10

Two Hundred Years Together

After meeting with Solzhenitsyn in the spring of 2001, the Israeli statesman Shimon Peres announced the stunning news that the Nobel laureate had completed a major historical work on Russia's "Jewish question." As Solzhenitsyn himself declared, this was a subject he would have preferred to avoid. It had given rise to "mutual reproaches" and fierce polemics on both the Russian and Jewish sides. Many Jewish commentators reduced the essence of Russian history to a particularly virulent form of anti-Semitism, while extreme Russian nationalists blamed Jews for all the calamities that afflicted their homeland in the twentieth century. And some of Solzhenitsyn's fevered critics were all too eager to confuse his patriotism and Orthodox faith with a badly concealed anti-Semitism.

But Solzhenitsyn's work on *The Red Wheel* had convinced him that the "Jewish question," however difficult to navigate, was a topic that could not remain taboo and should not be left to the distortions of irresponsible extremists. He had only touched upon this question in *The Red Wheel* because he wanted to avoid giving any encouragement to fringe elements who blamed the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 on the conspiratorial machinations of Jews. But since no fair-minded historian had jumped into the breach, Solzhenitsyn felt obliged to embark on this monumental project. Instead of "ever-increasing reproaches and accusations," there needed to be a "quest for all points of understanding, and all possible paths into the future, cleansed from the acrimony of the past." *Two Hundred Years Together* aims to understand the past accurately, equitably, while paving the way toward mutual understanding and full reconciliation between Russians and Jews.

The first volume of *Two Hundred Years Together* (published in Russian in the summer of 2001) treats the encounter between Russians and Jews from 1772, when 100,000 Jews first entered the Russian empire, to the eve of the revolutionary conflagrations of 1917. The second volume (published at the very end of 2002) covers the period from the revolutions of 1917 until the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Jews for Israel and the West in the early 1970s. The first volume aimed primarily "to report" events and was generally marked by a restrained tone; the second, more passionately written, volume describes events that Solzhenitsyn either knew firsthand or had spent decades investigating and writing about in *The Gulag Archipelago* and *The Red Wheel*.

Critics of *Two Hundred Years Together* have often failed to come to terms with the larger intellectual and moral concerns that inform Solzhenitsyn's analysis. Some commentators have perversely gone out of their way to read the book selectively, keeping scorecards of "good" and "bad" Jews in its pages and prying quotations egregiously out of context. These critics treat Solzhenitsyn's expressed goal of encouraging mutual understanding between Russians and Jews as a subterfuge. They accuse him of minimizing the Russian state's responsibilities for pogroms in 1882, 1903, and 1905–7. And some have mendaciously claimed that Solzhenitsyn holds Jews uniquely responsible for the criminal totalitarianism of the twentieth century. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Solzhenitsyn in no way minimizes the damage the pogroms did to the lives and liberties of ordinary Jews, to the "reasonable evolution" of the Russian state, or to Russian-Jewish relations. He establishes that, with one notable exception, the pogroms were not government-sponsored but instead were instigated spontaneously from below. But a "scandalously" weak Russian state did little to protect Russia's Jews or to bring the culprits to justice. However, Solzhenitsyn refuses to distinguish between good and bad forms of lawlessness: Peasants burning the homes and estates of landowners after the revolution of 1905 unleashed "pogroms" as unjustifiable as the mass violence against Jews in Moldavia, Ukraine, and southwest Russia. A strong, self-respecting, law-based state was the most sensible response to both forms of "incendiary" violence. The powerful excerpt from chapter 18 provides a particularly grim tally of the murderous anti-Semitism that gripped the Ukraine during the Civil War. Much of this violence was instigated by Whites, and some by Ukrainian nationalists and by ma-

rauding elements of the Red Army. These pogroms took the lives of up to 200,000 Jews and inflicted untold spiritual and psychological damage on survivors.

In particularly emphatic passages, Solzhenitsyn declares that none of the Russian revolutions can be blamed on a "malicious Jewish plot." The Russian writer freely mocks those fanatics who think they have discovered "the root cause that explained it all: the Jews!" They mistakenly maintained "Russia would long ago have ascended to the pinnacles of power and glory were it not for the Jews!" It was in truth the full panoply of "Russian failings," which Solzhenitsyn so powerfully explicates in the concluding paragraphs of chapter 9, that "determined [Russia's] sad historical decline."

While "it would be quite wrong to say that the Jews 'organized' the revolutions of 1905 and 1917," Solzhenitsyn believes that all parties must take responsibility for their "renegades," those who collaborated with an essentially totalitarian and terroristic regime after 1917. For Solzhenitsyn, though, it is always a question of collective *responsibility* and never of collective guilt. It is not a matter of answering before other peoples, "but to oneself, to one's conscience, and before God." In decisive respects, *Two Hundred Years Together* renews Solzhenitsyn's high-minded defense of "repentance and self-limitation" in the life of nations.

