CHAPTER-V
Jewish History in Russia Upto the Russian Revolution:

Russia was the least tolerant of the Jews from the beginning of her history.\(^1\) Czars, being fanatic Christians, during the 15th and 16th centuries, had ruthlessly put down a movement for conversion to Judaism. The rulers of the 17th century such as Peter the Great, though moderate in his dealings with the Russian Jews, was not at all liberal. The succession of Empresses to the Russian throne was another era of fanatic policies towards them. Catherine I in 1727, Anne in 1739, and Elizabeth in 1742, all issued special decrees expelling the Jews from their domains.\(^2\)

Russia got through three successive partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, 1795). Consequently, the largest chunk of that land became part of Russia. Thus Russia which was the least disposed to welcome the Jews, but ruled in the 19th century over the largest section of the Jewish people. The number of Jews in Russia equaled, if not outnumbered all other Jews combined in the world.\(^3\)

The Jews now lived under Russian rule all over the Western province of the empire which were previously

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 356.
\(^3\) Ibid.
governed by Poland. The Jews living in these provinces during 18th and 19th centuries were culturally backward in comparison to the Jews living in Western Europe. They were not familiar with the famous names of West Europe's persons of eminence who were born as Prime Minister, Desraeli and Recardo. They still took recourse to their religious leaning and their intellectual field was confined to Talmud and allied literature. While wearing dresses they chose to be conservative and lagged a century behind in fashion. Barring a few rich merchants the majority of Jews were occupied in petty trading, in keeping and farming. A majority of Jewish population was miserably poor.

From the very beginning the Czars of Russia adopted a policy which was to confine the Jews to the newly acquired Western provinces (Pale of Settlement) and to prevent them from spreading to other parts of the empire. On account of this policy more than twenty thousand Jews were expelled from the villages of Maghilev and Vitebsk alone. The climate made the situation worse. This was put in an impressive way by Elon:

4. Ibid., p.357.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p.358.
"nature itself joined forces with the sterile apparatus of Czarist oppression to inflict a terrible punishment on people and country alike as though for some primeval sin. Survival was an achievement". 7

The Jews of Russia enjoyed a new lease of life with the accession of Alexander II (1855-1881). The young ruler, was described by Desraeli as 'the most benevolent prince that ever ruled in Russia. 8 Czar Alexander II initiated a consistent policy of reform. By mid-19th century, a sort of messianic movement appeared in Russia itself. Almost at this time Alexander II ascended the Czarist throne and a vigorous programme of reforms, including humane approach to the Jews was started. 9 He rejected his father's policy of enforced conversion to christianity. He abolished the Jewish military cantonment, the six-year pre-conscription horror of Russian Jewish life. He permitted larger number of Jews to settle in the interior of the country. He allowed three classes of Jews to settle in that area: the merchants who

---


8. Roth, n.1, p.359.

were capable of paying heavy taxes, the graduates of Universities, and artisans recommended by the police of the Pale as 'well-behaved'.

Jews, by and large, welcomed these reforms. The liberal policy of the Czar gave acceleration to an internal cultural movement which was becoming formidable among the Jews of Eastern Europe for three generations. The Jews started enjoying liberal ideas and freeing themselves from the webs of parochial Jewish education. This secular awakening is known in Jewish history as the 'Haskalah', the mid nineteenth century period of East European Jewish 'enlightenment'.

Haskalah: 'Haskalah' is a word derived from the Hebrew 'sechel' which means intelligence or understanding. It signifies the effort of Jewish scholars and intellectuals (Maskilim) to 'enlighten' the masses of Russian Jewry.

Haskalah movement was a parallel to a Jewish movement called

------------------
10. Ibid. p.8.
'Aufklärung', in Germany at that time. But these movements differed fundamentally and significantly. The German movement grew in German environment and for German speaking peoples, but Haskalah was rooted in Hebrew language and thought emphasized history and theology, while Haskalah manifested itself most strikingly in Hebrew literature.¹⁴

Those days among the East European Jews there was an inner urge to self-understanding and enlightenment. These Jews were also affected by external political situation.¹⁵ For the Russian Jewish essayist, Moshe Lillienblum and for the Haskalah poet, Judah Leib Gordon, there were normalcy in sight, an enrichment to be gained from discourse with the surrounding gentile population".¹⁶ Gordon wrote, "Be a Jew at home and a man in the street. That is Jews should observe their traditions in the privacy of household and synagogue but live a full, healthy, Russian life in the outer world."¹⁷

The most influential of the early advocates of Haskalah in Russia was Issac Levinsohn (1788-1869). His thoughts were

¹⁴. Ibid.
¹⁵. Ibid., p.609.
¹⁶. Sacher, n.11, p.8.
¹⁷. Ibid.
similar to what Moses Mendelssohn of Germany was preaching. Both of them laid emphasis on reason called upon the Jews to amalgamate themselves in the general culture of their time and defend Judaism, as well as to widen their mental horizon which was the need of the time and to reconstruct their economic foundations.  

The changed temper of these authors bore testimony to the fact that Alexander's reforms and prevailing literal conditions were positively influencing the Jews. The pursuit of secular knowledge was gaining popularity among the Russian Jews. Some wealthy Jews and intellectuals organized a society for the promotion of culture among the Jews (1863) with its headquarters in St. Petersburg. Its purpose was to import secular knowledge among the Jews. "By placing its faith in cultural emancipation and secular activity on Russian soil, Haskalah literature at first de-emphasized the traditional messianic yearning for Zion".  

Zion then, as envisaged by the Haskalah writers, became a kind of mythic idyll in the words of Levinsohn, "the land where muses dwell, where each flower is a psalm, each cedar a song divine, each stone a book and each rock a tablet".

---

18. Grayzel, n.11, p.609.
20. Ibid., p.9.
While Alexander II was liberal towards the Jews, he was an autocratic ruler in general. The result was that terrorism emerged in Russia. In 1879 an attempt was made to blow up his train, and shortly thereafter an explosion shattered a part of his winter place. He did all to crush these revolutionaries but at the same time he tried to satisfy them by bringing about more reforms and conceding to a few of their demands. However, he fell victim to a terrorist bomb. His successor Alexander III (1881-94), showed himself a strong-willed monarch who promptly announced his intention to avenge his father's murder and to preserve the autocratic regime.  

The reign of Alexander III is known as the period of unprecedented oppression in modern Russian history. The new Czar saw in the ethnic minorities a constant danger to his authority. Almost immediately therefore, the non-Russian races i.e. Poles, Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Armenians and Turkmenians began to be discriminated in public employment and in educational and cultural spheres.  

22. Sacher, n.9., p.12.
The Jews again faced great hardships on account of new rules and regulations. In 1681 a chain reaction of officially inspired pogroms started all over the densely populated Jewish hinterland of Southern Russia. On May 3, 1882 in the form of temporary regulation Alexander III issued a new series of anti-Jewish decrees. They were not however temporary as they continued in effect, with mounting stringency until the March Revolution of 1917. 23

These oppressions of the Russian regime did not yield the desired result.

"The more the Jews of Russia were oppressed, the more they clung to their distinct ways; the more they were thrown together into areas of forced residence of ever-diminishing size, the more they sought refuge in the narrow confines of orthodox religion or in Messianic dreams or in radical avenues of escape." 24

The avenues of escape for the Russian Jews were three. The most popular one was the migration to America. New York

23. Ibid.

24. Emos Elon, n.7., p.58.
was considered for these Jews a new Jerusalem beyond the seas.\textsuperscript{25} Politics was the second avenue of escape. Revolution was the ultimate aim of the politically-oriented Jews. Historically, they were the most urban of all the ethnic groups of Russia and Poland. Therefore they were well versed with the nuances of politics. The third avenue of escape was Jewish nationalism. It was a reaction not only to Jewish suffering but also to the emergence of other national movements. The Jewish nationalism was very much influenced in particular by German romanticism.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: }The Jews living in the Western parts of the Czarist Empire in the 19th century were possessing their own language, religion, civil administration, judicial institutions and educational system. For historical, cultural and political reasons the Jews also developed a distinctive economic and social structure. The Jewish population was confined to a limited area, the Pale of Residence which included the former Polish

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p.58.  
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p.61.
provinces incorporated into the Csarist Empire in the 1770's and 1790's Bylorussia and Lithuania, the northeastern Ukraine, and areas near the Black Sea which had been colonized by the Russian in the early part of the 19th century. From among the Jews only a privilege minority of highly skilled artisans, rich merchants, certain veteran of the armed forces, and, for a time, university graduates, were permitted to live outside the Pale.

The overwhelming majority of the Jewish population was forced to reside within the Pale (Table I). Of the people who lived in that area, more than four-fifths of the Jewish population lived in urban areas, and Jews constituted nearly 40% of the urban population. One third of the Jews lived in the Shtetles, or market towns which were small semi-urban communities in which the Jews had settled in the first decade of the 19th century after being driven out of the villages by imperial edicts. 27

The urbanization of the Jewish population preceded the urbanization of the Slavic population of the Pale by nearly a century. Towns with a Jewish population of 10,000 to

second half of the 19th century. Those with Jewish populations ranging from 25,000 to 50,000 increased by 400 percent, and those with a Jewish population of over 50,000 increased by 500%. While the Jews in the various provinces of the Pale constituted between five and fifteen percent of the population, they formed between twenty five and 90% of the urban population. In 1897 over half the urban population of Bylorussia and Lithuasia was Jewish and in the Ukraine Jews constituted nearly one third of the urban population. Outside the Pale Jewish urbanization was even more pronounced. Over 80% of the Jews living in St. Petersburg province and 90% of all Jews in the province of Moscow resided in the provincial capital.

The government restrictions placed on Jewish residence were complemented by vocational and professional restrictions Jews were excluded by law from public service. Jewish agricultural colonization, which had been growing slowly but steadily during the 19th century, was set back by the May laws of 1882, issued by Tsar Alexander III, which


29. Salo W. Baron, The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets (New York, 19640, pp.82-83.
forbade Jews to acquire rural property. The 'numerous clauses' system prevented most Jews from obtaining secondary and higher education, effectively barring them from the professions, though there were some prominent Jewish attorneys. Enforced residence in the Pale prevented them from entering the heavy industries being built outside the Pale (Table II).

