

SOLZHENITSYN'S TWO CENTURIES TOGETHER, Part 16

- The Pogroms, part five. Some background to the second 'aliyah'

Essay by Peter Brooke first published in Church and State, No.143, Jan-March 2021

Downloaded from <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/solzhenitsyn>

THE 'BUND' AND RUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Just as the first 'aliyah' ('ascent' - emigration to Palestine) followed the pogroms of 1881-2, so the second aliyah followed the pogroms of 1903 and 1905-6. But much had happened in the interim, most notably the development of a more militant and self consciously Jewish politics, together with the influence of Marxism and the appearance, with the First Zionist conference, held in 1897, of trans-national Zionism.

1897 also saw the formal establishment in Vilnius (Lithuania) of the Jewish Marxist organisation, the 'Bund' - the General Jewish Labour Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia - six months before the formation of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDRP - *Rossiiskaia Sotsial-Demokratičeskaia Rabochaia Partii*). The RSDRP's first congress was held in Minsk in March 1898 with eight delegates, five of whom were Jewish, including three members of the Bund, two of whom joined the initial three member central committee. The main weight of what the RSDRP was soon to become was still in exile, mainly in Switzerland.

Jonathan Frankel, whose book *Prophecy and Politics*¹ (1) will be the main source for this article, says that the early history of Socialist Zionism in the Russian Empire has not yet been sorted out but he believes that the first use of the term 'Poale Zion' (workers of Zion) was in Minsk, also in 1897. It may be noted that Minsk and Vilnius and in general the areas where these political developments were taking place, were far removed from the South East of the Pale of Settlement, Ukraine, where most of the pogroms occurred.

The Bund originated in a Marxist self education group in Vilnius in the 1880s. One of the leading figures at that time was Lev Yogikhes, who went on to join Rosa Luxemburg in the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland (later, 1899, Poland and Lithuania) founded in 1893/4² (2) in opposition to Pilsudki's Polish Socialist Party (PPS) with its emphasis on Polish national separatism. In the 1880s, the Jewish group was being encouraged to move into an international culture - Marx and Darwin - by means of the Russian language, in other words to cease being distinctively Jewish. This changed with the arrival from prison early in 1890 of Aleksandr Kremer ('Arkadii'). He and his colleague Shmuel Gozhansky, began to push for an emphasis on agitation specifically directed at the Jewish community, using Yiddish as the

¹ Joseph Frankel: *Prophecy and Politics - Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, Cambridge University Press, 1984 (first published 1981)

² Frankel gives both years on the same page. The confusion may be due to the difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars. In my use of dates - as with my transliteration of Russian or Hebrew names - I have in general just followed my sources without researching the matter myself. The 'Kingdom of Poland' was the area of Poland that had come under Russian suzerainty in the wake of the Napoleonic wars (ie not as a result of the repartitions in the eighteenth century) with its capital in Warsaw. Pilsudski's party, with its nationalist ambitions, was organised across the whole territory of what was deemed to be historic Poland.

language. In Frankels's account this was opposed by the working class membership who saw themselves being sent back into a milieu they thought they were escaping:

'Previously, the movement had acted as a way of escape for the worker from the old environment into a completely new world with a new language (Russian), a new culture (Russian libraries), a new faith (socialism), a new peer group (the intelligentsia) and ever widening horizons (the international socialist movement). But, as now envisaged, the movement was to become that of the Jewish working class with Yiddish as the language, the local workshop as the focal point, and "trade unionism" or kassy and economic strikes - as the major form of activity.' (p.180)

The new tendency was also opposed by Luxemburg and Yogikhes, who saw it as potentially a Jewish equivalent of Pilsudski's national identity oriented PPS. But it was supported in an influential speech delivered in Vilnius in 1895 by 'Martov' (Julius Osipovich Tserdobaum), later leading theorist of the Mensheviks and, as we shall see, opponent of the Bund.

