

SOLZHENITSYN ON THE JEWS AND SOVIET RUSSIA

Deux siècles ensemble

Volume 2: *Juifs et Russes pendant la période soviétique*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

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This essay is a continuation of the reviewer's account of volume 1 of the same work which appeared in our Fall 2008 issue.

Early in this second volume of *Two Hundred Years Together*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn explains why the book is a necessary supplement to his principal work on the Revolution, the novel cycle entitled *The Red Wheel*:

I described the revolution literally hour by hour, and never ceased encountering episodes and discussion of the Jewish theme in the sources. Would I have been right to put all of it into the pages of *March 1917*? It would not have been the first time in history that a book and its readers succumbed to the facile and crude temptation to throw all the blame on the Jews, their actions, their ideas, to allow oneself to see in them the principal cause of events and thereby avoid the search for the real causes.

To avoid letting the Russians fall for this optical illusion, I systematically muted the Jewish theme throughout the entire *Red Wheel*, at least in comparison with the way it resonated in the press and hung in the air at the time. (pp. 45–46)

Solzhenitsyn is emphatic that “the February Revolution was not made by the Jews for the Russians; it was certainly carried out by the Russians themselves. . . . We were ourselves the authors of this shipwreck” (pp. 44–45).

Even if not the instigators of the Revolution, the Jews were the subject of its first cascade of “liberating” decrees. The Pale of Settlement,

practically nonexistent since the great Russian retreat of 1915, was formally abolished; *numerus clausus* regulations were dropped; restrictions on the Jewish practice of law and on entry into the officers corps were lifted, etc. Measures were taken against public expressions of anti-Semitism amid widespread false rumors of pogroms in the provinces. All this occurred amid a mood of euphoria soon to dissipate.

The fundamental political fact of the eight-month period between the February Revolution and the Bolshevik *coup d'état* of October was the uneasy coexistence of two political authorities. A Provisional Government was formed by a group of former Duma deputies and won widespread recognition, if no deep loyalty. At the same time, the “workers’ councils” (or *soviets*) of the Revolution of 1905 were revived by a small group of socialist intellectuals. They proclaimed themselves the “Executive Committee of the Council of Workers’ Deputies” before any actual council was formed. And their so-called Executive Committee remained a more important body than the council it called into being and in whose name it spoke: plenary sessions of the two- to three-thousand member “Petrograd Soviet” were mostly a forum for empty speechifying.

There were no constitutional rules to define the respective spheres of authority of the Provisional Government and the Soviet’s Executive Committee. What actually happened was that the Executive Committee assumed a “supervisory” role in relation to the Provisional Government, thwarting its purposes at will but refusing to take upon itself the responsibilities of governing. In Solzhenitsyn’s words: “The EC was a shadow government of the worst sort: it deprived the Provisional Government of all real power while criminally avoiding the direct and open assumption of power itself” (p. 46). The result was paralysis at the center and the perfect conditions for an eventual takeover by a determined and ruthless minority.

For several weeks the membership of the Executive Committee was not even divulged:

... several of the members hide behind pseudonyms and for two months refused to appear in public: no one knew exactly who was governing Russia. Later it came out that there were ten stupid soldiers in the EC for show, kept at arm’s length. Among the rest – the thirty active members – more than half were Jewish socialists. There were Russians, Caucasians, Latvians, and Poles, but the Russians amounted to less than a quarter of the whole. A

moderate socialist, Stankevitch, noted that "the most striking thing about the composition of the EC was the number of foreign elements . . . out of all proportion with their numbers in Petrograd or in the country." (p. 47)

These men were chosen to represent neither their own nationalities nor the people of Russia, but the various socialist parties: Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, and so forth. After June, the EC was replaced by a smaller *Central Executive Committee* of nine persons: five were Jewish, only one Russian (p. 67).

In view of subsequent events, it has largely been forgotten that most politically active Jews in Russia that year were not involved with these socialist parties at all:

In the course of the summer and autumn of 1917, the Zionist movement continued to gather strength in Russia: in September it had 300,000 adherents. Less known is that Orthodox Jewish organizations enjoyed great popularity in 1917, yielding only to the Zionists and surpassing the socialist parties. (p. 54)

Furthermore, most Jews who did belong to socialist parties were not Bolsheviks: "during the year 1917 Jews were proportionally much more numerous in leading positions among the Mensheviks, right Socialist Revolutionaries, left Socialist Revolutionaries and anarchists than among the Bolsheviks" (p. 65). Shortly before the Bolshevik *Putsch*, however, the Jewish socialists "Natanson, Kamkov, and Steinberg formed an alliance with Trotsky and Kamenev in the name of the left Socialist Revolutionaries" (p. 81). This brief alliance was useful to Lenin in creating the false appearance that the new "Soviet" government was more than a front for the Bolshevik Party.