The overwhelming majority of Jews employed in industry and handicrafts were actually artisans who were either self-employed or worked in small factories and workshops. At the end of the 19th century, of 300,000 Jewish industrial workers, 250,000 were employed in workshops and only 50,000 were in medium and large scale factories.30 Forty three percent of the artisans were in the various branches of the garment industry.31

The artisans and the middlemen of all types, who constituted will over half the economically active Jewish population, led precarious economic existence. Confinement within the Pale meant that economic competition was fierce. On the late 19th century in Kursk and Iaroslav provinces,

31. Ibid. p.20.
where no Jews were allowed to reside, there was less than one artisan for every thousand inhabitants. In Kiev province, within the Pale, there were 2.6 artisans for the same number of inhabitants. 32

"As a rule Jewish artisans were deprived of capital, equipment, stocks of raw materials and cheap credit facilities, and quite often worked for the account of middlemen supplying materials and accessories or acted as commission agents or subsidiary suppliers for manufacturers and wholesalers; or simply were exploited home workers as well as sweat shop sub-contractors for some what bigger jobbers". 33 No wonder that many artisans joined impoverished traders and shopkeepers in the miserable crowd of Luftmenshn, those without enough income to support themselves and their families, but with enough hope to loiter about the market square looking for the big break that only rarely came along. It was estimated that in many communities forty percent of the Jewish population consisted of Luftmenshn and their families. In 1898 nearly 20% of the


33. Schwarz, n.27, p.19.
Jewish population in the Pale applied for Passover Charities. In 1900 an investigative commission in Odessa found that 63% of the Jewish dead were buried at the expense of the Jewish community. All in all, it was estimated that at the turn of the century between 30 and 35% of the Jewish population depended on relief provided by Jewish welfare institutions. For some of these misery was relieved by emigration from Russia, some 70% of them going to U.S. More than half of these emigrants were artisans.

Many of those who remained sought economic relief in the rapidly developing industries of the Russian Empire. In the early part of the 19th century there were only a few hundred Jewish industrial workers, but by the turn of the century there were approximately 50,000. In cities such as Odessa, Vilna, Bialystok, Warsaw, and Lodz, the Jewish proletariat was a social and economic force to be reckoned with. Jews were concentrated in light industry, particularly in the related textile and garment industries. A micro study

34. Baron, n.29, pp.114-115.
35. Schwarz, n.27, p.18.
of the Jewish Labor structure is provided by the statistics for the city of Bialystok in 1887 (Table III).

The Jewish workers suffered all the disabilities of a laboring class in an industrializing, early capitalist social and economic order. Working hours were incredibly long, wages abysmally low, conditions abominably oppressive. In Gomel in the late 1890's the working day was 16 to 17 hours; in Minsk sugar refining factories in the early 1900's Jewish girls worked a twenty-hour day; in Dubravna weavers also worked a twenty-hour day. In 1900 the average worker's wage was twenty four rubles a month. 37 Workers were frequently what were non-views their conditions not paid on time and sanitary conditions in the factories and workshop were very bad.

Despite political and economic discrimination a few individual Jews managed to attain economic affluence and social influence. In 1904 Jews owned on third of all sugar factories in the Ukraine. On the eve of World War I Jewish-owned factories were producing 52% of all the sugar produced in the Ukraine. 38 Jews were also prominent in the

37. Gitelman, n.28, p.22.
38. Ibid., p.23
development of water transport, the oil industry and in banking. In 1914 sizable number of the directors of St. Petersburg banks were Jews.

These men represented only a very thin layer of the privileged, while the great majority of Jews remained imprisoned within the Pale and its poverty, a self-contained and distinct community. But there were signs which showed that the cultural isolation of the Jews was being slowly eroded. The Haskalah, or Enlightenment movement of the early and mid-nineteenth century had preached acculturation into the dominant Russian Culture. Same had heeded to this call and had gone so far as to convert to Russian orthodoxy and assimilate completely. The programs of the 1800’s had halted this trend, as Jews turned away from a culture which they perceived as not only alien but also hostile. In 1898 there were 375,000 children in Jewish religious schools, or kheders, six times as many as the number of Jews enrolled in Russian schools. In 1897 ninety seven percent of the Jewish population listed Yiddish as their mother tongues. At

40. Ibid.
41. Gitelman, n.28, p.47.
the same time, however, even thirty percent of Jewish men and 16% of Jewish women could read the Russian language, while only 21% of the general population was literate. As late as 1840 only 48 Jews were enrolled in Russian primary schools and secondary schools, and only 15 attended universities. It were these people, having made contact with the world beyond the Pale, who first became aware of the possibilities of modernization, secularization, and assimilation. Nearly all of them felt a need to involve themselves in the economic, social and cultural life around them, and many participated in political life as well. This made them painfully aware of the backwardness of Russia and her Jewish population. Most were convinced that with entities were in desperate need of modernization. As regards the Jewish people, some believed that modernization could be achieved only through

42. Schwarz, n.27, p.13. The literacy of the general population is discussed in Michael T. Florinsky, Russia: A History and Interpretation (New York), 1961, vol. II.

43. As late as 1840 only 48 Jews were enrolled in Russian primary schools and secondary schools, and only 15 attended Universities. Baron, n.29, pp.143-45.
secularization and assimilation; others agreed upon the need for secularization, but rejected assimilation; still others argued that modernization could be attained at the cost of only limited secularization of certain areas of life, and no assimilation at all. The assimilators would either convert to Christian faith and thereby remove the legal and social impediments to their complete integration into Russian society, or they would simply adopt the Russian culture and try as best they could to integrate themselves into whatever segment of Russian society they chose. If they had a taste for politics, they were likely to join either liberal or revolutionary movements which pursued broad objectives and which only incidentally concerned themselves with "the Jewish question" if at all. Those who rejected assimilation but aimed at the modernization of the Jewish population devised various strategies for the attainment of their objectives. These strategies were crystallized into programmes formulated and enunciated by political parties.

The first political party to attempt a synthesis of general political goals, whose attainment would ensure both the modernization of the Jewish and general populations and the preservation of Jewish identity, was the General League of Jewish Workingmen in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia known
as the "Bund". The Bund was a Marxist party which, for a time, was an integral part of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), through it ran afoul of that party's - and particularly Lenin's - ideas on the organisation of the party and of the future socialist state. The Bund's position and its historical evolution had profound implications for the nature and structure of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party - and perhaps for the course of Russian history as well as for the Bolshevik policy toward the Jews in Russia. It was in the course of his struggles with the Bund that Lenin concretized his organisational theories. The conflict with the Bund moulded and trained the highly disciplined, cohesive monolithic party which came to be identified as a uniquely "Leninist" one. This some experience helped shape the future of Russian Jewry.

Consciously rejecting the Bund's national programme for the Jews, the Bolsheviks tried to formulate a policy which would preclude a recrudescence of Bundist notions and aspirations among the Jewish masses, while at the same time achieving the economic, political and cultural modernization of

44. The name was originally "General League of Jewish Workingmen in Russia and Poland". It was elaborated in 1901. Ferdinand Lassalles "Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterbund" was the inspiration for the name.
Russian Jewry and their integration into the Soviet polity. In the pre-revolutionary period RSDLP policy was based on the naive belief that the revolution would solve the Jewish problem automatically. Since the Jewish problem was created by the injustices of the capitalist order and the idea of Jewish nationhood was but an exaggerated response to these injustices, both anti-Jewish discrimination and the "unscientific" notion of Jewish nationhood would be swept away by the majestic, impartial, liberating winds of Revolution. 45 Gitelman has written,

"The revolution did indeed come but both the Jewish people and the Jewish problem refused to go away. Confronted with these facts the Bolsheviks adjusted to them rather gracefully. A highly pragmatic Jewish policy was evolved the specifics of which were dealt with by the Jewish sections of the Soviet Communist party. But this did not end the conflict between socialist and national aspirations, it merely shifted its locale." 46

The history of the Jewish sections, and indeed the history of Soviet Jewry, is one of constant balancing

adjustment, and coordination of Jewish national motives and ideals with those of Communist ideology in its Soviet expression. Many of the Jewish sections' activists were former Bundists, and within the sections the old disputes and the old alignments on the national question continued. Furthermore, the Jewish sections in effect implemented for the party a national programme which could easily be construed as the heretical national-cultural autonomy of the Bund. This irony was compounded by the fact that Lenin's writings on the Bund and on the claims of the Jews to nationhood were taken much more seriously by ex-Bundist in the Jewish sections than they were taken by the Communists Party as a whole. Stained with original sin, the Ex-Bundist felt obliged to be more catholic than the Pope and to pursue their national programme with the greatest caution, even when urged to holder actions by other Party leaders. For these reasons, in order to understand the history of the Jewish Sections - in Russian, the Evsektsia (or Evsektsia, the singular form commonly used in Soviet Russia, even in reference to many sections) - it is necessary to examine the evolution of the national programme of the Bund and Lenin's criticism of it.47

--------------------

47. Ibid., pp.26-27.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Jewish Population</th>
<th>Jewish Percentage of total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the Pale Poland</td>
<td>1321.1</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10 Provinces)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West (3 Lithuanian and 3 Bilorussian provinces)</td>
<td>1422.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West (Ukraine West of the Dnieper-4 provinces and Bessarabia)</td>
<td>1768.6</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast (Ukraine East of the Dnieper - 3 provinces and the Crimea)</td>
<td>387.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 25 provinces</td>
<td>4899.3</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the Pale</td>
<td>316.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>5215.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE-II

**OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF JEWS, 1897***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage of Economically Active Jews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry and Handicrafts</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traders, Storekeepers, peddlers etc.</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Labourers, domestics, private employees</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official and professionals</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and transport</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession Unspecified</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE-III

**JEWS WOrKERS IN BIALYSTOK, 1887***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Factory</th>
<th>Number of Factories</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Jews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jews - Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>1223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawls &amp; Scarves</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blankets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloves &amp; Stockings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigskin Products</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breweries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanneries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Making</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumber Miles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine Shops</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour Miles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>2095</strong></td>
<td><strong>825</strong></td>
<td><strong>2820</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Jews in Russian Revolution:

When Czarism fell in March 1917 one of the first acts of its successor, the Provisional Government, was to abolish all legal restrictions on the Jews. 'All the limitations on the rights of Russian citizens imposed by hitherto existing laws on the basis of religion, creed or nationality are hereby revoked', the government's decree stated. This was followed by an extraordinary political and cultural efflorescence amongst the millions of Russian Jews. This was unprecedented, but very short lived, two years at most. 48