One of the problems for Jews inspired by Marxism was that there wasn't a large scale Jewish proletariat. Jewish workers were typically artisans working in small scale workshops. Kremer argued that, paradoxically, this could be seen as an advantage. Quoting Frankel (pp188-9), *'An artisan employed in a workshop did not fear dismissal as much as a factory hand because there were innumerable other small shops where he could find work, and this was doubly true if he was skilled. If the worst came to the worst he could even set up on his own. Further, as a class these skilled workers were better educated than the factory proletariat and were more easily organised ... True, he admitted, domestic and handicraft production was doomed and would ultimately be replaced by large scale industry. But this fact made it doubly important that the workers in small-scale production face the harsh transitional period as a united entity. Otherwise they would be exposed to limitless exploitation and degradation. The goal should be to provide the worker with the means of defence whether he remained where he was or moved to a new industrial setting. "We are lucky," he concluded, "that we live in an epoch where the process of change is so clear that we can foresee all the subsequent stages. To know that process and not to use that knowledge would be to commit a major historical error."*

Kremer and Gozhansky also argued for a distinct Jewish organisation on the grounds that Russian democracy couldn't be trusted to defend Jewish rights. Referring to Gozhansky's *Letter to the Agitators* which, he says, was probably written late in 1893, Frankel says (p.189):

'There could be no doubt, he wrote, that in the foreseeable future the Russian Autocracy would fall and be replaced by a constitutional system, but it was no longer possible to assume that a more democratic regime would automatically bring with it political equality for the Jews. Recent history clearly demonstrated that even parliamentary systems could deprive minorities of their rights, either through legislation (as in Roumania) or through intimidation and privilege (as in Austria-Hungary). Indeed "in constitutional Roumania, the Jews have fewer rights than in autocratic Russia.'

The position was summed up by another supporter of the new line, John Mill³, (3) declaring:

'that the Jewish workers suffers in Russian not merely as a worker but as a Jew; that in agitation all forms of national oppression should be stressed more and more; that, together with the general political and economic

³ Mill's Jewish name was Yoysel Shloyme Mil. It may be a reasonable speculation that he adopted the name 'John' rather than his own 'Joseph' or the Russian 'Ivan' in homage to J.S.Mill, much admired in Russian liberal and nihilist circles.

struggle, the struggle for civil equality may be one of our immediate tasks; and that this struggle can best be carried out by the organised Jewish worker himself.' (Frankel, p.190).

Bund domination of the RSDRP didn't last long. Already in late spring 1897, before the formal establishment of either the Bund (September 1897) or the RSDRP (March 1898), Kremer had had what Frankel calls a 'disastrous' encounter with Plekhanov (Plekhanov accompanied by Akselrod and Vera Zasulich). The disagreement seems to have been that whereas Kremer argued for a sharp worker/capitalist division, Plekhanov was arguing for a temporary alliance with bourgeois liberalism in opposition to autocracy. Perhaps as a result of this confrontation Kremer seems to have decided that a definite Jewish structure (the Bund) needed to be established prior to the expected formation of a Social Democratic Party in Russia (a Russian Social Democratic Party Abroad existed already) if the Jewish voice was to be heard.

Kremer was arrested in 1898 and in his absence the Bund in 'Russia' became more internationalist, less concerned with Jewish autonomy, but in Berne, the Bund leadership in exile was developing in the opposite direction, arguing for a Jewish national autonomy - a right of the Jews within the Russian Empire to decide democratically their own affairs without, however, demanding a distinct territory of their own. The case was put by Mill in an edition of the paper *Der yidisher arbeter* published in 1899:

'No less a person than Karl Kautsky, Mill noted, had recently argued in the name of Marxist principles that to divide the Austro-Hungarian Empire into independent national states would solve nothing, for the problem of oppressed minorities would live on in the new states. Indeed, Kautsky suggested, the fate of the Jews and the Ruthenians in an independent Galicia would not be an enviable one. The optimal solution, therefore, was a reorganisation of the Hapsburg Empire which would grant each national group autonomy.' (Frankel, p.218)

Lenin, when he met Plekhanov in Switzerland, found him fiercely opposed to the Bund - indeed, according to Lenin's account, to the Jews in general:

'He declared straight out that this is not a Social Democratic organisation but simply an organisation of exploitation - to exploit the Russians. He felt that our goal is to kick the Bund out of the Party, that the Jews are all chauvinists and nationalists, that a Russian party must be Russian and not "give itself into captivity to the tribe of Gad," etc. ... G.V. was not to be moved from this position. He says that we simply have no knowledge of the Jews, no experience of conducting affairs with them.' (p.229)