In chapter 21, Solzhenitsyn does justice to the singularity of the Holocaust on Soviet territory. He clearly acknowledges the monstrousness of the war against the Jewish people, without ever minimizing the comparable evils that were the gulag and collectivization. Solzhenitsyn refuses to "privilege" one form of murderous totalitarianism over another or to set the sufferings of Russians and Jews against each other. The "totality of suffering" experienced by both Russians and Jews at the hands of the National Socialist and Communist regimes is "so great, the weight of the lessons inflicted by History so unsupportable" that it is imperative that it produce good and not only bitter fruit. It must give rise to mutual empathy, understanding, and reflection on the part of both Russians and Jews. In making these appeals, Solzhenitsyn never loses sight of our common humanity or the rigorous demands of the moral law. And transcending all polemics, he affirms that a "mysterious Design" continues to connect Russians and Jews in their third century of cohabitation. Fidelity to it requires a strenuous effort to do justice to their *common past.*

Two Hundred Years Together
Introduction

Approaching the Theme

Through a half-century of work on the history of the Russian Revolution, I repeatedly came face to face with the question of Russian-Jewish interrelations. Time and again it would enter as a sharp wedge into events, into people's psychology, and arouse blistering passions.

I never lost hope that there would come, before me, a writer who might illumine for us all this searing wedge, generously and equitably. More often, alas, we meet one-sided rebukes, either pertaining to Russians' culpability toward Jews, and even the primordial depravity of the Russian people (there is quite a profusion of such views)—or, from those Russians who did write about this mutual dilemma, mostly agitated tendentious accounts that refuse to see any merit on the other side.

It's not that there is a paucity of public commentators—in Russia the Jewish side, especially, abounds in them, more so than the Russian side. But, despite this dazzling array of minds and ideas, there still has not appeared such an exposition or elucidation of our common history as might meet with understanding from both sides.

Yet we must learn not to tauten these tense, interwoven strings to their breaking point.

I would be glad not to test my strength in such a thorny thicket, but I believe that this history, and attempts to study it, must not remain "forbidden."

The history of the "Jewish question" in Russia (and not only in Russia) is, first and foremost, a *rich* one. To write about it means to hear new voices and to convey them to the reader. (In this book Jewish voices will sound far more frequently than Russian ones.)

But because of the atmosphere surrounding this theme, writing about it turns out, in fact, to be like walking a razor's edge. One feels from *two* sides

all manner of possible, impossible, and ever-increasing reproaches and accusations.

Yet what leads me through this narrative of the two-hundred-year-long cohabitation of the Russian and Jewish peoples is a quest for all points of common understanding and all possible paths into the future, cleansed from the acrimony of the past.

The Jewish people—like all other peoples and like all persons—is both an active subject of history and its anguished object. Furthermore, Jews often carried out, perhaps unconsciously, major tasks allotted them by History. The "Jewish question" has been treated from numerous angles, always with passion but also, oftentimes, with self-delusion. And yet the events that befall any people in the course of History are sometimes determined not by that people alone, but also by the other peoples who surround it.

An exaggerated hotheadedness on either side is humiliating to both. There cannot be a question upon earth that is unsuited for contemplative discourse among people. To converse broadly and openly is more honest—and in our case it is also indispensable. Alas, mutual grievances have accumulated in both our people's memories, but if we repress the past, how can we heal them? Until the collective psyche of a people finds its clear outlet in the written word, it can rumble indistinctly or, worse, menacingly.

We cannot shut the door on the last two hundred years; and in any case, our planet has shrunk, and, no matter how one parses it, we become neighbors again.

For many years I postponed this work and would still now be pleased to avert the burden of writing it. But my years are nearing their end, and I feel I must take up this task.

I have never conceded to anyone the right to conceal that which *was*. Equally, I cannot call for an understanding based on an unjust portrayal of the past. Instead, I call both sides—the Russian and the Jewish—to patient mutual comprehension, to the avowal of their own share of the blame. Yet isn't it so easy to turn away from it, saying, "That wasn't really *us*. . . "? I earnestly have tried to understand both sides of a historic conflict. To do this, I delve into events, not polemics. I try to *show*, taking up an argument only in those unavoidable cases where the truth has been enveloped in layer upon layer of falsehood. I dare anticipate that this book will not be met with the anger of implacable extremists, but instead will serve the cause of harmony. I hope to find benevolent collocutors among both Jews and Russians.

I conceive of my ultimate aim as discerning, to the best of my ability, mutually agreeable and fruitful pathways for the future development of Russian-Jewish relations.

1995

I wrote this book guided only by the demands of the historical material itself, as well as seeking beneficent solutions for the future. But let us not lose sight of the fact that, in recent years, Russia's condition has so precipitously been transformed that the question we are examining has been significantly marginalized, and has grown dimmer, when compared with Russia's other problems.