It is difficult to give a precise estimate of the number of Jews under Czarist rule at the outbreak of the Revolution. According to 1897 census 5.25 million Jews resided in the Russian empire. According to an estimate of the Jewish Statistical Society (Petrograd, 1917), 3,837,000 Jews lived in European Russia (excluding the Kingdom of Poland which until the war formed part of the Russian empire), in the areas not conquered by the Germans. In the Caucasus; Siberia, and Central Asia, the 1897 census recorded a population of 135,000 Jews constituted slightly

over 50 per cent of the combined urban population of Lithuania and White Russia. The census of 1897 also showed that in the Ukraine the Russians formed 35.5% of the urban population followed by the Jews (30%) and Ukrainians (27%). 49

As soon as the Revolution brokout, the mutual aid societies (which had grown in the years of wartime hardship) began to take soundings with a view to summoning a national congress of Russian Jews. The Jewish political parties, too, awoke to new life, after years of weakness in the years preceding the war and during the war itself. The socialist parties (the Bund, the 'United' Poale Zion), the Zionists and even the religious camp were flooded with new members. These parties redrafted their programmes, established new branches and new institutions, and embarked on a wide range of activities. Most of the Jewish bodies saw that the first essential thing was to summon a nation-wide Russian-Jewish Congress. This was to create autonomous institutions for Russian Jewry and frame demands from the state, in anticipation of the meeting of that constituent assembly dreamt of by most of Russia's liberal and revolutionary

49. Ibid.
parties. At the local level, communities were soon set up in towns and villages, and their institutions were democratically elected by the local Jews. The same period saw the awakening and flourishing of journalism and publishing in Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish, and the establishment of a comprehensive system of Jewish education, from kindergarten to teachers' seminary. All the while, in the political developments of the turbulent period, and in the leadership of the main political parties, Jews played a prominent part. This period in the history of Russian Jewry has not yet been properly investigated.50

How could this development be accounted for? There had been no preparation among the Jewish public in earlier years. The very legal existence of Jews had ceased to be recognized by the authorities in 1844. In a memorandum presented to the government by a committee for Jewish affairs at the time it was stated that the Jews did not cooperate with the authorities. They lived according to the Talmud, regarded their residence in Russia as exile, and

50. The introductions by V. Slutski and Ch. Shmeruk to Jewish Publications in the U.S.S.R., 1917-1960 issued by the Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem, 1961, give some idea of the range of publications.
awaited the coming of the Messiah. In the 1840s the Jews of Russia had no cultural or public organisation or any periodical of their own. Only a few individual Jews of that day attended schools and universities. Even in the last years of the century, only 1% of the Jews in the country gave Russian as their mother tongue: for 97% it was Yiddish. The same census, in 1897, revealed that only 24.6% of the Jewish population could read and write in Russian.

What, then, were the factors that led to the extraordinary, unexpected activity of Russian Jews in 1917? It is clear that one factor was the sudden end to long as continued oppression, combined with the immediate release of hitherto suppressed economic and social forces. Other factors were the attitude of the Russian Government and Russian society to the Jews, the demographic and economic changes among the Jews themselves since the beginning of the 19th century, and their own social and ideological development.

52. Ettinger, n.48, p.19.
The Jewish question had become one of the central political questions of Russia in the 20th century - the touch-stone of difference between reactionary and progressive. The struggle sharpened and the situation of the Jews worsened when the World War I broke out, particularly after the defeats suffered by the Russian army on the eastern front. The Czarist government sought to explain away these defeats by blaming 'traitors' disloyal to Russia chief among them the Jews.

The situation of the Jews was desperate; clearly, only the fall of the Czarist regime could save them. The feelings of relief with which they greeted the February Revolution, the fall of the Czar, and the assumption of power by liberal leaders can be easily understood. The Jews of Russia were in a state of terror and Messianic expectation, and the deliverance from oppression that came with the revolution burst all bounds and gave impetus to a huge independent Jewish activity.53

What forms did the political and social activity of Russian Jewry take at that time? It will not be possible to

53. Ibid.
judge of that action unless we try to uncover its deeper roots. Jewish political thought took shape mainly in medieval Europe, when the Jews were allotted the place a religious – social corporation within general society. The Jewish community in Europe developed from co-operation between a Jewish leadership that was concerned with maintaining internal discipline in the Jewish society, and the authorities who saw that leadership as a means of achieving fiscal objectives and as a tool for administrative control of the Jews. The co-operation between the Jewish leaders and the authorities became the distinguishing mark of the Jewish legal status in the eyes of the surrounding people and sometimes caused great suffering to the Jews in times of outbreak of riots. Within Jewish society also, reliance on the government and loyalty to it became a clear and established tend.

The change came with the appearance of Hassidic movement in the second half of the 18th century, and with the increased support given by the governments of Russia and Austria to the plans of the Jewish Maskilim (followers of the enlightenment) to weaken internal Jewish autonomy. The Jewish public reacted with great hostility to these trends and to the intervention of the government in its internal
affairs. The Haskalah (enlightenment) movement among eastern Europe Jewry was confined to a small section of the rich and part of the youth, and did not reach the mass of Jewry. In 1870s and 1880s enlightened young Jews were already devoting their time to political and social movements utterly opposed to that cooperation with the authorities preached by the Maskilim of the previous generation. Some of these young people turned to the Russian revolutionary movement and became an important element in it; others became leaders of the Jewish national movement, still others began to work for socialism among the Jews, in their own language, emphasizing their specific problems. 54

A deep ideological gulf divided the holders of these opinions. No reconciliation was possible between those who sought as revolutionary change in the existing political order of Russia and those who despaired of Russia entirely and saw redemption in the establishment of a special Jewish state. There was, however, one similarity between the opposing groups. The common factor was that both distrusted the government's intentions towards the Jews and saw it as a hostile element without which or against which - the solution of the 'Jewish' problem would have to come.

54. Ibid. p.24.
When the first Zionist Congress met in Basle in 1897 and in the same year the first all-Russian Congress of the Bund (The Jewish Social Democratic Union) took place, giving expression to both national and social radicalism, the enthusiasm around among the Jews of Russia was vast and overwhelming. It was as though, overnight almost, this great mass of people had awoken from its political slumber and had begun to develop ideologies, examine political programmes, and even establish political groups and parties, workers' funds, trade unions and mutual aid societies. It was not long before the efforts were made to merge national and social radicalism into the one movement of Zionist-Socialist ideology.

The Kishinev pogrom of March 1903 marked another turning point in this process. It then became clear to the Jews that government was indifferent to the preservation of public order and Jewish lives. At this juncture there originated Jewish secret organizations in self-defence. The Revolution of 1905-7 gave sharp and far-reaching expression to this movement.

55. Ibid. p.25.
This was a period of revival and ferment in the political life of Russia; councils, unions and political parties were built, strikes multiplied, demonstration were held, armed rebellions arose. In all these events the Jews played a leading part. The non-socialist elements among them combined into the Union for the Attainment of Equal Rights for Russian Jewry. Their aim was to prepare a plan for the national organisation of all Russian Jews; they also wished to establish a 'club' of Jewish representatives within the Duma, or at least to instruct these representatives on questions affecting the Jews. The Jewish members of the Duma were chosen from all Russian lists, and it was necessary to reach an agreed position on Jewish matters. 56

The socialist forces among the Jewish public organized strikes and demonstrations, and set up fighting squads to repel the pogrom. The years of the Russian Revolution thus served as a new stage in the public awakening of the Jews of Russia; they began to organize for action in the political sphere and through their strength came to realize that they must take their fate into their own hands. 57

56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
The political coup of June 1907, that limited yet further the powers of the Duma, dealt revolutionary and literal forces in Russia a bitter blow. It also silenced the political activities. The outbreak of the World War I intensified their despair. The pent-up forces within Russian Jewry were only waiting for a political change in order to renew their social and political activity with great vigour. The change came, when the Revolution broke out in February 1917. 58

The renewed activity in conditions of freedom derived from the experience gained in the Revolution of 1905. It was clear to many Jews representing various sections of the Jewish public that the Jewish people of Russia was a separate national unit whose rights must be secured. All the spokesmen of the Jewish parties saw the future of Russia as a federation of free nations, enjoying autonomy within the wider political framework. They first planned to summon a Congress of elected representatives of the whole of Russian Jewry (the All-Russian Jewish Congress) which would draw up the political programme. The main debates centered on the precise form and limits of national autonomy, on the links

with other sections of the Jewish people, outside the borders of Russia, and on the attitude to the Zionist idea, i.e. the effort to establish an independent Jewish state in the land of Palestine. In the elections to the Congress in which only small section of Russian Jewry took part, the Zionists and the religious groups won a decisive majority. The election to democratic communities set up in many places produced similar results. The Zionist influence grew even stronger when the Balfour Declaration was published in November 1917. It swept Russian Jewry to a peak of enthusiasm. The socialists only constituted a minority though they were dynamic and they had close connections with Russian political parties and those of other national groups inhabiting the empire.59

Two powerful forces opposed the vision of a federal Russia granting autonomy to all its peoples. the separatist ambitions of some nations, notably the Ukrainian, within whose borders lived most of Russia’s Jews, formed one source of opposition. The second was the centralizing tendency of the Bolshevik party, though in theory it recognized the

right of peoples to national autonomy.60 The Jewish parties in 1917 went some of the way with the Ukranian parties, in the hope that the latter would not finally, sever their connections with Russia. Their hopes were in vain: Ukranian separatists not only cut themselves off from Russia and took up arms against Russia; in the process they perpetrated mass murders of Ukranian Jews.61

Only the utter failure of the Ukranian attempt at independence restored the Jews to security and, for most part, to the boundaries of Russia. But most crucial for the fate of Russian Jewry was the policy of the Bolsheviks.

Soviet Theory on the Jews

Soviet theory on the Jews proceeds from the theories of nationality and religion. These are logical and simple in principle but the more they are pursued in detail the more complex and self contradictory they become. So far as the theory of national minorities is concerned, this problem has been solved by the construction of socialism which ends the


exploitation of minor nationalities by abolishing the exploiting classes of all Soviet nationalities. They now consist of state industrial workers, Kolkhoz peasants, and intellectuals, working harmoniously, irrespective of nationality, in the common aim of constructing communist society.62

Socialism encourages for strictly socialist purposes, the flowing of national cultures, but in mature communist society the national culture will be absorbed in a common culture to which all will have contributed. However, each nation has its own state, a Union or Autonomous Republic within the U.S.S.R. Before the Revolution, the struggle for national equality of rights must subserve the class struggle which is the engine of Revolution. After the legal and practical granting of national equality by the revolutionary state it must subserve the construction of socialism, and subsequently of full communism, which is the raison d'etre of the revolutionary state.