In June 1903, in preparation for the second congress of the RSDRP to be held in Brussels in July, the Bund held its Fifth Congress in Zurich. This was in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom and feelings were running high. In Frankel's account (pp.240-241): *'Because the congress was held abroad, the nationalist wing enjoyed a much stronger position than in 1898 or 1901; it was numerically much larger and it had a chance to hammer out its position at a preliminary conference held in Geneva. Its leading spokesmen at the congress (Liber, Medem, Kossovosy and Zhenia Hurvich) demanded that the Bund finally develop a totally coherent ideology - unequivocally for national autonomy, for national as well as class agitation, for the right of the Bund to represent and work among the Jewish proletariat throughout the Empire.'* A maximal demand was formulated which would have established a federal structure for the RSDRP but there was also a minimalist programme *'beyond which there was to be no retreat'*:

'Of the ultimata, the central one was the demand for recognition that "the Bund is the Social Democratic organisation of the Jewish proletariat, enters the RSDRP as its sole representative, and is not subject to any geographical restriction."

In the event, though, when they arrived in Brussels they found to their surprise that their position within the RSDRP was the very first item on the agenda and they were subject to withering attack by almost all the other delegates led by the 'Iskrovtsy', associated with the party journal *Iskra* founded by Lenin and Martov (and printed as it happens on a clandestine printing press in Kishinev, conveniently placed as it was near the Roumanian border). As the conference proceeded, however, other divisions emerged, notably, among the *Iskrovtsy* themselves, the division that was to separate Bolsheviks and Mensheviks - the division between the advocates of a small, tightly knit body of professional revolutionaries (Lenin) and those who wanted a mass party (Martov). In these quarrels the Bund representatives generally supported Martov. The Bund's own resolution defining themselves as the '*sole representative of the Jewish proletariat*' unlimited by geographical bounds was not voted on until weeks later, after the congress had moved to London. It was defeated by forty one votes to five (with five abstentions), whereupon the Bund representatives walked out, depriving Martov of their support and giving Lenin's supporters the majority that gave them the title 'Bolsheviks'.

ZIONISM AND 'TERRITORIALISM'

The same issue of *Der yidisher arbeter* (No 6, 1899) which contained Mill's call for a non-territorial Jewish national autonomy also contained an article, 'Socialism or Zionism', attacking Zionism, by Chaim Zhitlovsky, a friend of the Bund leaders in Berne, but himself more closely associated with the populist Social Revolutionaries (the Agraro-Socialist League formed in 1899, which became the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries in 1902, successors of the pre-Marxist Peoples Will and Black Repartition movements). Zhitlovsky criticised Zionism as a middle class response to anti-semitism whose solution to the problem was impractical: '*with a tiny state of two million Jewish inhabitants one cannot help the entire Jewish people which in Russia, Poland and Galicia alone is over six million people.*' Nor was there any prospect of establishing a Socialist state in Palestine. One could not '*carry through in Turkey what is still impossible in Europe*' (Frankel. pp.272-3). But what was worse was that the influence of Zionism was imposing on Jews a passivity that rendered them useless for any sort of militant political activity: '*It has to be shown that the entire Jewish people is God-fearing, innocent and far - so help us - from today's revolutionary ideas; that the Jewish worker will not bring the terrible plague of socialism and class war to Turkey - Heaven forbid!*'

This was indeed a problem for the Zionists of the time. There was no prospect of a mass transfer of Jews to Palestine without the consent of the Ottoman rulers. Herzl was dismissive of what had been achieved by the colonists of the 'first aliyah' (discussed in an earlier article in this series⁴ (4)):

'Should the powers show themselves willing to grant us sovereignty over a neutral land, then the Society will enter into negotiations for the possession of this land. Here two regions come to mind:

⁴ *Church and State*, No.141, July-September, 2020 and <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/solzhenitsyn/aliyah-1/>

Palestine and Argentina.⁵ (5) Significant experiments in colonisation have been made in both countries, though on the mistaken principle of gradual infiltration of Jews. Infiltration is bound to end badly.⁶ (6)

Given the impossibility of a direct exodus to Palestine, Herzl in 1902 thought in terms of territory close to Palestine, territory held by Britain, traditionally sympathetic to the Zionist idea. In October 1902 he obtained an interview with Joseph Chamberlain, at the time Secretary of State for the Colonies under Salisbury as Prime Minister. According to his diary⁷ (7):

'I expounded to the immovable mask of Joe Chamberlain the entire Jewish Question . . . my relations with Turkey, etc.

"I am in negotiation with the Sultan," I said. "But you know how it is with Turkish negotiations. If you want to buy a carpet, you must first drink half-a-dozen cups of coffee and smoke a hundred cigarettes; then you proceed to family-gossip; and, from time to time, you throw in a few words about the carpet. Now, I may have time to negotiate, but my People have not. They are starving in the Pale. I must bring them immediate succour ..." and so on.