2000

At the Turn of the Twentieth Century

By the beginning of the twentieth century, then,[1] the Pale of Settlement had outlived the purpose for which it had been created. It did not bar Jews from acquiring solid positions in the most vital areas of national life, whether economy and finance or the intellectual sphere. No longer of practical significance, it failed, too, in its political and economic goals. But what it did accomplish was to aggravate Jewish feelings of bitterness toward the regime, to fan smoldering social tensions, and, importantly, to stigmatize the Russian government in the eyes of the West.

But then again, was there any area or any undertaking whatever in which the Russian Empire did *not* lag behind throughout the nineteenth century and the pre-Revolutionary decades—given its general sluggishness, its unresponsive bureaucracy, and the inflexible thinking at the top? The Empire was unable to cope with a dozen issues absolutely crucial to the country's existence, such as those bearing on local self-government, on rural *zemstvos*, on land reform, on the Church and its ruinously humiliating status, on ways of making the government's thinking comprehensible to society, on the need to shift mass education into high gear, and on support for the development of Ukrainian culture. In just the same way, it was fatally late in reexamining the actual state of affairs relating to the Pale and the effect it was having on the situation in the entire state.

Over the course of more than a century, the regime proved incapable of solving the problem of its Jewish population, neither offering an acceptable form of assimilation nor allowing the Jews to remain in the kind of voluntary isolation that had prevailed a century earlier when they were first incorporated into the empire.

[1] In the preceding chapters, the author has enumerated a multitude of prominent Jewish entrepreneurs in the Russia of the late nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, the three decades between the 1870s and the early twentieth century had become a time of rapid development in Russia's Jewish community, with an undisputed flowering of intellectual energy among its elite, who now felt hemmed in not only by the Pale of Settlement but by the confines of the Russian Empire as well.

This general picture should certainly be kept in mind when focusing on the specific ways in which Russian Jews were denied equal rights, on the Pale of Settlement, and on the restrictive quotas in various fields of endeavor. Despite the growing significance of the Jewish presence in the US, at the beginning of the twentieth century Jews in Russia constituted roughly one half of the world's Jewish population[2]—a crucial circumstance for subsequent Jewish history. Looking back across the historical divide of the Revolution, I. M. Bikerman wrote the following in 1924: "Tsarist Russia was the home of more than half the world's Jews. . . . It is therefore only natural that the Jewish history of the generations closest to us in time has primarily been the history of Russian Jews."

And although in the nineteenth century

> Western Jews were wealthier, more influential, and more advanced in cultural terms, the life force of the Jews was in Russia. It was a force that grew in strength together with the flourishing of the Russian Empire. . . . The renaissance [of the Jews] began only with the incorporation into Russia of the lands populated by them. The Jewish population increased rapidly in number, to the point that it could even expatriate a huge contingent to the New World; Jews began accumulating wealth; a significant middle class came into existence; the material level of the lower classes was constantly improving; by dint of effort, Russian Jews were overcoming the physical and moral taint brought out of Poland; European-style education was spreading among Jews, and we were able to accumulate so much inner strength that we could afford the luxury of having a literature in three languages. . . .

This education and wealth had all been acquired by Jews in Russia. And "in terms of sheer numbers and the vitality of the forces it contained," Russian Jewry revealed itself to be "the backbone of the entire Jewish people."[3]

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[2] *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia* (Jerusalem, 1976–[ongoing]), II, 313–14. [Author's note.]

[3] I. M. Bikerman, "Rossiia i russkoe evreistvo," in *Rossiia i evrei*, Sbornik I (Berlin, 1924; reprinted Paris, 1978), 84–85, 87. [Author's note.]

This portrayal by a witness of the events described is echoed in 1989 by one of our contemporaries: "At the turn of the twentieth century, the public aspects of life had for Russian Jews attained a scope and a level of development that could have been a source of envy for many other national minorities in Europe."[4]

It must be said that the one thing that the alleged "prison-house of nations"[5] cannot be accused of is the denationalization of Jews or of any other national group.

True, some Jewish commentators complain that in the 1880s the St. Petersburg-based Jewish intelligentsia "took virtually no part in representing Jewish interests," and that these concerns were being upheld through the efforts of Baron Ginzburg and other wealthy and well-connected Jews.[6]

"Jews in Petersburg [where they numbered some thirty or forty thousand by the end of the century] were scattered throughout the city, and the overwhelming majority of the Jewish intelligentsia of the day had little concern for Jewish needs and interests."[7]

But in the very same years, "the holy spirit of renewal . . . hovered over the Jewish Pale, awakening forces in the rising generation that had been slumbering for centuries. . . . It was a veritable spiritual revolution."

Among young Jewish women, "the striving for education . . . was literally religious in its fervor," and soon in Petersburg, too, "many Jewish students of both genders . . . enrolled in institutions of higher education." By the beginning of the twentieth century "a significant part of the Jewish intelligentsia began to feel . . . that it was duty-bound to return to its own people."[8]

This spiritual awakening among Russian Jews gave rise to very divergent tendencies that had little in common with one another. Some of them would later play a role in determining the fate of the entire world in the twentieth century.