As for religion, this is a set of irrational beliefs and practices deriving from the need to make life tolerable

in the conditions of alienation and exploitation of class society. Religion in the U.S.S.R. is thus a survival from earlier periods which must disappear in the conditions of the rational society which will provide fully for the needs of the human personality. The Jews satisfy the theory of religion, but not that of nationality, since they live scattered throughout Soviet territory and thus cannot have their own state. In any case, for the same reason they are undergoing rapid assimilation and therefore do not need a national state within the U.S.S.R. It has been, and is, open to the Soviet Jews to dwell in a compact territory of their own within the U.S.S.R., namely the autonomous region of Biro Bidshan, but they have not chosen to do so. The existence of the state of Israel is irrelevant, accordingly except that as an arm of American and British Imperialism, which seeks to subvert Soviet Jews. Its language, the traditional religious vehicle of Jewry, is also reactionary.

63.

Elaborate Treatment of the Jewish Question: An elaborate and comprehensive theory on the Jews is difficult because that

63. Ibid.
there only a few systematic expositions in classical Marxism, pre-revolutionary Bolshevikism, or in the Soviet Period. The most systematic classical treatment was a review written by the young Marx in 1843, well before the main features of Marxism as a system were formulated. This is a long review, entitled "Zur Judenfrage" of some writings by Bruno Bauer. The review was written when Karl Marx was twenty five years old and appeared in his Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher in 1844. This document has been and remains something of an embarrassment to Marxists because of its apparent extreme antisemitism. Marx identifies Judaism or Jewry as the embodiment of huckstering and the power of money generally. The Jews thus represent an element which has destroyed the cohesion of society, replacing the proper relation of the human personality to other people and to things by the mediating factor of the market and of money, which atomises society. In the second part of the review, Marx dealt with an article by Bauer on "The Capacity of Present Day Jews and Christians to Become Free". His solution is a return of the Jews to social cohesion. This

64. Ibid.

65. The review is translated and annotated by T.B. Bottomore in his *Karl Marx, Early Writings* (London, 1963).
involves the elimination of Judentum, which has conquered Christendom. "The Document bristles with statements pitifully and strikingly expressed, which at their face value are oddly similar to the most extreme anti-Semitic views and could provide excellent slogans in the service of anti-Semitism." Marx wrote:

* What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money.

* In the Final analysis the emancipation of the Jews is the emancipation of mankind from Judaism.

* Money is the Jealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may exist.... The god of the Jew has been secularized and has become the god of this world. The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jews.

* The chimerical nationality of the Jew is the nationality of the trader and above all of the financier.

* The tenacity of the Jew is to be explained, not by his religion, but rather by the human basis of his religion - practical need and egoism.

These apparently anti-Semitic denunciations of Marx, though embarrassing due to their being in extreme terms, can be accommodated in the Marxist theory. Marx in his younger days was highly Hegelian in his style and he used the concepts of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Here we may interpret that alienation of the Jews which they wanted to maintain as a separate identity can be taken as thesis which Marx wanted to advance through an antithesis of the negation of alienation and to develop it into synthesis of social cohesion. Marx's thesis is that the Jews like the Gentiles, can become fully human again only by the restoration of social cohesion under the Gentiles. This is, the effect, the Soviet thesis that socialism is the only way of solving the Jewish problem.

The Jewish Nationality Question: An early as 1903, Lenin wrote in the Party's central organ, Iskra (The Spark) that the very idea of a Jewish nationality was 'manifestly reactionary', and in conflict in the interests of the Jewish proletariat'. Ten years later this theme was reasserted by Stalin in the pamphlet 'Marxism and the National Question'.

The main document in Bolshevik thought on the Jews before 1917 is Stalin's essay of 1913, Marxism and the
National Question. 67 This represented the authoritative Bolshevik view. This was also consistent with Lenin's occasional observations on the subject. It received Lenin's approve and was in fact written under his guidance when the Bolsheviks were clarifying their basic policy on national minorities. 68

According to this document Stalin firmly denies the status of nationhood to Jews since they lack certain constituents of nationality as conceived by him. He writes, "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture". 69

Stalin asks:

...what...national cohesion there be...between the Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian and American Jews ?.... If there is anything common to them left it is their religion, their common origin and certain relics of national character... But how can it be seriously maintained that petrified religious

67. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (London), Martin Lawrence, no date).
rites and fading psychological relics affect the 'fate' of these jews more powerfully than the living social, economic, and cultural environment that surrounds them? And it is only on this assumption that it is generally possible to speak of the Jews as a single nation.\textsuperscript{70}

The Jews in Russia are heading for inevitable assimilation. Not only do they possess no integral territory but the fact of the matter is primarily that among the Jews there is no large and stable stratum associated with the soil, which would naturally constitute the nation, serving not only as it 'frame work' but also as a 'national market'. Of the fire or six million Russian Jews, only three to four percent are connected with agriculture in any way. The remaining 96 per cent are employed in trade, industry, town institutions and in general they live in towns; moreover they are spread all over Russia and do not constitute a majority in a single province.

Thus, interspersed as national minorities in areas inhabited by other nationalities, the Jews, as a rule serve 'foreign' nations as manufacturers and traders and as

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid. p.10.
members of the free professions, naturally adopting themselves to the 'foreign nations' in respect to language and other things. All this, taken together with the increasing reshuffling of nationalities characteristic of developed forms of capitalism, leads to the assimilation of the Jews. The abolition of the Pale would only serve to hasten this process. 71

It is the process of inevitable assimilation which creates a struggle against it, reflected in the policy of the Bund for Jewish national autonomy.

If there is no democracy in the country there can be no guarantee of 'the complete freedom of cultural development of nationalities'. One may say with certainty that more democratic a century is the fewer are the 'attempts' made on the 'freedom of nationalities, and the greater are the guaranties against such 'attempts'. Russia is a semi Asiatic country and therefore in Russia the policy of 'attempts' not infrequently assumes the grossest form, the form of programs.

71. Ibid., p.36.
The Bund’s aim of securing special Jewish rights, such as Saturday as the day of rest, is retrogressive:

It is to be expected that the Bund will take another 'forward step' and demand the right to observe all the ancient Hebrew holidays... The maintenance of everything Jewish, the preservation of all the national peculiarities of the Jews, even those that are patently noxious to the proletariat, the isolation of the Jews from everything non-Jewish, even the establishment of special hospitals - that is the level to which the Bund has such.\(^2\)

Stalin freely accepts the principle of cultural right:

"There can be no possibility of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed down".\(^3\) But this point is made with a warning that the struggle for minority rights is, under the conditions of rising capitalism always a struggle of the Bourgeoisie of the minority nation against that of the dominant nation, a struggle into which the proletariat of the minority is drawn by its bourgeoisie 'And this creates a favourable soil for the lying propaganda

---

\(^2\) Ibid., p.42.

\(^3\) Ibid., p.17.
regarding "harmony of interests", for glossing over the class interests of the Proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers. This creates a serious obstacle to the work of uniting the workers of all nationalities. 74 However, Stalin does not go quite so far as the then traditional social democrat attitude on the question of national cultures.

The Russian social democratic view, which the Bund contradicted by its tendencies to preserve and stimulate Jewish culture, amounted to the abolition of all ethnic restrictions and inequalities but without stimulating or endeavouring to preserve national cultures, because their existence hindered international working class solidarity. This view reflected the cosmopolitan education of the more articulate Bolshevik leaders and their impatience with any obstacles to the unity of the proletariat throughout the Russian empire, and indeed the world Lenin's statements of this position with reference to the Jews are particularly pungent, not only because they are made in the struggle against Bundist particularism as a betrayal of Marxism. He and his type saw the Jewish traditional ethos as the extreme

74. Ibid.
embodiment of backward exclusiveness. Assimilation meant more than the emancipation of Jews. The construction of socialism takes precedence over the national ideal, even if it leads to complete assimilation. The overriding task is to assist the Jewish masses to take part in the building of socialism.

Biro - Bidsahm Project: The Jews did not constitute majority in any of the Republics of the Soviet union, the Antonomous Republics, Antonomous Regions, or National Areas. They are dispersed all over the country and constitute a minority in all those territories which together form the Soviet Union. This according to the theories of Lenin and Stalin on the nationality problem, which still influence Russian policy, the Jews are not a nation in spite of their official designation as a nationality.

The Soviet leaders had the realization, during the first decade after the Revolution, the great hardship in which the Jewish community was placed. The problem was aggravated by the economic disaster which affected many Jews in the Ukraine and Byelorussia - their main places of concentration - as a result of the First World War.
The idea that the Jews should take up agriculture and enjoy a measure of territorial concentration was actively encouraged by Mikhail Kalinin, the then President of the U.S.S.R. A special committee was established to give assistance to those Jew who were prepared to go back to the land. Another mass voluntary organisation - 'Oset' was formed to assist Jews who wished to become farmers. Special areas in the Southern Lukraine were designated for this purpose. Three Jewish national districts were established in the Kherson and Dnepropetrovsk regions and two in the Crimea. Since there was a very acute competition for land in these areas very few Jews could be absorbed. Moreover the nature Ukrainian and Tatar populations were hostile to the invading Jews. Anti-Semitic propaganda was widespread amongst the peasantry, which the Soviet authorities combated with great vigour.