'At the bit concerning the carpet, the Mask [his characterisation of Chamberlain's style - PB] laughed.

'I then came to the territory which I want to get from England: Cyprus, El Arish [a town in the North of Sinai - PB] and the Sinai Peninsula.

'Chamberlain began by saying that he was only at liberty to discuss Cyprus. The rest concerned not him but the Foreign Office. But, as to Cyprus, this was how the matter stood. That island was inhabited by Greeks and Moslems, whom he could not evict for the sake of new-comers. On the contrary, he was in duty bound to take their side. If the Greeks —encouraged perhaps by Greece and Russia—were to resist Jewish immigration, the deadlock would be complete. He personally had nothing against the Jews. And, had there been a drop of Jewish blood in his veins, he would have been proud of it. But, voilà, he had no such drop. He was, however, willing to help if he could; he liked the Zionist idea, etc. Ah, if I could show him a spot in the British Dominions where there was no white population yet, then we could talk! . . .

'he had no idea where El Arish was, and so we went over to a big table, where he hunted out an atlas, among other big books, and looked in it for Egypt. As he did so, he said, "In Egypt, you know, we should have the same difficulties with the natives (as in Cyprus)."

"No," said I, "we won't go to Egypt. We have been there before."

'At this he laughed again, stooping low . . . over the book. It was only now that he understood fully my wish to have a place of assembly for the Jewish people in the neighbourhood of Palestine.

'In El Arish and Sinai, the country is untenanted. England can give it to us. In return she would gain an increase of her power and the gratitude of ten million Jews. All this . . . impressed him.

⁵ The establishment of Jewish agricultural colonies in Argentina was a particular project of the banker, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, founder of the railway linking Constantinople and Europe and in 1891 of the Jewish Colonisation Association.

⁶ Herzl: The Jewish State, quoted in Gur Alroey: "Zionism without Zion"? Territorialist ideology and the Zionist movement', *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol 18, No 1 (Fall 2011), p.5

⁷ This and the following quotes from Julian Amery: *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol 4, 1901-1903, London, Macmillan and Co Ltd, pp.259-267.

'I summed up:

''Would you agree to our founding a Jewish colony on the Sinai Peninsula?''

''Yes!'' he replied, "if Lord Cromer [Consul-General of Egypt - PB] is in favour." . . .'

As Chamberlain's biographer, Julian Amery, comments: 'a Jewish colony in Sinai might prove a useful instrument for extending British influence into Palestine proper, when the time came for the inevitable dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.'

The following day, Herzl returned:

'Yesterday, I believe, was a great day in Jewish history. . . . At 2.15 I entered Chamberlain's office-salon. For that is what the Colonial Secretary's office reminds you of: the drawing-room of some shipping magnate.

'Chamberlain rose, very busy. He could only spare me a few minutes. But he said it in the most engaging manner. . . .

'He said to me:

''I have arranged a meeting between you and Lord Lansdowne [Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs - PB]. He expects you at half-past four in the afternoon. I have already prepared the way for you. Put the whole matter before him, but do not mention Cyprus. The Cyprus part of it is my concern. Be careful to tell him that your projected settlement is not a jumping-off place with the point directed at the Sultan's dominions.''

'He positively beamed as he said that. Altogether, the Mask was amazingly alive to-day and full of sustained mirth.

'I said:

''Of course there can be no question of that, as I want to go to Palestine only with the Sultan's consent.''

'He looked at me with amusement, as if to say: "The deuce you do." But aloud he said:

''Reassure Lord Lansdowne that you are not intending a Jameson raid from El Arish upon Palestine.''

"I shall reassure him, Mr. Chamberlain!" said I, laughing in my turn . . .'

Soon after this encounter, Chamberlain went to East Africa and on December 21, 1902 noted in his diary: 'If Dr. Herzl were at all inclined to transfer his efforts to East Africa, there would be no difficulty in finding suitable land for Jewish settlers. But I assume that this country is too far removed from Palestine to have any attractions for him.'

He had found a suitable 'spot in the British Dominions where there was no white population ...'