The Russian Jews of the period envisioned at least six different kinds of futures, many of which were mutually exclusive:

> —retaining their religious identity by self-isolation, as had been the case for centuries (but this option was rapidly losing appeal);

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[4] E. Finkel'shtein, "Evrei v SSSR. Put' v XXI vek," *Strana i mir* [Munich], 1989.1: 70. [Author's note.]

[5] A hostile moniker for Russia in use in the nineteenth century.

[6] G. B. Sliozberg, *Dela minuvshikh dnei. Zapiski russkogo evreia*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1933–34), I, 145. [Author's note.]

[7] M.A. Krol', *Stranitsy moei zhizni*, vol. 1 (New York, 1944), 267. [Author's note.]

[8] Krol', pp. 260–61, 267, 299. [Author's note.]

—assimilation;

—struggling for cultural and national autonomy of the Jews in Russia, with the goal of an active but separate existence in the country;

—emigration;

—enlisting in the Zionist movement;

—joining the revolutionary cause.

In the Revolution of 1905

How can we sum up the effect of the 1905 Revolution on Russian Jews as a whole? On the one hand, "The revolution of 1905 had an overall positive outcome. Though Jews still did not have equal civil rights, it granted them political equality. . . . The Jewish question had never been so positively viewed in public opinion as after the so-called 'Libertarian Movement.'"[1]

But on the other hand, as a result of the significant participation of Jews in the events of 1905, all Jews as a group now more than ever came to be identified with the revolution.

An official plan of government reforms published August 25, 1906, promised to look into restrictions aimed at Jews in order to see which ones could be immediately revoked because they "generated nothing but irritation, and were clearly obsolete."

But at the same time the Russian government was profoundly dismayed by the revolution itself (which dragged on for two more years in the form of widespread and at times simply criminal terrorism, barely contained by Stolypin)—as well as by the prominent participation of Jews in it.

Angered by the persistent nature of revolutionary violence, as well as by the humiliating defeat in the war with Japan, the ruling circles in Petersburg were not above yielding to the temptingly simple view that there was nothing organically wrong with Russia and that the entire revolution, from beginning to end, was a malicious Jewish plot, part and parcel of a worldwide Jewish-Masonic conspiracy. Here was the root cause that explained it all: the Jews! Russia would long ago have ascended to the pinnacles of power and glory were it not for the Jews!

[1] G. A. Landau, "Revoliutsionnye idei v evreiskoi obshchestvennosti," in *Rossiia i evrei*, Sbornik I, 116. [Author's note.]

It was a myopic and facile explanation, which made the impending fall of these high officials all the more irrevocable.

The superstitious faith in the historical potency of conspiracies (even if such may occur, formed by groups small or large) utterly overlooks the principal reason why individuals and entire state structures fail, namely, human weaknesses.

It was our Russian failings that determined our sad historical decline, from the senseless Nikon-inspired schism, the cruel inanities and perversities launched by Peter, and, throughout, the national shock occasioned by the zigs and zags of the post-Petrine period, a century-long squandering of Russian strength on campaigns foreign and irrelevant to the country, together with a hundred years of arrogant smugness by the nobility and a bureaucratic sclerosis for the duration of the nineteenth century. It was not some alien conspiracy that allowed us to abandon our peasants to centuries of mere existence. No outside conspiracy caused the stately and cruel Petersburg to repress the warm culture of Ukraine. No outside plot was involved when four ministries at a time could squabble for years over jurisdiction over a particular matter, endlessly bouncing the issue off four bureaucratic walls, and through each and every section office. And no foreign plot is to blame for the fact that none of our successive emperors was attuned to the tempo of the world's development and to the genuine needs of the day. If we had preserved the spiritual strength and purity that earlier in our history had flowed from St. Sergius of Radonezh, we would have had no need to fear any plot or conspiracy.

No, it would be quite wrong to say that the Jews "organized" the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, just as it was not organized by any other nation as such. In the same way, neither the Russians nor the Ukrainians, considered as nations, had organized Jewish pogroms.

It would be easiest for all of us to look back at the revolution and to renounce our "renegades." They were, it is claimed, "non-Jewish Jews,"[2] or else "internationalists, not Russians." No nation, however, can shirk its responsibility for its members. As nations, we contribute to their formation.

In the case of young Jewish revolutionaries (and, alas, their mentors), as well as those Jews to whom the encyclopedia refers as "the important driving force of the revolution,"[3] what was forgotten was the wise counsel of the prophet Jeremiah to the Jews taken to Babylon: "Seek the welfare of the city where I [the Lord] have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf: For in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7).

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[2] See, for example, Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York, 1987), 448. [Author's note.]

[3] *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, VII, 349. [Author's note.]

In contrast, the Russian Jews who had joined the revolutionary movement were burning with eagerness to tear that city down. They were blind to the consequences.