Settlement of the Jews in Biro-Bidzhan was another project to 'normalize' the Jewish position in the U.S.S.R through territorial concentration. Three major reasons


guided an experiment whose purpose was the establishment of a Jewish autonomous region in the Soviet Far East. One was to bring about a solution of Russia's Jewish problem by giving the Jews a homeland and creating a Jewish nation. The second reason was to arouse sympathy among Jewish communities abroad for the project of a "Soviet Jewish State". The third was to increase the defence potential of the U.S.S.R. by recruiting setters for an exposed Far Eastern recruiting setters for an border area.77

The Biro-Bidzhan project was received with greater enthusiasm in certain Jewish circles abroad than in Moscow or Kiev. "In the light of growing anti-Semitism in Europe and the increasing restriction on Jewish immigration into Palestine, the new project was looked upon as a chance for a national life in the Soviet Union, a new hope for Jewry in the U.S.S.R., where Jewish life was on the decline since the communist revolution".78 Dr Chaim Weizmann, the President of the World Zionist Organisation - greeted the Biro-Bidzhan plan as a 'station' on the road to the Jewish homeland in Palestine. But subsequent events have proved that life in

78. Ibid.
the Far East had little national appeal for Soviet Jewry. 79

In 1942 Biro-Bidzhan had a population of 100,000 due to the influx during the war of people of whom less than a half were Jews. 80 But the area never become an important centre of Jewish agricultural settlement, because urbanisation proceeded at a quick pace and more than a quarter of its population lived in the capital. According to 1959 census the Jews occupied only 8.8% of the whole population.

Why are these so few Jews in Biro Bidzhan? The following reply was given by a Jewish contributor to the official Soviet Novosti Agency: 81

By the end of the thirties, especially in the War years, there was no longer any need for Jews with jobs to move. Why should a person living in Vinnistsa, Kiev or Sverdlovsk, leave a place where he has lived for a long time give up his permanent job, and acquaintances? There may have been other reasons. And, of course, Soviet power is not to blame for the fact that tens of thousands and not hundreds of thousands went to Biro-Bidzhan.


81. Rabinovich, n.75, p.29.
Who, then, is to blame? Whatever the answer, the fact is that the attempts at Jewish territorial concentration ended in failure.

This lack of a Jewish national centre puts the large Jewish community in the U.S.S.R., into a category of its own. Its situation cannot be compared with any of the national groups which form a majority in one of the territorial units of the Soviet Union.

Another factor which has no important impact on the position of the Jewish population -- apart from the lack of territorial centre -- is its special socio-economic structure. Whereas 45 percent of the inhabitants of the U.S.S.R. lived in rural areas\(^{82}\) 96 percent of the Jews resided in urban centres\(^ {83}\). In the mid-1930s over 10 percent of the Jewish working population was engaged in agriculture.\(^ {84}\)

However, Biro-Bidzhan project failed in April 1958. Khrushchëv gave an interview to the correspondent of the

\(82\) U.S.S.R. in Figures, p.7 as cited in S. Levenberg, n.77, p.35.


\(84\) Rabinovich, n.75, pp.57-8.
French newspaper Figaro, in which he stated that the Biro Bidzhan project failed because Jews were incapable of collective work; they were individualists and not inclined to do agricultural work.85

The project, born of contradictory trends in policy, executed haphazardly, and without due consideration for Jewish feelings and sentiments, was doomed to failure.

U.S.S.R. and Zionism:

When the Bolshevik Party came to power in October 1917, there already existed a powerful deep-rooted Zionist movement.

Among the Russian Jewry Zionism as an idea and as a movement predates Herzt's Judenstaat and the emergence of the World Zionist Organisation. The early writings of Parez Smolenskin, Moshe-Leib Lilienblum, and Leon Pinsker, contained nearly all the basic elements of the classical Zionist concept. The first conference of Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) met at Katowicz in 1884, thirteen years before the first Zionist Congress in Basle, and practical

85. S. Levenberg, n.77, p.74.
colonization work in Palestine started even before that date. There were in Russia at that time some 80 Hovevei Zion groups in 50 towns. The precursors of the first 'Aliyah' were the Biluim, the fourteen Jewish students from Kharkov who landed at Jaffa in 1882. The second 'Aliyah' (1903-15) was predominantly Russian. The majority of the forty settlements that existed in Palestine before the World War I were created by Russian Jews.

Russian Jewry had responded overwhelmingly to Herzl's call. Of the 197 participants in the First Zionist Congress (1897), 66 were from Russia. Next year, the movement counted 373 local groups. At the fourth Congress (1900) Russian Zionists were represented by more than 200 delegates, and at the fifth (1901) they played a leading part in the formation of the 'Democratic Faction', which demanded that more attention be given to Jewish national education and culture. The first all Russian Zionist conference met in 1902 at Minsk, with the participation of 500 delegates.

87. Ibid., p.99.
88. Ibid.
representing some 75,000 shekel holders. At the sixth Zionist congress (1903), the Russian delegation constituted the bulk of the 177 who opposed Herzl's proposal to appoint a commission to investigate the British Government's Uganda offer and walked out after the proposal had been accepted. By the time, Russian Zionism with its 1.572 local groups was a major force in the World Zionist Organisation.

Russian Zionists were an ideologically alert and diversified movement. After Herzl's death, the majority of the seventh Zionist Congress (1905) decisively rejected the Uganda project. The dissenting minority created a world wide Jewish Territorialist Organisation but this failed to capture the imagination of the Zionist masses in Russia. It found considerable and active support in labour circles. The Zionist Socialist Party (Z.S), founded in 1904-06, branded the Palestine solution as utopian, and devoted its main attention to problem of Jewish migration which, it believed, would automatically develop into a movement of colonization, and thereby solve the Jewish problem. Another socialist group with a Zionist background emerged in 1905-60. It opposed both the Palestinian and other territorialist

---

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.
solution of the Jewish problem, and advocated Jewish national autonomy in Russia, based on an elected Jewish national assembly. They were called 'Sejmists' from the Polish term Sejm (Diet). Both groups later merged in a limited Socialist Party, known as the Fareinikte. By the spring of 1917, their combined membership was estimated at 13,000.91

Palestine - oriented Labour Zionism has been represented since 1900 by Poale Zion, whose Zionist concept was strictly materialistic, expressed in market terms. For a time they worked within the general framework of the Zionist organisation. Later, emphasis was increasingly put on proletarian class consciousness, which barred continued co-operation with the middle-class Zionist movement. Since 1903 an intermediate position had been occupied by the Tzeirei Zion groups. Their orientation was socialist, non Marxist, and with no stress on the class struggle. Tzeirei Zion constituted the back bone of the pioneer movement in Russia, and were predominantly represented in the second 'Aliyah'. From 1901 the religious wing in Zionism was represented by Mizrachi.

------------

Prior to 1905 Revolution, the Russian Zionists consistently abstained from active participation in the country's general political life. The all Russian Zionist convention in Helsingfors, Finland held in November 1906 reversed this stand. A comprehensive and imaginative Helsingfors Programme encompassed all aspects of Jewish interest in Russia. It offered, on the one hand, an organic synthesis between the struggle for Jewish civic and national rights in the country, and the upbuilding of the Jewish homeland in Palestine, on the other.\textsuperscript{92}

In Czarist Russia, Zionism was an illegal movement and like all other political parties was largely handicapped in its expansion. But the Soviets confronted a strong well-organised Zionist movement. With some 1200 local groups and a membership of 300,000\textsuperscript{93} it enjoyed virtual hegemony in Russia's Jewish community.

The Zionist cause could expect little understanding, let alone sympathy, from Russia's new rulers. As early as 1903, Lenin wrote in the party's central organ, Iskra (The Spark), that the very idea of a Jewish nationality was

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p.220.
"manifestly reactionary" and 'in conflict with the interests of the Jewish proletariat'. Ten years later, the verdict was reasserted by Stalin in the pamphlet *Marxism and the National Question*. Nevertheless, in its early stages, the new regime did not noticeably affect Zionist activities. A "Palestine Week" proclaimed in the spring of 1918, was successfully conducted in hundreds of Jewish communities. A concerted effort was made to mobilize private initiative and capital for the upbuilding of Palestine. Within a year of the overthrow of the Czarist regime, Zionist activities were in full swing throughout Russia. In the *London Zionist Review* of October 1918, Isaak A. Naiditch, a leading Zionist and Vice-Chairman of the Moscow Jewish Council, was able to relate that the Jewish Commissariat (Yevkom), established in January 1916 as a subdivision of the people's Commissariat for National Affairs, "which at first proclaimed the combating of Zionism... as one of its chief tasks, has up to now accomplished nothing of any consequence".

Yevkom's early absence of a noticeably anti-Zionist record was primarily the result of its personal composition.

---

94. This has already been discussed under the sub-heading, *The Jewish Nationality Question* of this chapter.

95. Schechtman, n.86, pp.101-102.
It was staffed in the main by men who had virtually no specifically Jewish national background and who had no motivation for militant anti-Zionist action. They saw their personal mission in winning the Jewish masses for the communist cause through appeals in Yiddish. The Yevkom had neither time nor incentive or particular inclination to indulge in a sustained anti-Zionist crusade. However, since the Zionists suspected any non-communist political formation and also by way of precaution the leadership dropped the Helsingfors programme. A Zionist conference, attended by sixty delegates, met in Moscow on 5-8 May 1918, and hailed the Balfour Declaration as the first step to international recognition of a Jewish Palestine, but passed a resolution calling for strict neutrality in Russia's internal political affairs.

The year 1918 passed in relative tranquillity. But the Jewish sections of the Communist Party known as the Yevsektsia, established simultaneously with the Yevkom and composed of virulently anti-Zionist former militants of the Bund and the Fareinikte, turned communist, had by the summer

96. Ibid.
97. Ibid., p.102.
of 1918 begun to denounce "the counter-revolutionary essence" of Zionism".\textsuperscript{98}

In the second half of 1919, the Yevesktsia sternly condemned the government's failure to act vigorously and speedily against Zionism and Zionists. The conference of Yevsektsia and Yevkom groups in Moscow, held in June 1919 urged the dissolution of the 'counter-revolutionary... clerical and nationalistic Zionist organisation...', an instrument in the hands of entente imperialism in its war against proletarian revolution'.\textsuperscript{99}

As early as that, the central Soviet authorities showed no inclination to yield to Yevesktsia's prodding. The year 1919 was the most critical in the life of the new regime. Fully absorbed by the desperate struggle against the advancing anti-Soviet armies, it was not inclined to pay attention to such a relatively 'innocuous' movement as Zionism.\textsuperscript{100}

Yet alarmed by the Yevesktsia conference, the Central Committee of the Zionist Organisation, in July 1919,

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., p.104.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
submitted to the all Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets (Vtsik) a memorandum avoided any mention of the essence of Zionist ideology maintaining that Zionist activities were merely directed at transforming Jewish small merchants into farmers and artisans in Palestine. In reply to this request, the Vtsik on 21 July resolved that since no decree of the Vtsik or the Council of People's Commissar had declared the Zionist party as counter-revolutionary, and since the cultural and educational activities of the Zionist organisation did not contradict the decisions of the communist party, the Presidium of the Vtsik instructed all Soviet organisations not to hamper the Zionist party in its activities.101

The Zionist Central Committee rather optimistically interpreted this resolution as an implicit legalization of Zionism in the Soviet Union. Actually, it was but an equivocal and relatively phrased expression of official tolerance; it remained valid as long as no other Soviet body declared Zionism and Zionists to be counter-revolutionary.