Herzl met Chamberlain again in April, by which time a Zionist commission had visited Sinai and reported on it negatively. On that occasion Chamberlain floated the idea of 'Uganda' (actually a fertile region in Kenya). At the time Herzl was unenthusiastic:

''In the course of my journey I saw the very country for you," said the great Chamberlain. "That's Uganda. The coast-region is hot, but the farther you get into the interior the more excellent the climate becomes, for Europeans too. You can plant sugar there, and cotton. So I thought to myself: that would be just the country for Dr. Herzl. But then, of course, he only wants to go to Palestine, or somewhere near.''

"I can't help myself," I replied. "Our starting-point must be in or near Palestine. Later on we could also colonise Uganda; for we have vast numbers of human beings who are prepared to emigrate. We must, however, build upon a national foundation; that is why the political attraction of El Arish is indispensable to us. ... As a land-speculation the thing would be bad. No one would give a penny for country of that sort. No one but ourselves, because of that underlying political purpose of ours. But, be it well understood, we are not going to place ourselves under Egyptian, but only under British rule."

'He: "I expect that that is how matters will remain. We shall not leave Egypt. Originally that was our intention. I know what I'm saying, for I was in the Government at the time. In the 'Eighties, we thought we should relinquish Egypt. But we have had to sink so much money in the country, and we have so many interests there, at the present time, that we can no longer get away. Thus, you with your Settlement will be sharing the fortunes of a British Dependency. Should things change in Egypt at some future time, and your Colony be strong enough, I am sure it will not fail to assert itself."

It seems to have been the Kishinev pogrom that decided Herzl in favour of the 'Ugandan' offer, as the need for a Jewish homeland seemed to have become pressing. That, and the fact that British water engineers had surveyed Sinai and concluded that the scheme (which would have involved a diversion of the waters of the Nile) was impractical. It should be said, though, that there were limits to British generosity. According to Amery's account: *'In its original form, the draft agreement submitted by Herzl presumed the establishment of a virtually independent Jewish State; and Lansdowne minuted on it, "I fear it is throughout an imperium in imperio". After some modification, however, by the Foreign Office, a more suitable text was agreed. This provided for the settlement in East Africa of a Jewish community to be organised under a Jewish "Super-Mayor" with a wide measure of "municipal" autonomy.'*

THE EMERGENCE OF LEFT WING ZIONISM

Herzl announced his 'Uganda' policy at the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basle, August 1903. Also in August he had antagonised Russian Jews by meeting the Interior Minister, Plehve, whom they saw as responsible for the events in Kishinev. In his address to the Congress he called on his Russian followers to act 'calmly and legally.' In reaction a group of left wing Zionists produced a pamphlet under the title *Neither calmly not legally*. A conference of left wing Zionists was held in Kiev in September 1903 and the result was the journal *Vozrozhdenie* (Rebirth), first printed in Paris early in 1904. *Vozrozhdenie* was 'territorialist', meaning that while the Jews needed a territory of their own, it didn't have to be Palestine. The position of Simon Dubnow and of the Bund, both of whom believed in their different ways that national unity was possible without a coherent territory was ridiculed, rather prettily, as wanting *'to break the barrel while wanting to keep the wine'* (Frankel, p. 280). But territory was regarded as a long term aspiration. In the meantime they wanted full involvement in the Russian revolutionary movement and supported national autonomy (the wine without the barrel) as an interim demand.

They were aligned with the Socialist Revolutionaries rather than the Social Democrats, believing in deliberate political action rather than economic determinism as the motivating force for historical change, and supporting 'terrorism', or at least the assassination of fomenters of the pogroms. An

attempted assassination of Krushevan⁸ (8) had been supported by founder members of *Vozrozhdenie* in a pamphlet: 'What is the lesson of Dashevsky's assassination attempt?'

Zhitlovsky was converted to their long term territorialism, breaking his connection with the Bund.

In July 1904, the first of three Zionist Socialist Parties - the SSRP (Zionist Socialist Labour Party) - was formed at a conference in Warsaw attended by Poale Zion groups from Warsaw, Kiev and Dvinsk (in Latvia), together with representatives from *Vozrozhdenie*. In the event the populist leaning *Vozrozhdenie* left them early in 1905. In July 1905 an SSRP spokesman, Nachman Syrkin, attended the 7th Zionist Congress in Basle, claiming to speak as a representative for the 10,000 organised workers said to be supporting the 1905 revolution. The SSRP presented itself as the most extreme Social Democratic Marxist group, in competition with the Bund, declaring unremitting class war against the other Jewish classes. The development of capitalism necessarily, they argued, forced the Jewish proletariat in the advanced industrial countries into sweatshops. The only solution was an exodus to an undeveloped country - it didn't have to be Palestine - where a start could be made with a basically agricultural economy. Necessarily this process would have to be led by a Jewish capitalist class. The immediate task of the Social Democrats would be to defend the interests of the proletariat.