The role of the small but energetic Jewish people in the long and complex history of the world is undisputed, powerful, persistent, and even striking. Their impact on the history of Russia is a case in point. Yet this role has remained a riddle for all of us.

And for Jews as well.

Indeed, this strange mission brings them no happiness.

Two Hundred Years Together
Volume II, Chapter 15

Among the Bolsheviks

The topic is only too familiar: Jews amid the Bolsheviks. It has been written about innumerable times. Those who wish to prove that the Revolution was un-Russian and "of alien stock" point to Jewish names and pseudonyms in an effort to clear Russians of blame for the revolution of 1917. Jewish authors, on the other hand (both those who used to deny the marked participation of Jews in the Bolshevik regime and those who never disputed this point), are unanimously of the opinion that these were not Jews *in spirit.* They were *renegades.*

We are in full agreement with this view. Individuals should indeed be judged in the light of their *spirit.* Yes, these people were renegades.

But neither were the leading Russian Bolsheviks Russian in spirit. Many were distinctly anti-Russian, and all were certainly anti-Orthodox. In them, Russian culture manifested itself only through the distorting lens of political doctrine and calculation of partisan advantage.

Let us pose the question differently: How many random renegades does it take to create a tendency that is no longer accidental? What proportion of one's people needs to be involved? About Russian renegades we know that there was a depressingly, unforgivably large number among the Bolsheviks. But what about Jews? How actively did Jewish renegades take part in setting up the Bolshevik regime?

A further question arises: What is the attitude of a people to its renegades? For this can vary widely, ranging from curses to acclaim, and from avoidance to participation. It manifests itself in the actions of the population, be it Russian, Jewish, or Latvian, in other words in life itself, and only in a minor and secondary sense in the accounts of historians.

And so, can nations disavow their renegades? Would such a disavowal have meaning? Should a people remember its renegades or not; should it

preserve a memory of the fiends and demons that it engendered? The answer to that last question should surely not be in doubt: *We must remember*. Every people must remember them as *its own*; there is simply no other way.

There is probably no more striking example of a renegade than Lenin, but it is impossible not to acknowledge him as a Russian. True, old Russia evoked disgust and loathing in him, as did the whole of Russian history, to say nothing of Russian Orthodoxy. And it seems that of Russian literature he assimilated only Chernyshevsky and Saltykov-Shchedrin, while also amusing himself with Turgenev's liberalism and Tolstoy's denunciations. There was not even any sign of attachment to the Volga Region, where he grew up (he sued the peasants on his estate for damaging his crops)—on the contrary, he pitilessly delivered the whole area to the horrifying famine of 1921. All that is undeniable. But it was we Russians who brought into being the social environment in which Lenin grew and filled with hate. It was *in us* that the weakening of the Orthodox faith took place, that faith in which he could have matured instead of trying to destroy it. A more characteristic exemplar of a renegade is difficult to imagine, and yet Lenin is Russian, and we Russians must answer for him.

If one chooses to raise the issue of Lenin's ethnic roots, it will change nothing to say that he was of very mixed heritage: His grandfather on his father's side, Nikolai Vasilyevich, was of Kalmyk and Chuvash background; his grandmother, Anna Alekseyevna Smirnova, was a Kalmyk. On his mother's side, the grandfather was a converted Jew, Israel, then Alexander, Davidovich Blank; his grandmother, Anna Johannovna (Ivanovna) Grosschopf, had a German father and a Swedish mother, Anna Beata Östedt. But none of this gives us the right to claim that Lenin does not belong to Russia. We must acknowledge him not only as a genuine offspring of Russia as a country, for all the ethnic groups to which he owes his existence were part of the fabric of the Russian Empire, but also as an offspring specifically of the Russian people, being the product of a country and a social atmosphere shaped by us Russians; even though *in spirit*, ever alienated from Russia and at times fiercely anti-Russian, Lenin was for us indeed an alien formation. And yet for all that we simply cannot disavow him.

And what about Jewish renegades? As we have seen,[1] there was no specifically Jewish gravitation toward the Bolsheviks over the course of 1917. But energetic Jewish activism did manifest itself in the revolutionary maneuvers of the period. At the last congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party prior to 1917 (London, 1907) where, it is true, Mensheviks were included, out of the 302 (or 305) delegates more than half—160—were Jewish. And at the April conference in 1917 (where Lenin's explosive "April

[1] Chapters 13 and 14.