The Yevsektsia was increasingly damaged by the apparent semi-tolerance of the Soviet authorities and urged total

proscription and liquidation of Zionism. In July 1920, its third conference declared that there was 'no longer any ground for a cautious attack on Zionism. It is necessary to put an end to the vacillation of the official attitude towards the general Zionist party and to all its cultural and economic organisations. It is essential that a total liquidation be carried out, not with standing the socialist phaseology of the Tzeirei Zion and Zionist socialist.102

There was no uniformity in the Soviet Government's response to Yevseksia's pressure, though throughout 1920 harassments took place in other Jewish centres, usually in the wake of Yevseksia inspired newspaper articles and denunciations; Zionist students were frequently expelled from the universities as "ideologically alien elements". On the other hand, there were communities where Zionist activities continued un-hampered.103

In the early stages of the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) inaugurated by Lenin in 1921, the general relaxation of the regime's administrative pressure made life easier for the Zionist groups as well. For some eight months they enjoyed a

103. J.B. Schechtman, n.88, p.106.
measure of respite from extensive harassment. Yevsektsia angrily protested at the government's "leniency". Their daily Emes (The Truth) of 13 January 1922 called for 'a campaign to exterminate Zionism in the U.S.S.R. forever'.\textsuperscript{104}

Repressions were resumed by mid-1922. The main target was the Tzeirei Zion party. Two illegal Tzeirei Zion conferences, called with consummate conspirational precautions, went undetected. But the third conference, in a Kiev synagogue on 30 April 1922, was raided by the Cheka on the fourth day of its deliberations. Fifty-one persons were arrested, and thirty-seven of them appeared on 26 August before the Soviet military court. The indictment read:

The Tzeirei Zion is a popular wing of the Zionist party, which, under the mask of democracy, seeks to corrupt the Jewish youth and to throw them into the arms of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie in the interests of Anglo-French capitalism. To restore the Palestine state, these representatives of the Jewish bourgeoisie rely on reactionary forces, ranging from Tiutiunik and Petliura to such rapacious imperialists as Poincare, Lloye George, and the Pope.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
The court unanimously pronounced the defendants guilty and charged: Twelve were sentenced to two years' hard labour, and fifteen to one year. Ten were released, after thirteen months those sentenced to two years were permitted to leave the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵

In certain cases, the convicted Zionists were offered the tantalizing alternative of deportation to Palestine in return for a full recantation. This included an admission that the goals of Zionism were indeed anti-Soviet and/or counter revolutionary. Those who signed such a statement were permitted to apply for the conversion of their sentence into a deportation order; they could then obtain an exit passport, valid for travel to Palestine.¹⁰⁶

The rationale for this opening of a tiny loophole was apparently two fold: the Soviet authorities might have been eager to get rid of hundreds of Zionist devotees, and they also wanted to impress world Jewish opinion favourably by showing that Zionists were prosecuted not because of the immigrationary aspects of their programme, but only for their "counter-revolutionary" sympathies and activities.

¹⁰⁶. J.B. Schechtman, n.86, p.108.
within the Soviet Union. This later consideration also seems to have accounted for the government's benevolent gesture towards the Histadruth (General Labour Federation in Palestine), which was invited to participate in the International Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow in the summer of 1924. The Palestine pavilion attracted tens of thousands of enthusiastic Jewish visitors from all parts of the Soviet Union. Special excursions came from four large cities. Emboldened by this impressive demonstration, Zionists Youths in Odessa marched in formation in the streets singing the 'Hatiq Va. They were dispersed by the mounted police and 32 of them were arrested. They declared a five-day hunger strike as a protest against their treatment by the prison authorities.

On 25 August 1925 two Zionist leaders, Professor David Shor and Itzhak Rabinovich, submitted to Peter Smidovich, acting head of the Vtsik, a memorandum outlining Zionist aims and activities and asking for the release of all Zionist prisoners, cessation of further arrests, and

107. Ibid., p.108.
109. Ibid., pp.50-1.
authorization of emigration to Palestine. A special session of the Vtsik discussed the request at considerable length, but inconclusively. The Zionist were advised to submit a project for a legalized emigrationary society. This was done. But the Yevsektsia immediately intervened and urged the Poliburo of the Communist Party to reject any concession to the Zionits. A few days later Smidovich meaningfully told Rabinovich: "your own people are advancing all kinds of hindrances'. The attempt to establish agreement with the regime petered out. 110

The very fact that the highest echelons of the Soviet regime were prepared to negotiate with the Zionists at that time, the repeated assertions that the Soviet Government was actually "not against Zionism" and that all the harassment of the Zionist was the work of the Yevsektsia only, may appear puzzling. A partial answer to this puzzle may be that the Soviet Union saw no real 'danger' in the existence of the Zionist movement. It did not belong to the mainstream of Russia's political struggle, was in no way a challenge to their power. Yielding to the Yevsektsia's pressure the

110. J.B. Schechtman, n.86, p.108.
regime was willing to permit its Jewish communist section to
denounce Zionism. But during the first decade of communist
rule the Soviet Government was not prepared to make
Yevsekias's words and deeds the Governments official
policy.

The rationale for this restraint towards Zionism was
governments' vague apprehension. The clearly enunciated
anti-Zionist policy unfavorably affects Soviet Russia's
image in the Jewish communities of the Western world.
Contrary to the belief, Soviet Russia was at that time very
sensitive to world public opinion and was loath to
experience only adverse Jewish reaction to the clear-cut
official persecution of Zionism. "It was in this spirit that
communist leaders did not refuse to discuss some modus
vivendi with the non-legalised but also outlawed
Zionists'. 111 Negotiation to this effect proceeded inter-
mittently and inconclusively for more than half a year. They
ended abruptly on 16 March 1926, when more then 100
Zionists, including the chief negotiator, Robinovich, were
arrested and subsequently sentence to three year's exile in
Kazakhstan. 112

-------------

111. Ibid., p.110.
112. Goldman, n.105, p.87.
In the later part of the 1920s, Yevsektasia's position in the Soviet regime general structure started to deteriorate. The total liquidation of all Jewish national institutions (Kehitoth, Tarbut, O.R.T., O.S.E., etc., the actual disappearance of the Bund, Fareinikte and the Poale Zion, as well as the increasingly efficacious persecution of all forms of Zionist activities, throughout the U.S.S.R. for which the Yevsektsia claimed full credit, undermined its usefulness to the regime. By the end of the decade, the authorities apparently came to the conclusion that the Yevsektsia had outlived its usefulness: "The Moor has done his duty - the Moor can go". Neither in Yevsektsia nor the Yevkom which was dissolved early in 1924, together with the People's Commissariat for nationality affairs, of which it was a subdivision, were ever devised as permanent institutions to handle Jewish affairs in the communist spirit. The Communist Party and the governmental machinery took over.113

However, hostility towards Zionism and persecution of Zionists continued Zionist activities were effectively crippled. The last citadels of organised underground Zionism

113. J.B. Schechtman, n.86, pp.111-112.
- the Moscow Central Executive Committee for Tseirei Zion and the Union of Zionist Youth were liquidated in September 1934. In the years 1936-9, the government mounted an intensive, large-scale campaign against 'Zionist imperialist oppression of the Palestinian Arabs'. The Zionists were denounced on the radio, in the communist press, and in the resolutions passed at factory meetings Zionism officially pronounced dead and buried, still occupied a prominent place in the regime's propaganda effort.

By the end of the thirties the also visible vestiges of organised Zionism had been ruthlessly and efficaciously eradicated in the U.S.S.R. The regime considered 'the Zionist Chapter' fully and irretrievably closed.

It was dramatically reopened in the early stages of the World War II. In September 1939 the Soviet Union annexed Poland's eastern and South-Eastern provinces with a Jewish population of about 1,200,000 - 1,250,000 (Some 300,000 Jews came later as refugees from the German occupied areas). In


115. In volume 51 of the first edition of the large Soviet Encyclopaedia, 1944, Zionism was summarily dismissed as 'moribund': the final ideological rout of Zionism came with the Victory of the Great Soviet Revolution of October 1917".
June 1940 the Rumanian provinces of Bessarbia and Northern Bukovina were incorporated in the U.S.S.R. According to the Rumanian census of 1930, these had the Jewish population of 277,949. The almost simultaneous annexation of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania added a further 265,000 Jews. Within nine months, the Jewish community of the Soviet Union increase by some two million.116

Zionists constituted a high percentage of this influx. Polish Jewry, was the 'backbone' of the World Zionist Organisation. The Soviet Union had once again with a two-million-strong, predominantly Zionist, 'new' Jewish minority.

Soviet Union and the Palestine Question:

To the average Russian Orthodox Christian prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, the possession of Constantinople (Istanbul), the cradle of Russian orthodoxy was merely a stepping-stone to the Holy Land of Palestine. Before World War I when the Russian spoke of Muslims, they meant the non-Arab Muslims World, especially the Turks and Tatars. It was

116. Schechtman, n.86, p.112.
The Bolshevik regime that became victorious in World War I was aware of its unpopularity in Europe. One of the early steps taken by this Bolshevik regime was its "Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East" (December 5, 1917), urging them to join forces with the Soviet revolution. This appeal, signed by Lenin and Stalin, repudiated in no uncertain terms the secret agreements entered into by the Tsarist regime in 1915-16:

We declare that the secret treaties of the dethroned Tsar regarding the seizure of Constantinople, which was confirmed by the disposed Kerensky, now are null and void. The Russian Republic and its governments the Council of People's Commissars, are against the seizure of foreign territories. Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Muslims.  

Among the Muslims of the East, to whom the Bolsheviks, addressed this appeal were not only the Turks, Persians, 


Tatars and Kirghz but also the Arabs, the "victims of rapacious European plunderers".