Syrkin, their most distinguished spokesman, who stood for the party in the election to the 2nd Duma, Autumn 1906, was actually (and had been since the 1980s when still a somewhat precocious teenager) opposed to this sort of historical determinism. From 1888 (aged 20) to 1898 he had been a member of the Jewish Academic Society in Berlin, together with the 'Palestinophiles' (this word for the advocates of settlement in Palestine is rather ironic in the light of later developments), Chaim Weizmann and Lev Motskin, but later, at the University of Berne where, as we have seen, the Bund leadership developed its idea of national autonomy, he was expelled from the Zionist Society (an expulsion supported by Weizmann) for slandering the movement.

Following a line of argument associated with Moshe Leb Lilienblum and also with Zhitlovsky (in his pamphlet *A Jew to the Jews*, 1892) Syrkin argued that the position of the Jews in European society had become impossible. In Frankel's account (pp.298-9):

'The Jews had been permitted entry, or even invited, into backward and feudal societies in order to fulfil certain specific economic functions which at that time were out of bounds to the indigenous population, whether nobles, peasants or churchmen.. They had acted as intermediaries between the warrior class and its serfs, between one branch of the society and another. Despised by the upper classes and hated by the lower, they had rarely lived anything but a precarious existence. The Khmelnitsky massacres of 1648⁹ (9) were only an extreme example of a chronic peril, a process which "runs through the whole of Jewish history like a scarlet thread."

'So long as there was little or no competition from within the ranks of the host nation, the Jews had usually been able to count on a measure of official protection against the popular wrath. But as soon as the

⁸ The role of Pavel Krushevan and his journal *Bessarabets* in provoking the Kishinev pogrom, as well as his possible responsibility for the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is discussed in the previous article in this series, *Church and State* No. 142, Oct-Dec 2020.

⁹ Discussed in my article in *Church and State* No 132, April-June 2018, also accessible at <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/solzhenitsyn/prologue/>

indigenous nationality produced a capitalist and middle class of its own, the presence of the Jews became an historical anachronism. Sooner or later the pressure to expel them from their positions in the economy and even from the country became irresistible. It was now the turn of the Jews in the Pale of Settlement, Galicia and Roumania to suffer the fate that had overtaken the Jews in England, France and Spain hundreds of years before. By means of legislation, boycott, discrimination and violence, the rival groups within the indigenous nationalities were squeezing them out of the economic lifestream, creating a "million-headed poverty-stricken Jewish mass."

Quoting Syrkin directly:

"Eighty percent of the Jewish people ... is slowly losing its sources of livelihood and is doomed to disaster. The transfer to productive labour is full of obstacles and, for the most part, blocked entirely ... But apart from economic pressure, this ... mass also carries on its shoulders the nightmare of antisemitism in the government, the police, the middle class and the mob"

'And even those Jews who had become wage-earning workers were confined to the margin of the productive process, to domestic industry and sweat shops - a mere "national reserve army of the international proletariat."

'In the West, the situation on the surface was incomparably better, and many believed that democratisation, the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, the removal of the numerus clausus in education and the attainment of equal civil rights would solve the Jewish question in eastern Europe too. But, Syrkin insisted, there could be no form of self-deception greater than this. Political equality, in fact, represented a double threat to the Jews: acid like corrosion within and mounting hatred without.'

Through assimilation the Jews 'invariably concentrated out of all proportion to their numbers, in the middle and upper section of the bourgeoisie as merchants, traders, professional and academics' and 'this advance up the economic ladder ... was nearly always accompanied by a deliberate attempt on the part of the Jews to divest themselves of their national heritage, to abandon the ideal of an autonomous national existence or a national mission ...'