Theses" were announced), among the nine members of the newly chosen central committee we see Grigori Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Yakov Sverdlov. At the summer VI Congress of the newly named Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks, eleven members were elected to the central committee, including Zinoviev, Sverdlov, Sokolnikov, Trotsky, and Uritsky.[2] Next came the so-called "historic meeting" of October 10, 1917, on Karpovka Street, in Himmer and Flakserman's flat, where the decision to undertake the coup was taken. Among the twelve participants were Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sverdlov, Uritsky, and Sokolnikov. At the same occasion the first "Politburo" (an appellation with a brilliant future) was organized, and of the seven members we see the same Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sokolnikov. Not a small number by any count. D. S. Pasmanik puts it succinctly: "There can be no doubt that the number of Jewish renegades greatly exceed the restrictive quotas of old . . . and that they occupy far too much space among the Bolshevik commissars."[3]

Of course all this relates to the upper echelons of Bolshevism and is in no sense indicative of any mass Jewish movement. Moreover, the Jews in the Politburo did not act in any coordinated manner. At the October meeting, for example, Zinoviev and Kamenev were opposed to launching the coup at that particular time. It was Trotsky who was the leader and guiding genius of the October seizure of power, and he has in no sense exaggerated his role in his *Uroki Oktiabria* (The Lessons of October). Lenin, with his cowardly retreats into hiding, was not a significant contributor to the coup proper.

In accordance with his internationalist view, and particularly after his 1903 polemics with the Bund (the Jewish Social Democratic Labor Party), Lenin did not believe that there should be any such thing as a "Jewish nationality"; in his view, in fact, it did not exist but was a reactionary fiction invented in order to sow dissension in the revolutionary camp. (Stalin concurred, deeming Jews "a paper nation" and prophesying their inevitable assimilation.) Lenin accordingly considered anti-Semitism a capitalist stratagem, a device useful to the counterrevolution, but not something that had organic reality. At the same time, he had an excellent understanding of the mobilizing potential of the Jewish question on the ideological battlefield. And, needless to say, he was ever ready to make the most of any special bitterness felt by Jews to further the revolutionary cause.

And it so happened that from the first days of the revolution Lenin found himself forced to seize on this very circumstance. Just as he had not foreseen crucial developments on the state level, Lenin did not anticipate the degree

[2] *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia,* VII, 399. [Author's note.]

[3] D. S. Pasmanik, *Russkaia revoliutsiia i evreistvo: Bol'shevizm i iudaizm* (Paris, 1923), 155. [Author's note.]

to which educated and semi-educated Jews (who were scattered throughout Russia because of the war) would come to the rescue of his government in critical months and years, beginning with the episode when they replaced the Russian civil servants who were on a mass strike against the Bolsheviks. These were the Jewish inhabitants of Russia's western borderlands who had been evicted from their homes[4] and had not returned to their previous areas of residence after the war. (For example, of the Jews evicted during the war from Lithuania, those returning after 1918 were mostly inhabitants of small towns and villages, whereas the urbanized Lithuanian Jews as well as the younger generation remained in the large towns of Russia.)[5]

Right "after the annulment of the Pale of Settlement in 1917, there followed a great exodus of Jews from the lands bordered by the Pale to the interior of Russia."[6] This was not a movement of refugees or formerly evicted persons but a migration of individuals seeking to resettle for good. Here is a sample of a Soviet report from 1920. "Several tens of thousands of Jewish refugees and evictees have settled in Samara alone"; in Irkutsk "the Jewish population has grown to fifteen thousand . . . [and] large Jewish communities have arisen in Central Russia, along the Volga, and in the Urals." However, "the majority is still being supported by social welfare agencies and various philanthropic organizations." And the paper ends with an exhortation: "Party organizations, Jewish sections of the Party and of the Peoples' Commissariat of Nationalities must mount the most vigorous and broad-based campaign against any return to the areas holding the 'graves of forefathers' and on behalf of a reorientation toward productive labor in Soviet Russia."[7]

Try putting yourself in the shoes of the small body of Bolsheviks who had seized power and were barely holding on to it. Whom could they trust? To whom should they turn for help? Semyon (Shimon) Dimanshtein, a Bolshevik from way back, and since January 1918 head of the Jewish Commissariat (a specially created subsection of the Commissariat for Nationalities), gives this account of the remarks Lenin had made to him:

> Of great benefit to the revolution was the fact that due to the war, a significant portion of the Jewish middle intelligentsia happened to be in Russian cities. They foiled the widespread sabotage which we encountered immediately after the October Revolution and

[4] See ch. 12. [Author's note.]

[5] S. Gringauz, "Evreiskaia natsional'naia avtonomiia v Litve i drugikh stranakh Pribaltiki," in *Kniga o russkom evreistve*, 1917–1967 (New York, 1968), 46. [Author's note.]

[6] *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, II, 312. [Author's note.]

[7] *Izvestiia*, October 12, 1920, 1. [Author's note.]

> which was extremely dangerous for us. Jews, though far from all of them, sabotaged this sabotage, thereby rescuing the Revolution in a difficult moment.

