the early years of the twentieth century. A wide spectrum of views emerged, from those, like Max Emilievich (Emmanuel) Mandelstamm in Kiev, who supported Herzl's concept of political Zionism, to the majority, led by people like Abraham Menahem Ussishkin and Jehiel Tschlenow, who mostly had been active in Hovevei Zion and who wished to combine political and cultural activity.

At the same time, the early years of the twentieth century were difficult for the Zionists. The failure of the Turks to accept large-scale Jewish settlement in Palestine led Herzl, who was preoccupied with the deterioration in the situation of the Jews in eastern Europe, to accept a British suggestion that Jews be settled in British-controlled East Africa. This provoked a split in the world Zionist movement between Territorialists, willing to accept an area for Jewish settlement other than Palestine, and the Palestinophiles, who were particularly strong in the tsarist empire. In addition, Plehve saw the decisions of the Minsk conference of 1902 as abrogating the Zionist undertaking not to engage in politics in Russia, and, accordingly, in 1903 he banned the activities of the movement, except for propaganda encouraging settlement in Palestine.⁵³

A movement which was close to Zionism in that it saw itself as national in character, but which rejected Zionism's 'Palestinocentrism' and lack of interest in the diaspora, was 'national autonomism'. Its principal ideas have been set out with admirable clarity by its principal ideologist, Simon Dubnow. From around 1903, when he lost faith in the possibility of Jewish integration in the tsarist empire, he began to argue that the Jewish diaspora had always made up a single unit, and that

⁵² Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, iii. 46.

⁵³ On these developments, see Almog, *Zionism and History*, 254–304; Halpern and Reinharz, 'Nationalism and Jewish Socialism', 240–1.

its local components had sought and achieved far-reaching autonomy. The concept of national autonomy was based on the assumption

that all sections of the Jewish people, though divided in their political allegiance, form one spiritual or historico-cultural nation, which, like all national minority groups in countries with a mixed population, are in duty bound to fight in their several lands at one and the same time not only for their civil equality but also for their national rights—the autonomy of the Jewish community, school and language . . . The fate of universal Jewry ought not to be bound up with one single centre. We should take into account the historic fact of a multiplicity of centres of which those that have the largest numbers and can boast of the most genuine development of a national Jewish life are entitled to the hegemony of the Jewish people.⁵⁴

Dubnow set out his ideas in a series of ‘letters’ on ‘the Old and New Judaism’. In them, confronted with the rise of intolerant ethno-nationalism in Europe, he argued, under the influence of the Russian Orthodox philosopher Vladimir Sergeevich Solovev, that the Jews should not establish a rival Jewish ‘national egoism’,⁵⁵ but should cultivate a ‘national individualism’ which did not aim to deprive other nations of political freedom or cultural autonomy.⁵⁶ In a multi-national state the government was bound to set limits to the autonomy they could concede to individual nationalities, which should not go beyond the point at which such autonomy conflicted with that granted to others. Since the Jews, in his view, had always existed in a state of ‘national individualism’, they were particularly well suited for a state based on this form of autonomy. In his words, ‘The ideal of a spiritual nation is in its essence an ethical one, and such is precisely the national ideal of Judaism.’⁵⁷

Another advocate of the idea of autonomism, or ‘diaspora nationalism’, was Chaim Zhitlovsky (1865–1943). Like his friend S. Y. Ansky (the pseudonym of Solomon Zainvil Rapoport, 1863–1920), he was born in Vitebsk and had joined the Russian Populist movement *Narodnaya Volya*. Disillusioned by the wave of pogroms of 1881–3, he began to argue that the Jewish identity had been preserved by the Jewish religion, which could provide the tools to create a secularized identity which would protect the national existence of the Jews expressed in cultural, religious, and linguistic autonomy. He remained sympathetic to the socialist ideal, and in his pamphlet *A Jew to Jews*, published in London in 1892 under the pseudonym I. Chasan, he called on Russian Jewish radicals and revolutionaries to embrace Jewish nationalism. His attempt to combine nationalism and socialism seems to have had an influence on the evolution of the General Jewish Workers’ Alliance (the Bund) in the early twentieth century. Along with Ansky and Viktor Chernov, Zhitlovsky was also among those who organized the Russian

⁵⁴ Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, iii. 54–5.