Solzhenitsyn writes: "It must be stated clearly that the October *Putsch* was not led by the Jews (except for the glorious Trotsky and the young and dynamic Grigori Chudnovsky)" (p. 80). He remarks that there were also some Jews in the Winter Palace defending the Provisional Government *from* the Bolsheviks, and recalls meeting one of them in a Soviet prison himself.

The new government's first challenge was a mass strike of service personnel in support of the deposed Provisional Government. Ministry buildings barred their doors against the new "Soviet Commissars"; Trotsky got laughed out of the Defense Ministry. Most importantly,

banks refused Bolshevik demands for funds. In 1919, Lenin specifically credited his Jewish followers for keeping him in power at this point: “immediately after October, it was the Jews who saved the revolution by breaking the resistance of the civil servants” (p. 105).

Lenin’s team claimed at first to be a mere caretaker government pending the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. Elections for such an assembly had been scheduled by the Provisional Government for November 12th, and the Bolsheviks reluctantly allowed them to go ahead in the hope of dominating the resulting body. But their rivals the Socialist Revolutionary Party won a large majority. Most Jewish voters supported Zionist parties. The Constituent Assembly was forcibly dispersed the night after it convened, January 6, 1918, and all Bolshevik pretenses to democratic legitimacy were scrapped.

During these critical first months, Lenin had no reliable Russian troops; his only armed force was a Latvian rifle brigade which he assigned to the Jewish commissar Nachimson.

The author discusses some of the arguments used by Jewish apologists to excuse or palliate Jewish involvement in Bolshevik rule. He accepts the common argument that the Jewish Bolsheviks were renegades, i.e., “not Jews *in spirit*.” He points out, however, that the same was true of Russian Bolsheviks and denies that any nation may simply disown its renegades: “for if we release ourselves from all responsibility for the actions of our national kin, the very concept of a *nation* loses any real meaning” (p. 132).

There are many Jewish authors who to this very day either deny the support of Jews for Bolshevism, or even reject it angrily, or else—the most common case—only speak defensively about it. The matter is well-attested, however: these Jewish renegades were for several years leaders at the center of the Bolshevik Party, at the head of the Red Army (Trotsky), of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (Sverdlov), of the two capitals (Zinoviev and Kamenev), of the Comintern (Zinoviev), of the Profintern (Dridzo-Lozovsky), and of the Komsomol (Oskar Ryvkin, then Lazar Shatskin). (p. 91)

Marxists are officially “internationalists,” of course, and Trotsky was especially emphatic in rejecting his ethnic heritage. But does it necessarily follow that he was not influenced by it? “To judge by the appointments he made,” Solzhenitsyn observes, “Jewish renegades were closer

to him than Russian renegades" (p. 92). Particularly striking was his appointment of the incompetent Jewish doctor Sklianski to a high post in the Commissariat of War.

The author goes on to discuss the roles of the Jews Uritsky, Drabkin, and Sverdlov in dispersing the Constituent Assembly, concluding with one of his strongest formulations: "by these sorts of operations the new Jewish form of government was sketched out" (p. 93).

He reproduces the remarks of some contemporary observers:

I. F. Nazhivin records the impressions he received at the very beginning of Soviet power: at the Kremlin in the administration of the Sovnarkom "you see nothing but Latvians upon Latvians, Jews upon Jews. I have never been an anti-Semite, but here there were so many it leapt out at you, and each one younger than the next."

[The writer Vladimir] Korolenko himself, liberal and hyper-tolerant as he was, entered into his Journal in the Spring of 1919: "Among the Bolsheviks there are a great number of Jewish men and women. Their tactlessness, their self-assurance are striking and irritating. . . . In their ranks, and above all in the Cheka [the secret police], you constantly see Jewish physiognomies, and this exacerbates the still virulent traditional feelings of Judeophobia [among the population]." (p. 99)

Another witness quoted by Solzhenitsyn specifies that most of the heads of prisons were Poles and Latvians, while "the section charged with combating black marketers – the least dangerous and most lucrative – was in the hands of Jews" (p. 94). Jews are also said to have been unusually noticeable in the organs charged with provisioning (p. 97). Solzhenitsyn lists the names of ten Jewish bankers who provided important financial services for the Bolsheviks (p. 115).

Some Jews were also implicated in the murder of the Imperial family, notably Sverdlov (who transmitted the order from Moscow) and Urovsky (who led the execution squad), but Solzhenitsyn believes the point has been exaggerated in recent years by certain Russian nationalists "who take a morbid pleasure in this agonizing thought" (p. 100). Most of the executioners were Hungarian prisoners of war; final responsibility for the crime rested, of course, with Lenin.