Lenin considered it

> inexpedient to emphasize this point in the press, but made it clear that taking control of the governmental apparatus and altering it significantly was achieved exclusively due to this reserve of literate, reasonably competent and sober-minded new civil servants.[8]

As we see, the Bolsheviks invited Jews starting with the very first days after assuming power, offering both leadership positions and administrative work within Soviet governmental structures. The result? Many, very many, responded positively, doing so without delay. What the Bolshevik regime needed above all were functionaries who would be absolutely loyal, and it found many such individuals among young secularized Jews along with their Slavic and international confrères. These people were not at all necessarily "renegades," since some were not members of the party, had no particular revolutionary sympathies, and seemed apolitical prior to this point. And for many this might have been a simple household decision rather than one based on ideology. The fact remains, though, that it was a mass phenomenon. And Jews were not dispersing to the previously closed rural areas they had cherished, preferring Moscow and Petersburg.

> Thousands of Jews thronged to the bolsheviks, seeing in them the most determined champions of the revolution, and the most reliable internationalists. . . . Jews abounded at the lower levels of the party machinery.[9]

> A Jew, as an individual who was clearly not a member of the nobility, of the clergy, or of the old civil service, automatically became part of a promising subset in the new clan.[10]

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[8] S. Dimanshtein, "Vvedenie," in N. Lenin, *O evreiskom voprose v Rossii* (Moscow, 1924), 17–18. [Author's note.]

[9] Leonard Schapiro, "The Rôle of Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 40 (1961–62): 164. [Author's note.]

[10] M. Kheifets, "Nashi obshchie uroki," *22* [Tel Aviv], No. 14 (1980): 162. [Author's note.]

And in order to encourage Jewish participation in the Bolshevik enterprise, "at the end of 1917, when the Bolsheviks were only just setting up their institutions, the Jewish section in the Commissariat of Nationalities was already functioning."[11] Soon thereafter, starting in 1918, this body was transformed into a separate "Jewish Commissariat," and in March 1919, in preparation for the VIII Congress of the Party, it was planned to announce the formation of a "Jewish Communist Union of Soviet Russia" which would be an organic but separate part of the Russian Communist Party. (The idea was to bring this new formation into the Comintern as well, so as to undermine the Bund.) A special Jewish section of the Russian telegraph agency (ROSTA) was also established.

D. Shub's justifying comment to the effect that "significant numbers of young Jews were attracted to the Communist Party" as a result of the pogroms that had taken place on the territories held by the Whites during the Civil War[12] (that is, starting in 1919) is quite mistaken. The mass influx of Jews into Soviet structures occurred in late 1917 and 1918. There is no doubt that the events of 1919 (discussed in chapter 16) could only have served to strengthen the Jewish connection to the Bolsheviks, but this certainly did not originate the phenomenon.

Another author, a Communist, explains "the particularly important role of the Jewish revolutionary in our labor movement" by the fact that Jewish workers demonstrate a "special development of certain psychological qualities necessary for leadership"—attributes that are only beginning to grow in Russian workers, namely, outstanding levels of energy, cultural development, and orderliness.[13]

Few commentators deny the *organizing* role of Jews in Bolshevism. D. S. Pasmanik puts it this way: "The appearance of Bolshevism [in Russia] resulted from the peculiarities of Russian history . . . but the methodical organization of Bolshevism was in part achieved by the activity of Jewish commissars."[14] The dynamic role of Jews in Bolshevism at the time was also noted with approval by American observers: "The rapid emergence of the Russian Revolution from the destructive phase and its entrance into the constructive phase is a conspicuous expression of the constructive genius of Jewish dis-

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[11] *Evreiskaia tribuna* [Paris], September 7, 1923, 1. [Author's note.]

[12] D. Shub, "Evrei v russkoi revoliutsii," in *Evreiskii mir*, Sbornik II (New York, 1944), 142. [Author's note.]

[13] Iu. Larin, *Evrei i antisemitizm v SSSR* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1929), 260–62. [Author's note.]

[14] D. S. Pasmanik, "Chego zhe my dobivaemsia?" in *Rossiia i evrei*, Sbornik I, 212. [Author's note.]

content."[15] While the October Revolution was riding high, there were any number of Jews who spoke about their energetic input into Bolshevism with head held high.

Let us recall that in the period before 1917, revolutionaries and radical liberals readily and actively capitalized on the restrictions placed on Jews, not at all because of any love for them but as a way to further their own political agendas. In much the same way, in the months, then years, following the October coup, the Bolsheviks were only too happy to make use of the services of Jews in their administrative and Party structures, motivated once again not by feelings of solidarity with Jews but by the benefits received from their talents, their intelligence, and their alienation from the Russian populace. Latvians, Hungarians, and Chinese were utilized in similar ways—no sentimental hang-ups could be expected from them.

The attitude of the Jewish population at large toward the Bolsheviks was guarded, if not hostile. But having finally attained full freedom thanks to the revolution,[16] and together with it, as we have seen, a true flowering of Jewish activity in the social, political, and cultural realms, all superbly organized, Jews did not stand in the way of the rapid advancement of other Jews who were Bolsheviks and who then exercised their newly acquired power to cruel excess.