⁵⁵ On this, see Veidlinger, ‘Simon Dubnow Recontextualized’, 425.

⁵⁶ Dubnow, ‘Pis’mo tret’e: Etika natsionalizma’, in his *Pis’mo o starom i novom evreistve* (1897–1907), 61.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 62.

Socialist Revolutionary Party in Berne in 1893. Zhitlovsky argued for the recognition of Jewish national rights and was a tireless advocate of the Yiddish language; however, he defined Jewish national rights in a relatively narrow linguistic sense.⁵⁸

The other movement which was to transform the ideological landscape of Russian Jewry was socialism. The emergence of socialist movements across Europe was the product of two developments: the progress of industrialization, particularly in western and central Europe, which brought about the emergence of a class of industrial workers, and the success of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in articulating an ideology for this working-class movement, a 'scientific socialism' which they claimed, unlike earlier utopian versions, identified the forces which underlay the development of society and which would therefore ensure the ultimate triumph of their ideas.

From its inception the socialist movement was plagued by deep divisions. In constitutional states a division developed which was to split the movement during the First World War between the advocates of revolutionary change and those who sought to achieve their goals gradually and by parliamentary means. The key question which divided these two groups was whether the capitalist system was capable of being reformed.

The tsarist empire was an autocracy, and even after the revolution of 1905–7 socialist activity of all types was savagely repressed. Here the divisions within the socialist movement were of a different type. They centred on a number of issues. One was tactical: did one need a conspiratorial party to struggle against the tsarist regime, or should one rather favour mass agitation as a means of promoting change? The first form of organization was favoured by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and, in a different way, by the Polish socialist Józef Piłsudski until his break with socialism in 1908. A party based on mass agitation was favoured by the Mensheviks and the majority of the Polish Socialist Party, which emerged from a split with the Bolsheviks in 1906. A second was the role of the peasantry in the revolution. In western and central Europe the socialist movement had been suspicious of peasants, who had been used to suppress the 1848 revolution and who were the mainstay of conservatism in a number of countries. However, in the tsarist empire the impoverished and land-hungry peasantry, which had received insufficient land after the abolition of serfdom, became a potentially revolutionary force by the end of the nineteenth century. The Social Revolutionaries, the direct descendants of the populists of the 1860s and 1870s, saw themselves as the spokesmen for this radical anti-government force. The Mensheviks, who were the most Western of the Russian socialist groups, shared the Western suspicion of

⁵⁸ On the early Social Revolutionary movement, see Hildermeier, *The Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party before the First World War*; Melancon, 'The Socialist Revolutionaries from 1902 to 1907'; Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*.

the peasantry, while Lenin saw the peasantry as a force which could be used to attack the autocracy: their revolutionary sentiments could be exploited, but the revolution would have to be controlled by a small, tightly knit group of professional revolutionaries fully acquainted with Marxist doctrine.

A third issue over which the various socialist parties disagreed was the question of the non-Russian nationalities in the tsarist empire, which was becoming increasingly pressing. Lenin and the Bolsheviks saw this problem, as they saw the issue of the peasants, in instrumental terms: the national sentiments of different groups could be exploited, but socialism's aim was world revolution. The working class had no fatherland and after the socialist millennium nations would be abolished, although some form of national autonomy could be granted to groups with a common territory, language, economy, and culture. The counterpart of the Bolsheviks in the Polish lands was the Social Democracy of the Congress Kingdom and Lithuania, a title deliberately chosen by its founders to stress that the party was not aiming to win support in areas outside the tsarist empire. Its leaders, some of them of Jewish origin, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Jogiches, others ethnically Polish, such as Julian Marchlewski, argued that the different Polish partitions were now integrally linked with the economies of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. To seek Polish independence would hamper the revolutionary struggle, and the Social Democracy should rather ally itself with revolutionary socialist groups in Russia, especially the Bolsheviks. They were opposed by the Polish Socialist Party, which saw itself as a party of Poles in all the partitions, although it was divided on how to achieve its joint goals of socialism and Polish independence.