And at the same time as they lose their own virtue as a people, their very success excites the hostility of the people round them. Quoting Syrkin directly (*The Jewish question and the Jewish Socialist state*, 1898): *"Not the character of the Jews, even though it is a miserable and disgusting caricature ... but the open profit motive, the hunger for the wealth of the Jews, the desire to strike the ground from under a competitor, to confiscate his property, to expel him from the country - these are the factors that make them antisemitic."*

The only solution, then, was a mass exodus to an undeveloped land. But contrary to the position later developed by the SSRP he argued that this new state had to be Socialist from the start, not because Socialism was the inevitable next stage after capitalism but on a purely voluntarist basis - that it was a moral necessity that corresponded with what was best and most necessary to be preserved in the Jewish tradition:

"What are the Jewish works - the Pentateuch and the Prophets," he wrote in 1900, "if not a literary memorial to the class war between the haves and have-nots?" "It was this people," he declared in 1902, "that thousands of years ago said that 'there shall be no poor among you' and made social laws such as the Jubilee, the sabbatical year and all the laws on gleaning in order that justice rule in the world." "The Jewish people," he stated in a speech in New York in 1918, "is a socialist people not because it lives in want but because the

revolution was declared on Mount Sinai." "Remove the socialist creativity ... from Jewish history," he declared in Jaffa, "and we are left without any reason for projecting Jewish history into the future." (Frankel, p.306).

In 1901, he published *A manifesto for Jewish youth*, arguing that the Jewish proletariat needed two movements that would complement each other but still remain distinct. One, like the Bund, would support the Russian revolutionary movement; the other would press for exodus to a new land. Weizmann reading it declared it to be madness, principally because in his view the Zionist movement could only succeed by winning the favour of the existing powers and therefore had to keep well clear of any association with the Revolution. After the pogroms in Kishinev and Gomel, however, Syrkin's argument began to appear more relevant.

JEWISH EMIGRATION

Frankel is primarily interested in the intellectual history of the radical - Socialist and Zionist - Jewish movements of the time. Something should be said about the social circumstances in which these ideas were being developed.

Perhaps the most obvious symptom of the Jewish problem was the steady increase in emigration, overwhelmingly to the United States. Frankel gives as figures 37,011 in 1900, 77,544 in 1904. 92,388 in 1905, and 125,234 in 1906. Solzhenitsyn argues (p.326)¹⁰ (10) that '*Jewish emigration to America remained weak until 1886-7. It saw a brief rise in 1891-2, but it was only after 1897 that it became massive and continuous.*' He argues that what made the difference was the legislation introduced in 1896 imposing a state monopoly on the production and sale of alcohol.

According to the Pahlen Commission (1886), '*Jews owned 27% (rounded figures) of all the distilleries in European Russia, 53% in the Pale of Settlement (notably 83% in the province of Podolsk, 76% in that of Grodno, 72% in that of Kherson). They held 41% of the breweries¹¹ (11) in European Russia, 71% in the Pale of Settlement (94% in the province of Minsk, 91% in that of Vilnius, 85% in the province of Grodno). As for the share of commerce in alcohol held by the Jews, the proportion of the places of fabrication and sale is 29% in European Russia, 61% in the Pale of Settlement (95% in the province of Grodno, 93% in that of Moghilev, 91% in the province of Minsk).*' (p.325.)

The law taking state control of the production and sale of alcohol therefore hit hard at one of the major areas of economic activity that were available to poorer Jews. It didn't prevent Jewish domination of the sugar industry, the timber industry, the export of grain, railways and navigation, military supplies, the oil industry round Baku and of course the financial services industry. Zhitlovsky came from a wealthy timber processing background and Frankel quotes him saying:

'Samuil Solomonovich Poliakov builds railways in Russia. These railways, according to Nekrasov's famous poem which reflects the true socio-economic fact, are built on the skeleton of the Russian peasantry. My

¹⁰ Alexandre Soljénitsyne: *Deux siècles ensemble, t.1, Juifs et Russes avant la révolution*, Eds Fayard, 2002. English translations are my own from the French. Nearly twenty years after the French edition it hasn't yet been officially translated into English, though some unofficially translated extracts can be found on the internet.

¹¹ *Brasseries* in the French which could mean either brewery or small café serving alcohol.

uncle, Mikhail, brews spirits in his distillery for the Russian people ... My niece, Liza, sells the spirits to the peasant. The whole shtetl lives from the Russian peasant. My father (in Vitebsk) employs him to cut down Russian woods which he buys from the greatest exploiter of the Russian muzhik - the Russian noble ... Wherever my eyes rested I saw only one thing ... the harmful effect of the Jewish tradesmen on the Russian peasantry' (p.263. Unfortunately Frankel's reference doesn't give a date).