Starting with the late 1940s, when the Communist regime had a serious falling out with the world's Jews, the vigorous Jewish participation in the Communist revolution began to be soft-pedaled or entirely concealed by Communists and Jews alike. It was an annoying and troubling reminder, and attempts to recall this phenomenon or to refer to it were classified as egregious anti-Semitism by the Jewish side.

In the 1970s and 1980s, as information about the past began to pile up, the early revolutionary years came into sharper focus. And more than a few Jewish voices began to speak out about this phenomenon in the public forum.

Indeed, there are many explanations as to why Jews joined the Bolsheviks (and the Civil War produced yet more weighty reasons). Nevertheless, if Russian Jews' memory of this period continues seeking primarily to *justify* this involvement, then the level of Jewish self-awareness will be lowered, even lost.

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[15] S. Tonjoroff, "Jews in World Reconstruction," *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger*, September 10, 1920, 507. [Author's note.]

[16] The complete removal of all legal restrictions on Jews in Russia was accomplished by the Provisional Government in March 1917. This is described in ch. 13.

Using this line of reasoning, Germans could just as easily find excuses for the Hitler period: "Those were not real Germans, but scum"; "they never asked us." Yet every people must answer morally for all of its past—including that past which is shameful. Answer by what means? By attempting to *comprehend*: How could such a thing have been allowed? Where in all this is *our* error? And could it happen again?

It is in that spirit, specifically, that it would behoove the Jewish people to answer, both for the revolutionary cutthroats and the ranks willing to serve them. Not to answer before other peoples, but to oneself, to one's consciousness, and before God. Just as we Russians must answer—for the pogroms, for those merciless arsonist peasants, for those crazed revolutionary soldiers, for those savage sailors. (I think I rendered them descriptively enough in *The Red Wheel*. I will add another example, of that Red Army man Basov. He is the one who kept under guard Andrei Shingaryov, a defender of the people and lover of truth. First, Basov took spending money from the arrested Shingaryov's sister for transporting the latter under guard from the Peter and Paul Fortress to the Mariinsky hospital—in other words, for not giving Shingaryov a minute of freedom. In just a few hours, that same night, he brought sailors to the hospital to shoot Shingaryov and Fyodor Kokoshkin.[17] In that disgusting type, how much is ours!!)

To answer, just as we would answer for members of our own family.

For if we release ourselves from any responsibility for the actions of our national kin, the very concept of *a people* loses any real meaning.

[17] *Dnevnik A. I. Shingaryova. Kak eto bylo: Petropavlovskaia krepost'*, 27.XI.1917–5.I.1918, 2nd ed., Moscow, 1918, 66–68. [*Diary of A. I. Shingaryov. How it happened: Peter and Paul Fortress,* 27 Nov. 1917–5 Jan. 1918.] [Author's note.]

During the Civil War

The dark eruption of pogroms against Jews in Ukraine continued through 1919 and into the beginning of 1920. In their breadth, scope, and cruelty, these pogroms outstripped beyond measure all that we have read, previously, of 1881–1882, 1903, and 1905.[1] The high-ranking Soviet official Yuri Larin wrote in the 1920s that what occurred in Ukraine in the Civil War was "a most lengthy series of massive pogroms against the Jewish population, far outnumbering previous occurrences both in terms of the number of victims and the *number of participants*." Vinnichenko[2] is supposed to have said: "The pogroms will end when the Jews stop being communists."[3]

All the victims of those pogroms were never tallied up with certainty. Naturally, given the circumstances, reliable statistics could not be kept either during or following the course of events. A book on Jewish pogroms in 1918–1921 states that "the number of those killed in Ukraine and Belorussia during the period from 1917 through 1921, inclusively, ranges from 180 to 200 thousand. . . . Just the number of those orphaned stands in excess of 300 thousand, a testimony to the colossal scale of the catastrophe."[4] The first edition of the Soviet Encyclopedia gives the same data.[5] The modern Jewish Encyclopedia reports that "by various estimates, the number of dead ranges from 70 to 180–200 thousand Jews."[6]

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[1] Chapters 5, 8, and 9, respectively.

[2] Volodymyr Vinnichenko, writer and social-democrat revolutionary who was prime minister during the Ukrainian Directorate (December 1918 through February 1919). [Editor's note.]

[3] Iu. Larin, *Evrei i antisemitizm v SSSR* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1929), 38. [Author's note.]

[4] *Evreiskiie pogromy, 1918–1921*, 74. [Author's note.]

[5] *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia*, 1st ed., Moscow, 1932, Vol. 24, 148. [Author's note.]

[6] *Kratkaya evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, VI, 569. [Author's note.]

Summarizing data from various Jewish sources, a contemporary historian counts up to 900 massive pogroms, of which 40% were conducted by Petliura's forces, and the defenders of the Ukrainian Directorate; 25% by the forces of Ukrainian warlords; 17% by Denikin's army; and 8.5% by Budyonny's First Cavalry and other Red army forces.[7]

How many torn-apart lives underlie those numbers!

[7] G. V. Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina*, 56. [Author's note.]