The socialist ideology had a strong appeal to Jews, both the growing Jewish artisan class and the smaller proletariat, and also the more radical sections of the Jewish intelligentsia. By 1898, as a result of the restructuring of Jewish life, there were nearly half a million Jewish artisans in the Pale, 194,000 employed in the textile trades, 85,000 in cotton goods, and 58,000 in food production. There were also about 50,000 Jews employed in medium- and large-scale factories. Vilna, which grew in size during this period to nearly 200,000, was an important centre of communications with the rest of the empire and became one of the centres of socialist agitation.

There were a number of reasons why the socialist idea appealed to Jews. In the first place, it seemed a way to break out of Jewish isolation and begin a more promising form of integration into wider society. From the 1860s Jews had begun to involve themselves in the revolutionary movement with this goal in mind. Jews were a significant minority in the Russian Populist movement *Narodnaya Volya*, particularly in its later incarnations. Thus, in the 1880s five out of its seven leaders were Jewish (Abram Bath, Boris Orzhikh, Natan Bogoraz, Zakhary Kogan, and Lev Yakovlevich Sternberg) and Jews made up between a fifth and a third of the membership in the south and south-west between 1885 and 1890. Other Jewish

leftists, including Arkady Kremer (1865–1935), Lidiya Akselrod, Leon Jogiches, and Tsemah Kopelson, joined the growing socialist movement.⁵⁹

The hope of transcending narrow ethnic divisions through socialism was encouraged by Józef Piłsudski, who was to be a dominant figure in Polish politics in the first half of the twentieth century and who was himself a socialist at the beginning of his political career. He argued that

the less antisemitism there is among Christians, the easier it will be to unite the social forces . . . and the sooner a workers' solidarity will emerge: a solidarity of all who are exploited and wronged. Jew, Pole, Lithuanian, we are equally exploited . . . we are all equally wronged by Moscow . . . Let us encourage Jewish comrades whenever we meet them.⁶⁰

Certainly, socialism seemed to offer a road to integration into wider society at a time when integration of the Jews seemed no longer achievable under the existing political system in east central Europe. As Ezra Mendelsohn has written of conditions in the Pale: 'intellectuals [who] were no longer able to identify with the old Jewish culture nor free to become assimilated into Russian life . . . could at least identify with "the people", the peasant, or the proletariat'.⁶¹

Many Jews were attracted to the socialist idea consciously or unconsciously because it represented a secularized version of the age-old Jewish messianic longing. Indeed, the messianic impulse, which was only one element in traditional Judaism, became in its new secular form the dominant passion which motivated many Jewish socialists.⁶²

Finally, many Jews were driven to the socialist movement by the abject poverty of the Jewish proletariat. This is strikingly described by a former Jewish communist activist, Waclaw Kuchar. Describing the life of his family in Łódź, where his father was a handloom weaver just before and after the First World War, he wrote:

The ceiling of the room was very low and there was no running water, toilet, or electricity, not to mention other necessities . . . Every bucket of water had to be carried through the long back yard up to the fourth floor. Every bucket filled with garbage or excrement had to be carried down from the fourth floor to the sewer. Seven of us lived in this room . . . my father worked as a pieceworker . . . From daybreak in the summer, and by the light of an oil lamp late in the evening in the wintertime, spindles with colourful threads on the big handloom beat out the measures of the weaver's life of resignation and helplessness.

Pieceworkers were exploited: they had no insurance and they lived and worked without work regulations. My father's work was tied to the seasons. During the summer months, he

⁵⁹ For more information about the involvement of Jews in revolutionary activities, see Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Russia*; Naimark, *Terrorists and Social Democrats*, 92–5, 202–11; N. Levin, *While Messiah Tarryed*; and Schapiro, 'The Role of the Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement'.

⁶⁰ Piłsudski, 'Kwestia żydowska na Litwie', 7.

⁶¹ Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale*, 29.

⁶² Herberg, 'Socialism, Zionism and the Messianic Passion', 68.

wove heavy wool scarves with fringes for the following winter, and during the winter months, lighter scarves for the next summer . . . The average working day for a pieceworker was twelve to fourteen hours, and in the peak of the season everyone wanted to weave as much as possible, so after only a few hours of sleep, my father was again at the loom . . . When he returned home with money he always bought some treat on his way . . . On Fridays he would buy fish for Saturday. It wasn't a carp or a pike, it was a small fish, cheap and full of bones, yet the tradition was maintained . . . Weekdays, in my childhood, dinner always consisted of one course: a thick soup when we had some money, and a thin one when there was hardly any work. Even if we had enough to buy some meat, it was boiled in the soup; each of us got a little piece on a plate so we could feel full longer.⁶³