One reason which must have motivated the Bolsheviks to include the Arabs, especially those of Palestine in their purview at this time was the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, issued just a few days prior to the Bolshevik seizure of power on November 7. The Balfour Declaration albeit un-intentionally served to divert a large part of the articulate Jewish population of Soviet Russia from communism to Zionism. The Jewish Bund, the Jewish counterpart of the Mensheviks (the right wing of the Russian Social Democrats), soon discovered that it constituted a minority in a sea of Zionists. The Bund had joined its Soviet comrades in a bitter and sustained anti-Zionist movement. This campaign was accentuated by the fact that Great Britain was the chief prompter of Allied intervention in Russia in the period 1918-20.119

To the Bolsheviks, therefore Zionism became synonymous with treason. When the Jewish Bund, together with other moderate socialists, fell into disgrace and was disbanded,
the small group of Jewish Communists remained the focal point of opposition to Zionism.

With Zionism in disrepute in Soviet Russia, no Zionist was permitted to leave Soviet occupied territory, especially for Palestine. However toward the end of 1919, under the Denkin regime in Southern Russia, hundreds of Russian Zionists, in the guise of Palestinian refugees, did leave Russia, via Odessa, for Palestine. The first charter ship, which sailed for Palestine at the end of 1919 carrying several hundred Zionists, was the Russian. When the Soviet government learned about this emigration permitted the departure of limited numbers of Zionists whose ranks were infiltrated with communists posing as Zionists. They formed the nucleus of the Party of Palestine, founded in 1919 and admitted to the Comintern in 1924.

The Inter War Period: Palestine became a close British Mandate on July 24, 1922 under the League of Nations pending such time as the country was ready for complete independence. The terms of the Mandate included the pledge

120. Ivar Spector, n.117, p.416.
of the Balfour Declaration? obligating Great Britain to create a Jewish national home in Palestine.\textsuperscript{121} The Soviet regime attacked the Mandate system as a mask for the seizure of Turkish and German possessions by the Entente powers.\textsuperscript{122} It refused to recognize the Palestine Mandate from its inception until its termination on May 15, 1948. The Soviet Union alleged that the Mandate system was one reason for its refusal to participate in the League of Nations. In 1934, when the U.S.S.R. did join the League, it specifically restated its negative position on the Mandate system.\textsuperscript{123} The bankruptcy of British policy in Palestine", according to Soviet interpretation, was revealed by a succession of Arab uprisings in 1920, 1921, 1929, 1933 and 1936-39. From the Soviet standpoint, England established in Palestine "an imperialist regime, a military police dictatorship, and transformed the country actually into a British colony\textsuperscript{124}

\begin{flushleft}
121. Mandate System has been discussed elaborately in earlier chapter.
\end{flushleft}
The Soviet government emerged from the civil war (1918-20) with an intervention complex, to prevent a recurrence of this threat to its survival. It delegated to the newly created Third International (Comintern) in 1919 the conduct of an offensive or counter attack, against the colonial possessions or spheres of influence of England and France, with special emphasis on those in the Middle East adjacent to Soviet Russia. The first Soviet "Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East" was issued by the Bolshevik government in 1917. Fearing reprisals from the colonial powers, however, it caused the Second Appeal to be issued by the Comintern. On July 3, 1920, the Second Congress of the Third International invited the "enslaved peoples of the Middle East" to meet in Baku, the oil centre of the Caspian Sea. This same Congress passed a resolution condemning Zionist activities in Palestine. 125

The Baku assembly demonstrated that the Arabs were by no means the focus of Soviet concern. In 1920 of the 1,891 delegates who attended, only three were Arabs. There were as yet no independent Arab states in the Middle East. The Arabs

---

125. Minutes of the Second World Congress of the Communist International (Hamburg, 1921), pp.198, 204.
received occasional cursory mention in Soviet publications as the victims of British and French imperialism. However, for Moscow, Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan around the Soviet borders -- all confronted by English or Anglo-French territorial encroachment that constituted "The East" which awaited Soviet liberation. It were these three Muslim states, with some support from the West which stemmed the tide of Soviet expansion into the Arab world and forced the Soviet government to settle for non-aggression pacts with them early in 1921.126

For several years thereafter the Soviet foreign policy was diverted from the Muslim world of the Near East to other areas. The Soviet government sought to normalize its relations with its European neighbours and to spread revolution in the Far East, especially in China. After Soviets were expelled from China in 1927 by the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai Shek, the U.S.S.R. turned once again to the Arab world. Taking advantage of existing unrest among the Arab peoples against the English and French mandatory powers and of Arab resentment against Zionist immigration into Palestine, it played at least indirectly, a role in

fomenting and augmenting the disturbances in 1929 which spread rapidly throughout Palestine and to other Arab lands.  

The Stalin regime, in 1929, was engrossed in the First Five Year Plan. Soviet leaders had little interest in events abroad including what was brewing in Palestine. The outbreak of riots in Jerusalem in August and their impact throughout the Arab world reawakened Soviet interest in the progressive revolutionary movement' taking place in the Middle East.

At the Sixth Congress of the Comintern (July 19-September 1, 1928) a certain Haider, a Palestinian delegate criticised the Third International for its neglect of the Arab question. The Arab World, he insisted, was of great significance to the Comintern because of the confrontation in this small area of a large number of important problems and question, with different types of imperialist policy and all forms of colonial bondage. When the riots occurred


in Palestine, the Comintern attributed them to the "dismemberment of Arabistan into numerous small countries", "disfranchisement of the basic mass of the population" (the Arabs), "violent Zionist colonization", and the growing pressure of British and French imperialism" in the Arab countries. In this struggle, the Comintern accused the "Zionist bourgeois colonizers and their lackeys" of playing the role of direct agents of British imperialism, in contrast to the fallahin (peasants) and beduin (normads) who provided the main driving force of the revolutionary movement.

The Communist Party of Palestine, comprised predominantly of Jews, was caught by surprise by the 1929 revolt. It was severely criticized by the Comintern for misunderstanding the revolutionary character of the Arab uprising as a "general national anti-imperialist peasant revolt," for its failure to make of the Palestinian Communist Party a Jewish-Arab movement, and for its lethargy

in neglecting to support the movement. Its number one task for the future, as outlined by the Comintern, was the "Arabization of the party from top to bottom". This included the creation of Arab or Joint Arab-Jewish trade-union organisation, the drafting of an agrarian program reflecting the demands of the follahin and beduin and the exposure of Zionism and Majlis Islam as agents of imperialist reaction. Majlis Islam was an organisation of Arab nobility and clergy.131

The record of Soviet participation in the Palestinian revolutionary movement of 1929 and their plans for the future of Palestine and the Arab lands are to be found in the secret documents on the Programmes of the Communist Party for the Arab Countries, published in 1928.132 These were followed by another secret programme on "The Tasks of the Communist Party of Palestine in the Countryside, published in 1931 in Arabic and Hebrew.133 This anti-Zionist document, intended for the Arabs, is still of major significance. Although it was written in a different time and against a different background, it represents, almost in

132. Ibid., p.419.
133. Ibid.
toto, the arguments used today in the Soviet press. These and other documents pertaining to the Middle East and Palestine, were published in 1934 by the Marx-Engels Lenin Institute of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) under the title Documents of the Programms of the Communist Parties of the East. Except for a brief summation of one and on-half pages, this publication remained largely unknown in the West until 1956, when an English translation became available.

These documents provided a guide for the Communist Parties of the Middle East as to how, with the aid of the Soviet Union, they could spread communism and Soviet influence in Palestine and other Arab lands. This purpose was to be translated into action in Three stages: (i) The colonizing power must be exposed by means of an intensive national liberation movement, a campaign against colonialism which, in their opinion, would create a United Front of all classes except the direct agents of imperialism.

(2) Once national independence had been achieved, the local communists conduct a campaign among the workers and

134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
peasant masses to the effect that political sovereignty was not enough, that complete liberation involved a social, as well as a political revolution, that the liberated state, therefore, must pass to the control of the workers and peasants.

(3) The final stage was the seizure of power by the Communist Party.

This guide became and has remained the basis of Soviet Policy in the Middle East.

However, during the decade of the thirties, there was no significant move in Palestine and the Near East-Soviet activity, for the most part was restricted according to the above written blueprint for communism. Instructions and guidance were given to local Communist groups which were weak and inarticulate and which, in most instances, had been driven underground. The main reason for the comparative lull in Soviet-Arab relations was the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe and their impact on the Near and Middle East. The Arab rebellion of 1936-39, unlike that of 1929, invited little Soviet attention. This was due to tension abroad and the Stalin purges at home, which removed from the scene or
frightened into silence the remaining Soviet experts on the Middle East.\textsuperscript{136}

During these years, the anti-semitism of the Hitler regime evoked a sympathetic response among same nationalists, especially in Palestine. English officials in Palestine were inclined to tolerate the Nazis because they were anti-communist. At though, as a result, the Soviet government may well have become disillusioned with the Arabs in the late thirties, it was in no position to assume an aggressive role in the Near East until the end of World War II.\textsuperscript{137}

In June 1941 Hitler's armies invaded Soviet territory. In the face of new realities with its persistent anti-zionist policy on the home front, the Soviet Government made a sustained effort to enlist the sympathy and support of world Jewry for its war effort by an appeal to Jewish solidarity.