A major Jewish grievance was their confinement in the Pale of Settlement. Nonetheless Solzhenitsyn says (p.315) that according to the 1897 census there were 315,000 Jews living outside the Pale, about 9% of the Jewish population in the Empire (excluding the Kingdom of Poland) and nine times what the figure had been in 1881. Solzhenitsyn contrasts this with the figures of 115,000 Jews in France and 200,000 in Great Britain. Nonetheless their position was fragile as witnessed in 1891 when the Grand Duke Sergius (assassinated in 1905) expelled some 20,000 Jewish artisans from Moscow in the middle of the winter. A further 70,000 (families whose presence outside the Pale was technically illegal but who had previously been officially granted a toleration) were expelled in 1893.

Solzhenitsyn (p.343) claims that, despite English protests against Russian government policy, *'after evaluating the proportions that the flood of emigration risked taking, Great Britain soon brutally closed its doors.'* He is referring to the Aliens Act, introduced in the last days of the Unionist government (the government of Joseph Chamberlain who offered east Kenya to Herzl and Arthur Balfour of the Balfour declaration) in 1905. This was at least partly a response to antisemitic riots in South Wales in 1902 and 1903 and to demonstrations by the 'British Brothers League', formed in 1901 to protest against immigration and claiming some 45,000 members (probably meaning, according to Wikipedia, signatures to its manifesto).

Nevertheless, Solzhenitsyn is exaggerating. According to an account by an academic historian, Jill Pellew of the University of London:

*'The 1905 Act specified that at certain "immigration ports" where immigrant ships would be allowed to discharge passengers, there were to be immigration officers (supported by medical officers) with power to reject those who came within special categories of "undesirable". An "undesirable" immigrant was specified in the act as someone who could not show that he was capable of "decently" supporting himself and his dependants, although a special clause (added through the efforts of [Sir Charles] Dilke and company) made an exception for immigrants who were seeking entry as political or religious refugees ... The term "immigrant" was defined as an "alien steerage passenger" although not one who had a pre-paid onward ticket. As far as "undesirables" already in the country were concerned, the secretary of state could deport certain convicted alien criminals if the sentencing court recommended expulsion, and also aliens who, within twelve months of landing, were found in receipt of parochial relief.'*¹² (12)

But the act was left to be implemented by the new Liberal government, and specifically by the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone and his Parliamentary under secretary, Herbert Samuel, himself a Jew (and later first High Commissioner for Palestine). Pellew goes through their handling of it in some detail. Immigrants were judged to be unable to support themselves if they had less than £5.00 in their pockets. Friends and sympathisers arranged for them to have the £5.00, sometimes passed from passenger to passenger. Initially boats with less than twelve steerage passengers were exempted. That became less than twenty and frequently immigrants found

¹² Jill Pellew: 'The Home Office and the Aliens Act, 1905', *The Historical Journal*, Vol 32, No 2, June 1989, p.373.

themselves waiting until a boat with less than twenty steerage passengers became available. Pellew concludes: *'The fact was that Gladstone and his party, even though they had come into power with a landslide victory at the end of 1905, did not wish to go through the trauma of bringing the unappetising Aliens Act up again in parliament by proposing its repeal. Gladstone was under parliamentary pressure to relax the regulations, particularly in the early days, Samuel was looked on as an ally of his fellow Jews. Therefore the compromise which they reached between administering the law as its legislators intended and repealing it altogether was to administer it badly.'* (pp.378-9)

Returning to the situation in the Russian Empire another of the motives Solzhenitsyn gives for Jewish emigration was the desire to avoid conscription, which would help to account for the increase in 1904, the year of the Russo-Japanese war. This brings us to 1905, the year of the Revolution, the formation of the Constitutional Democratic Party (the 'Cadets') which became the main political vehicle arguing for Jewish rights, the Union for Equality of Rights in which Vladimir Jabotinsky began to make his mark, the role of Parvus and Trotsky in the formation of the St Petersburg soviet, a series of pogroms which marked an exponential increase in the number of Jewish deaths (47 in Kishinev in 1903, 800 in Odessa in 1905, according to Frankel) not to mention the subsequent formation of the SERP - Jewish Socialist Labour Party - and ESDRP(PZ) - Jewish Social Democratic and Labour Party (Poale Zion), the return of the Bund to the RSDRP, the second, much more politically determined *aliyah* to Palestine, and the highly publicised Beyliss ritual murder trial. I had hoped to be able to finish the series with this article, bringing the story to the end of the period covered in Solzhenitsyn's first volume, but so much remains to be said that at least one other article will be necessary.