Jews were found in all the major socialist movements in the tsarist empire, the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Polish Socialist Party, the Social Democracy of the Congress Kingdom and Lithuania. There was, in addition, a specifically Jewish socialist party, the General Jewish Workers' Alliance, usually called the Bund, which was founded in September 1897 in Vilna. (Because of its railway connections to St Petersburg and Warsaw, the presence there of the Teachers' Institute which had replaced the rabbinical seminary in 1874, and the poverty of the artisan population, Vilna became a major centre of socialist agitation.) Until the founding of the Bund there was no fixed demarcation line between the Russian and Jewish socialist movements. The formation of the Bund pre-dated the establishment of the Russian Social Democratic Party of Labour, which united the various Russian socialist groupings. As Allan Wildman has written, 'The Jewish Social Democrats worked simultaneously in both [movements] without the slightest conflict of loyalty.'⁶⁴ The founders of the Bund, like the Russian Jewish intellectual Arkady Kremer, saw themselves as socialists and internationalists. They started to agitate using Russian among the Jewish workers in places like Vilna but shifted to Yiddish when they realized that this was the only way to reach their desired audience.

Kremer described the aims of the Bund shortly after its foundation as follows: 'A general union of all Jewish socialists will have as its goal not only the struggle for general Russian political demands; it will also have the special task of defending the interests of the Jewish workers, of carrying on the struggle for their civil rights, and, above all, of combating the discriminatory anti-Jewish laws.'⁶⁵

Throughout its history the Bund had difficulty in finding the right balance between its general socialist objectives and its specifically Jewish goals. It joined the Russian Social Democratic Party of Labour shortly after its founding as a separate autonomous group. At its third conference, held in Kovno in 1899, it rejected a resolution calling for national equality for the Jews on the grounds that

⁶³ W. Kuchar, 'Wspomnienie łódzkie', MS in the possession of G. Zlatkes.

⁶⁴ Wildman, *The Making of a Workers' Revolution*.

⁶⁵ *Arkady*, 164, quoted in N. Levin, *The Jewish Socialist Movements 1871-1917*, 258-9.

emphasis on national differences would undermine the solidarity of the working class. At its fourth conference on 24–8 May 1901 it accepted a resolution that in the tsarist empire ‘various nationalities, should become a federation of nationalities with full national autonomy for each, regardless of the territory it occupies . . . The concept of “nationality” should also apply to the Jewish people.’⁶⁶ The Bund’s growing interest in national cultural autonomy, partly dictated by the disadvantage at which their illegal status placed them in their conflicts with their rivals on the Jewish street, led to clashes with the Russian Social Democratic Party of Labour, from which the Bund seceded in 1903. The party still stressed its leftist credentials, giving priority to the revolutionary struggle over efforts to improve the immediate situation of Jewish workers. In 1905, during the height of the revolutionary agitation, the Bund finally came out in favour of ‘national–cultural autonomy’, with Yiddish as the language of education, and also called for the recognition of the rights of Jews to use Yiddish in public life.⁶⁷

One movement, Po’alei Zion, attempted to combine socialism with Jewish nationalism. It was founded in 1900 and soon began to compete effectively with the Bund, partly because of its use of national slogans, which resounded on the Jewish street, and partly because its stress on the need to strive for practical goals rather than revolution attracted those sceptical of Bundist maximalism.⁶⁸

The party also benefited from the bizarre attempt of the Okhrana, the Russian secret police through their agent Sergey Zubatov to undermine support for revolutionary socialism among Jews by creating an Independent Jewish Labour Party which would support limited economic goals. Zubatov persuaded some arrested Bundists to participate in this scheme and was able to ensure that the police allowed the movement to function without hindrance. In Minsk the party had the support of the head of the provincial police and was given a printing press, which it used to create its own paper. Moreover, Zubatov organized trade unions and public lectures for workers. The Po’alei Zion leadership believed that there was common ground between their movement and that of the Independent Jewish Labour Party in their opposition to revolutionary activity, and together the two groups were able to pose a serious challenge to the Bund in the Pale of Settlement. The Independent Jewish Labour Party proved to be something of a sorcerer’s apprentice, and when it organized a large-scale strike in Ukraine, Zubatov was ordered to halt its activities and was moved by Plehve to St Petersburg, where he could be

⁶⁶ As quoted in Hertz, ‘The Bund’s Nationality Program and its Critics in the Russian, Polish and Austrian Socialist Movements’, 57.