On 24 August 1941 the Jews the world over heard for the first time over the Radio a voice from Moscow, addressing


\textsuperscript{137} Ivor Spector, n.115, p.420.
them as 'Brider Y:den' (Brother Jews). In this broadcast the pact Parets Markish said that all Jews were now one people and one army and that no longer the man would divide them.138

In April 1942 came the announcement of the formation in Moscow of a Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The Committee's main purpose was to build up pro-Soviet public opinion among the Jews in the Western countries. The public opinion build-up was headed by Solomon M. Mikhoels, the renowned actor, and Itzik Feffer, Red Army colonel, communist poet laureate. Earlier in his verses he had classified Mufti of Jerusalem. Feffer's wartime poem, "I am a Jew", had the ring of Zionist anthems, evoking the Maccabean heroes and symbols of the Jewish national revolt.139

In 1943, Mikhoels and Feffer went with Stalin's personal blessing to the United States and England, to plead for active Jewish support of the Soviet war effort. They were understandably eager to secure Zionist understanding and sympathy for their mission. In London, Michoels declared

139. Ibid.
that Zionism is a "great idea" though it was inapplicable to Soviet Jewry with its deep roots in Russia. On his return to Moscow in December 1944, he sent greetings on Dr. Weizmann's seventieth birthday.\textsuperscript{140} Interest in Palestine and Zionism was also shown by Ivan Maisky, the former Soviet envoy to London who visited Palestine in October 1943 and sent to Moscow a glowing account. In November 1944, Shachna Epstein, Secretary of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, wrote in the Committee organ, Aynikayt, that "the Jewish people has a right to political independence in Palestine and that no sensible and freedom loving person can have any objection to the Jews there continuing to develop in freedom the home they had set up through hard, constructive work, on the basis of self government".\textsuperscript{141} The following April, the Palestine Communist Party, which during the bloody riots of 1929 and 1939 had observed the Kremlin's directives and glorified the "national revolutionary nature of Mufti's policies, received new instructions and announced its readiness to co-operate with the Histadrut in combating the infamous British White Paper. At the World Trade Union

\textsuperscript{140} Benjamin West, \textit{Struggle of a generation: the Jews under Soviet Rule} (Tel Aviv, 1959), pp.144-145.  
\textsuperscript{141} Sechtman, n.84, p.114.
Conference (W.T.U.C.) in London in February 1945, the Soviet delegation endorsed a resolution stating that "the Jewish people must be enabled to continue the rebuilding of Palestine as their National Home". It was also noted with satisfaction that the Moscow paper Red Star, the organ of the Red Army, published an article highly critical of the Arab League on 13 July 1945. Two days later its content was broadcast by Radio Moscow in Arabic.

At the conclusion of World War II, the victorious U.S.S.R. confronted a number of military, political, and economic problems. These problems can be put in three major categories: domestic, regional and International. In the home front was the task of building the war-torn areas. No doubt, the gigantic task of postwar reconstruction was given top priority, since Moscow's claim to superpower status rested on the twin pillars of military and industrial strength.

In regions adjacent to the Soviet frontiers -- Eastern Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East -- U.S.S.R. in

---

142. Ibid., n.84, pp.114-115.

order to counter "capitalist encirclement" and to protect the national security set out to consolidate and, in some instances, to expand the territorial gains made during the war. The three regions mentioned above have been ranked in accordance with their respective military, strategic and political importance to the U.S.S.R. The experiences of 1930s and especially of the war still fresh in their minds, the Kremlin regarded Eastern and Central Europe as absolutely indispensable to the national security of the Soviet Union. 144

The territorial acquisitions on the shores of the Pacific, too, represented an important strategic asset. Japan had capitulated, China was weak and this had prompted the U.S.S.R. into a position of strength in the Far East. Relatively Middle East was less significant to Stalin than were the other two regions. However, this cannot be disputed that parts of the area, such as northern Iran and northeastern Turkey as well as the Turkish Straits were of considerable strategic importance to Moscow. At the minimum, they controlled access to Russia's "soft underbelly" - the Ukraine and Transcausian area and the predominantly Muslim territories of Central Asia. 145

144. Ibid.

145. Ibid.
The situation that Stalin came across in the post-war Middle East in at least two important respects. First, unlike the other regions the Middle East had long been a sphere of exclusively Western (mainly British) influence. For this reason with the exception of northern Iran, the Russian Army made no move into the territory of the U.S.S.R.'s southern neighbors. Secondly, according to the 1941 agreement with Great Britain, Soviet troops were obliged to leave northern Iran no later than six months after the end of World War II. In view of these considerations, the Kremlin was left with no choice but to pursue its interest in the Middle East by means of diplomatic negotiations with its war time allies. Soon it was explicit to Stalin that neither London nor Washington was prepared to countenance Soviet aggrandizement since the Middle East was viewed by them as vital to western military, political, and economic interests. Refusal to permit Russian expansion applied not only to Turkey and Iran but also to the former Italian Colonies that Moscow had sought to administer in the early post war period.146

After 1945, when it become obvious that the West had no intention of offering any such recognition, Moscow embarked upon a course of political competition vis-a-vis its former Allies. The main concentration was on three major areas contiguous to the Soviet Union: Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East. Stalin's handling of the Palestine problem is an interesting example of such a process.

Attempts of Cooperation: Though at the Yalta Summit, the question of Palestine was not on the official agenda, it did come up in informal discussion. The most striking feature of these deliberations seems to have been a tacit agreement by the Allied heads of state "to hand over Palestine to the Jews and to continue Jewish immigration at least for the immediate future". President Roosevelt subsequently reported being surprised by the fact that "Stalin had not appeared opposed to Zionism". Kremlin's conciliatory posture was probably influenced by a desire to demonstrate to the Western Allies its flexibility at a juncture when it

148. Oles, M., n.142, p.64.
was generally assumed that the question of the Palestine mandate would soon be submitted to the United Nations, whose establishment had been officially agreed upon at Yalta.149

By being a prominent member in the United Nations and having veto power in the Security Council, the Soviet Union expected to play a prominent part in deciding the future status of Palestine. Since no vital Soviet interest were claimed to be at stake in Palestine, direct Russian involvement in the affairs of the former League of Nations mandate would have meant implicit Western recognition of the legitimacy of Moscow’s role.150

Stalin’s calculations at Yalta went awry. Prime Minister Churchill, in late February 1945, announced his government’s decision not to submit the political problem to the United Nation. It was clearly evident that this move was to preclude Soviet Union in the affairs of the Mandate. This decision on the part of Churchill, "deprived ... [Stalin’s conciliatory] stand on Palestine, including the support of the Jewist cause there, of its raison d’etre."151

149. Ibid.
150. Yaacov Roi, n.147, p.15-16.
151. Ibid., p.17.
The resolve of the Allied powers to keep Soviet Union away from the Palestinian question was well-taken by Kremlin. When, in late fall of 1945, Great Britain set up the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to review the Jewish refugee problem in Europe as well as the situation in Palestine, Stalin adversely reacted to the Committee and its recommendations. He was convinced that London and Washington had no intention to cooperate with Moscow. The U.S.S.R. was left with no choice but to develop its own approach to the political problem. The Kremlin endeavored to return the issue to the United Nations where they could be expected to play a prominent role. Whatever Stalin's original intentions may have been, it was obvious that thereafter, in Palestine and elsewhere, East-West relations would be marked not by cooperation but by confrontation.

U.S.S.R. was not lacking in power with respect to Palestine. Soviet trump card was the issue of immigration to Palestine which it played in 1946-47. Soviet Union was not in a position to control events in Palestine directly.

153. Yaacov Ro'i, n.147, pp.23-27.
However, it was in a position to deny emigration to the Jews from Eastern Europe to counter the Western objections to its participation in the resolution of the Palestine problem. Kremlin set out to facilitate their emigration to the Western Zones of Germany and Austria. It should be noted that earlier Soviet Union had taken a stance publicly that it was opposed to mass exodus of Jews of Eastern Europe as well as to Zionism.\textsuperscript{155} The Soviet government did so in full awareness of the fact that most emigrants were determined to proceed to Palestine and to do what they could to ensure the establishment of a Jewish state.\textsuperscript{156} As a result, the number of Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in West Germany and Austria swelled from "less than 100,000 in summer 1945 to approximately a quarter of a million early in 1947," making it impossible for the West to disregard "the Question of Palestine's political future".\textsuperscript{157}

Initiation of this policy, on the part of Kremlin, seemed to have been serving related objectives. First, Great Britain was opposed to the mass immigration of Jews to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{156} Yaacov Ro'i, n.147, pp.25-33. \\
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p.33.
\end{flushright}
Palestine and President Truman was in favour of it. Moreover a large scale influx of Jewish DPs in the Allied zones of occupation could have been expected, at a minimum, to exacerbate Anglo-American relations. Second, the influx of a large number of East European Jews into Palestine might well have resulted in a failure of Western efforts to resolve this ticklish problem independently of the larger international community. Either way, the chances of the Palestine issue being brought before the United Nations, Moscow's major political objective in 1946,47, did greatly improve. Stalin's gambit, followed by the Kremlin's support of the Jewish community's (Yishuv) political aspirations in Palestine did indeed lead to the desired results. The Soviet moves eventually contributed to the collapse of Anglo-American attempts to settle the Palestine question outside the U.N. framework. Once that occurred Great Britain was forced in early 1947 to place the Palestine Question again on the United Nations agenda. It became virtually difficult to deny the U.S.S.R. active participation in the search for a resolution of the problem.

159. Ibid., p.68.
Stalin had come to the conclusion that cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and its war time Allies was impossible. Kremlin began actively searching for means to weaken the Western hold on the Middle East. Palestine represented a 'weak link' in Great Britain's regional - imperial defence system'. It was vulnerable because of the existence in that country of two competing nationalisms - Jewish and Arab that worked not only to frustrate each other's ambitions but also to rid themselves of British tutelage. Therefore, in concentrating on Palestine, Moscow could have reasonably hoped to remove the British presence. This could have been the prelude for the withdrawal of imperialist presence from the whole of Middle East.\textsuperscript{160} It is an irony that for the attainment of these particular objectives Stalin's policies more readily facilitated Soviet backing of Zionists rather than Arab nationalist aspirations in Palestine.

However, Kremlin, before it could commit itself openly to the Zionists, had to out maneuver Anglo-American moves to exclude Moscow from attempts to resolve the Palestine problem. Kremlin in 1946-47 did likewise by insisting that any change in "the status of dependent territories" should

\textsuperscript{160}. Ibid.
be decided by the United Nations.  

Stalin's persistence paid off in February 1947 when the British Government expressed its inability to mediate the Arab-Jewish dispute referred and the Palestine problem to the UN. In the meantime Soviet ability to influence events in Palestine had considerably increased. The Jewish population had swollen on account of large-scale immigration of East European Jews. The situation in Palestine was deteriorating fast since the Jews and Arab Palestinian were locked in incessent conflagration and with the British. This offered a unique opportunity to U.S.S.R. to influence events by supporting Zionist aspirations for an independent Jewish state.

The Kremlin welcomed the submission of the Palestine Question to the U.N. Andrei Gromyko Deputy Foreign Minister declared on May 8, 1947, that the U.S.S.R. was prepared 'to take upon itself, together with the United Nations as a whole, the responsibility not only for the final decisions that may be taken by our organization on the Palestine problem, but also for the preparation of the decision.'

161. Yaacov Ro'i, p.147, p.46.