⁶⁷ On the Bund, see Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia from its Origins to 1905*; Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale*; Peled, *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale*; and Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality*.

⁶⁸ On the Po’alei Zion, see Borochoy, *Nationalism and the Class Struggle*; M. Mintz, ‘Ber Borokhov’; and Abramovitch, ‘The Poale Zion Movement in Russia’.

more easily controlled. The party had now lost its *raison d'être* and disbanded after the Kishinev pogrom in the spring of 1903.⁶⁹ (On this, see Chapter 2.)

Nationalism and socialism were not the only ideologies to struggle for dominance among the Jews. The liberals and integrationists also remained a significant force in Russian Jewish life and began to reformulate their views to take into account the stress on Jewish peoplehood which had been one of the consequences of the new intellectual climate after 1881. Journals such as *Voskhod* and *Budushchnost'* were much more sympathetic to those who saw the Jews as more than merely a religious group, and developed a concept of integration which would still leave some space for a Jewish ethnic identity in a liberal and constitutional empire. These views were attractive particularly to those who had graduated from Russian universities in the 1860s and 1870s, and a group of them, lawyers, doctors, and journalists, formed a loose circle around the lawyer Aleksandr Yakovlevich Passover (1840–1910) in St Petersburg. All were affected by the increasing restrictions on Jewish employment. Lawyers, who had placed their hopes in Alexander's reform of the judicial system, were particularly hard-hit by the ban on new Jewish entrants to the profession introduced in 1889, which was to last for fifteen years. They also saw the measures introduced since 1881 as largely responsible for the impoverishment of Russian Jewry and its many pathologies. Later members of this group were men who were to play a key role in Russian Jewish life in the next generation, the lawyers Maksim Vinaver, Genrikh Sliozberg, Mikhail Kulisher, Oskar Gruzenberg, and Leon M. Bramson, the historians Mark Wischnitzer and Yuly Brutskus, and the archaeologist Salwian Goldstein. Most were born between the 1860s and early 1870s, but they came from different areas of the Pale and had diverse family backgrounds. They differed too in their political approach, but all saw their future in a liberal Russia. Many, after moving to St Petersburg, had worked in organizations like the Society for the Promotion of Culture among the Jews of Russia or the Society for the Promotion of Artisan and Agricultural Labour and were committed to the transformation and modernization of Jewish society. Their location in St Petersburg brought them in touch with the key integrationist figures of the previous generation, above all Horace Guenzburg, whose financial backing was of critical assistance.⁷⁰

The group first became active in response to the trial of David Blondes, a Jewish barber accused in 1900 in Vilna of ritual murder. They now described themselves as the Defence Bureau, and, with Guenzburg's support, were able successfully to conduct Blondes's defence, in which the principal role was taken by

⁶⁹ On Zubatov, see Pospelovsky, *Russian Police Trade Unionism*, and Schneiderman, *Sergei Zubatov and Revolutionary Marxism*.

⁷⁰ On these developments, see Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia 1900–1914*, 13–18.

the Russian lawyers V. D. Spasovich and Mironov, who were assisted by two members of the group, Maksim Vinaver and Oskar Gruzenberg.⁷¹

They also now began a campaign to counteract antisemitic propaganda and provide accurate information about the Russian Jewish community. For this purpose a press bureau was established, and a legal advice bureau was set up to deal with cases like that of Blondes. They sought the support of prominent Russian literary personalities such as Maksim Gorky, Leo Tolstoy, Vladimir Solovev, and Vladimir Korolenko, and also attempted to lobby key government figures. Although a parallel organization was created in Moscow, they did not succeed in establishing themselves elsewhere. It was the shock of the pogrom in Kishinev in March 1903 and the need to react strongly to it which brought the Defence Bureau to the centre of Jewish political life.

These years also saw a new vitality on the part of the Orthodox. Some hoped they would be shown greater understanding in the new conservative political climate. Thus, in a letter to Pobedonostev in 1882 a group of Orthodox Jewish emigrants in London argued that the state in its own interest should support the Orthodox rather than the 'maskilim' (by which they meant all non-traditional Jews), who sought only to erode the foundations of faith and tradition. The consequences were dangerous for both state and society: 'The lack of faith among the Jews not only encourages nihilism, but spreads atheism [which leads to] a corruption of morals among the general population.' It was true that 'the Jewish people are convinced that the government is hostile to the Jewish faith', but this was the consequence of the way the government had favoured the maskilim. 'Government authorities always patronize the educated, aristocratic Jewish party while oppressing individuals of the Orthodox religious party, who exhort the people to be true to their faith.'⁷² The elections to the last Rabbinic Commission in 1879 were a clear case in point. Although the Jewish population had overwhelmingly chosen 'spiritual rabbis', the intervention of the maskilim had induced the provincial governors to select only 'those without any religious learning'. If the Russian state wished to destroy the harmful influence of revolutionary nihilism and to win the trust of the Jewish people, it should allow the spiritual rabbis to educate Jewish children from a young age and 'entrust them with independent authority over Jewish religious issues'.⁷³

The new political dynamism of the Orthodox was evident in the elections to the Rabbinical Commission in late 1893. The Orthodox were determined to be properly represented on the commission and made considerable efforts to canvass their supporters and distribute leaflets.⁷⁴ They encountered less opposition from the other sections of the community, who had been disillusioned by the activities of the last Rabbinic Commission and who were also preoccupied with other issues.

⁷¹ On the Blondes trial, see S. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*, 62; Pozner, 'Bor'ba za ravnopravie', 169; and Kats, 'Memoirs of my Life' (Yid.).

⁷² J. H. Lipschitz, *Zikhron ya'akov*, ii. 77.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 208.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Indeed the commitment of a significant part of the political elite to radical political change was used as an argument by the Orthodox to obtain official support.

The government tried to establish a balance on the commission. It was composed of three leading Orthodox figures, Rabbi Tsevi Hirsh Rabinovich, the preacher at the main synagogue in Vilna, who became its chairman, Rabbi Samuel Mohilewer (1824–98) of Białystok, and Rabbi Luria Hillel Mileikovski of Mogilev, and four ‘enlightened’ laymen, Hermann Barats, Yakov Gottesman, Samuil Simkhovich, and Avraham Katlovker, the state rabbi of Kishinev.⁷⁵

The commission, which met for ten weeks, from 19 November 1893 to 28 January 1894, examined a total of twenty-seven cases, most of which related to ‘marriage, religious rituals, and divorce—all of which had a personal character’.⁷⁶ The Orthodox made their presence strongly felt, and their intervention encouraged the Orthodox public, who hoped the commission could intercede with the authorities on other matters. Thus a group of printers in Vilna sent a petition to Rabbi Rabinovich asking him to ‘endeavour to remove the prohibitions on the printing of two sections of the *Shulḥan arukh* namely, “Hoshen mishpat” and “Even ha’ezer”, as well as select writings of the *posekim* [rabbinic authorities] that are banned in Russia’. According to Jacob Halevi Lipschitz, the rabbi raised the issue in the context of other religious questions and obtained permission to publish the requested books.⁷⁷

The Orthodox also sought to work together with other sections of the community in dealing with the increasingly pressing problem of the dual rabbinate (on this, see Chapter 8). Though most opposed Zionism, there were also those who became active in the religious Zionist movement Mizrahi.

The new political climate was intensified by a transformed literary atmosphere, which is discussed in Chapter 7. What characterized it was above all a new respect for the previously scorned values of traditional Jewish life, along with a new appreciation of the Yiddish language, the language of the people. Alexander Tsederbaum had created the basis for a Yiddish reading public through *Kol mevaser*, the Yiddish supplement of *Hamelits*, and the 1880s and 1890s saw the establishment of Shalom Abramowitsch and the emergence of Shalom Aleichem and Isaac Leib Peretz as major literary figures. Hebrew literature also developed a new vitality. The break with the artificial Hebrew style of the Haskalah freed the language for important developments in both prose and poetry and saw the emergence of major poets like Hayim Nahman Bialik and Saul Tchernichowsky.

These years also saw the beginnings of a Jewish national historiography, mostly in Russian, as a series of monographs and general works attempted to elucidate the history of the Jews of Poland–Lithuania and Russia. A key role here was

⁷⁵ On these individuals, see C. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia*, 368 nn. 26–8.

⁷⁶ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv, St Petersburg (RGIA), f. 821, op. 8, d. 293, ll. 151 ob.–152, quoted in C. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia*, 250.

⁷⁷ J. H. Lipschitz, *Zikbron ya'akov*, ii. 208–9.

played by Simon Dubnow. He saw historical consciousness, which he described as ‘historicism’, as fundamental to his view of the world. In his autobiography he wrote:

In historicism, I found a counterweight to religious and philosophical dogmatism . . . I myself have lost faith in personal immortality, yet history teaches me there is collective immortality and that the Jewish people can be considered as effectively eternal, for its history coincides with the full span of world history. The study of the Jewish people’s past, then, encompasses me as well in something eternal. This historicism admitted me to the national collective, drawing me out of the circle of personal problems onto the broad highway of social problems, less profound but more relevant.⁷⁸

In Odessa in October 1892 he issued in *Voskhod* a stirring appeal to Russian Jews to take up the study of their history:

And so, let us set to work! Our work will take place on the soil of the past, but its harvest will belong entirely to the present and the future. I appeal to all right-thinking people, Jews and non-Jews, to cooperate in the sacred work—the writing of Russian Jewish history. We will show that we, the Jews of Russia, are not only a branch of the most historical people, but we ourselves have a rich past and we know how to appreciate it. An ancient people, grown grey with age, made wiser by the experience of many centuries, and with an unparalleled past—is it possible for such a people to turn away from its own history?⁷⁹

Dubnow’s appeal evoked a strong response from the St Petersburg liberals, above all Vinaver, Gruzenberg, and Vasili Bermann (Ze’ev Wolf), who had already begun to compile a volume describing the historical evolution of the legal status of Russian Jewry. With Dubnow’s help they founded the Historic–Ethnographic Society within the Society for the Promotion of Culture among the Jews of Russia, which gave this venture the framework it needed. Their research resulted in a two-volume study on Russian Jewish history, entitled *Regesty i nadpisi* (Digests and Inscriptions), published in 1899 and dedicated to one of the pioneers of Russian Jewish history, the ‘bearded Cossack’ Sergey Bershadsky. In the introduction its editors wrote:

From all these sources stream facts, pictures, ideas. A rich new world of our own cherished past unfolds before our eyes . . . The very reading of these dry documents about ordinary happenings affects us in the same way as Antaeus’ contact with Mother Earth. The past is woven into the present, and in the old we see the new, in the new the old; and life with all its glory, multiplicity, and immediacy captures us. We waded up to our necks in details and minutiae, scowling and unenthusiastic, and emerge, fortified and serene. We have achieved that solidity and self-satisfaction which gives life inexhaustible worth and richness. *Vernunft fing wieder anzusprechen und Hoffnung wieder anzublühen* [Intelligence again began to speak and hope to flourish]. The most important thing for us is the life of our people.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Dubnow, *Kniga zbizni*. See also K. Pinson, introd. to Dubnow, *Nationalism and History*.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Vinaver, ‘Kak my zanimalis’ istoriei’.

⁸⁰ Quoted *ibid*.

CONCLUSION

The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century saw a new dynamism and activism within Russian Jewry. This development is recorded by Simon Dubnow, who participated actively in it. After describing the ‘transitional state of affairs which lasted throughout the eighties and during the first half of the nineties’, he states:

out of the chaos of these nebulous tendencies, there emerged more and more clearly the outlines of definite politico-national doctrines and organizations, and new paths were blazed which, leading in different directions, converged toward one goal—that of the regeneration of the Jewish people from within, both in its national and social life . . . The entire gamut of public slogans rang through the air, all bearing testimony to one and the same fact: that the era of national prostration had come to an end, and that the vague longings for liberation and regeneration had assumed a conscious endeavour pursuing a well-defined course.⁸¹

It was the crisis sparked off by large-scale anti-Jewish violence in Kishinev and Gomel in 1903 and by the unsuccessful war with Japan, which began with the Japanese surprise attack on Fort Arthur in Manchuria in January 1904, which was to cause these new movements to acquire more concrete form.

⁸¹ Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, iii. 41.