The Bolshevik *Putsch* led to a split in Jewish parties such as the Bund and the Zionist-Socialists. Those who would not support Lenin either

emigrated or were suppressed. But the left wings of two Zionist-Socialist groupings joined the Communist Party *en masse* in 1919 and 1921. And the left wing of the Bund simply dissolved, with many of its members joining the Communists. According to an internal Party survey of 1926, 2,500 Bundists had become Party members. Many Mensheviks, Jewish and otherwise, did likewise. Most of these persons would face persecution under Stalin (pp. 118–19).

There were Jews who resisted Soviet power. “But,” writes Solzhenitsyn, “they did not have any way of making themselves heard publicly, and the present pages are naturally filled not with their names but with those who guided the course of events” (p. 123). He relates the stories of two Jews who are known to have sacrificed their lives fighting the new regime. Leonid Kannegiesser assassinated Moisei Uritsky, a Jewish Chekist, explaining in a letter to his sister that (among other motives) he was ashamed to see Jews helping to install the Bolsheviks in power. Alexander Abramovich Vilenkin, four-times decorated cavalry officer, was shot in 1918 for belonging to a clandestine anti-Bolshevik Organization.

“These combatants of Bolshevism, whatever may have been their motivation—we honor their memory as Jews. We deplore that there were so few of them, just as the White forces in the Civil War were too few” (p. 125).

In 1918 [writes Solzhenitsyn] Trotsky, with the aid of Sklianski and Yakov Sverdlov, created the Red Army. Jewish soldiers were numerous in its ranks. Several units of the Red Army were composed entirely of Jews, as, e.g., the brigade commanded by Joseph Forman. Among the officers of the Red Army, the share of Jews grew in number and importance for many years after the Civil War. (p. 135)

According to one of the author’s Jewish sources, “the proportion of Jews in the position of Political Adjuncts was especially high at all levels of the Red Army” (p. 136).

Of special interest to students of Communism is the Cheka, the secret political police who carried out the Red Terror and eventually built the Gulag. In their early phase, national minorities composed almost 50 percent of the central apparatus of the Cheka, and nearly 70 percent of the responsible posts. An inventory on 25 September 1918 reveals, besides a great number of Latvians and a not insignificant

number of Poles, a good showing by Jews. And of the judges assigned to the struggle against counter-revolution—by far the most important section in the structure of the Cheka—half were Jews (pp. 142–43).

The Ukrainian Cheka, in what used to be the Pale of Settlement, was composed about 80 percent of Jews (p. 150). In Kiev, which was 21 percent Jewish in 1919 (p. 156), key positions in the Cheka were "almost exclusively" in Jewish hands. Of the twenty members of the commission which decided people's fate, fourteen were Jews (p. 148).

The Kievan Cheka even published a newsletter, *The Red Sword*; it offers an unusual glimpse into the minds of those who carried out the Terror. In an article by its Jewish editor-in-chief Leon Kraini we read: "For us there cannot be any question of encumbering ourselves with old principles of morality and humanitarianism invented by the bourgeoisie." A certain Schwartz echoes his sentiments: "The Red Terror which has been proclaimed must be carried out in a proletarian fashion. . . . If in order to institute the dictatorship of the proletariat in the whole world it is necessary to annihilate all the servants of tsarism and capitalism, we will not hesitate to do so" (p. 141).

Vasily Shulgin, an old political ally of Stolypin, witnessed an enormous exodus from Kiev on October 1st, 1919 as the town was about to be occupied by the Bolsheviks. Some 60,000 Russians, according to his estimate, left on foot with nothing more than they could carry. At the time, there were some 100,000 Jews living in Kiev. "But there were no Jews in this exodus; you could not see any among these thousands of Russians. They did not want to share our destiny." Even the wealthiest "bourgeois" Jews preferred to take their chances with the Bolsheviks (pp. 149–50).

Sergei Maslov, author of *Russia after Four Years of Revolution*, reports: "In the towns of southern Russia, especially the Western half of the Ukraine which changed hands several times, the advent of Soviet power gave rise to ostentatious sympathy and the greatest joy in the Jewish quarters, and often nowhere else" (p. 150).

One of the best promoted legends about the Russian Revolution concerns "the pogroms carried out by the White Armies" during the Civil War. Solzhenitsyn devotes several pages to examining this widely received notion.

In the first place, it is important to understand that Reds and Whites were not the only forces fighting in Southern Russia at this time. There was a powerful Ukrainian separatist movement under the leadership of Symon Petliura. There were also a number of private

armed bands responsible to no one but themselves. These were led by local bosses (Solzhenitsyn names ten), and operated mainly in rural areas. Some described themselves as “Blacks” or “Greens,” and opposed both the White and Red Armies. The entire scene was extremely chaotic, and it can be a difficult chore for the historian to figure out exactly who was where when.

The pogroms which occurred across the whole of Southern Russia during this period were “unprecedented in their cruelty and numbers of victims” (p. 134)—out of all proportion to anything which had been seen in 1881–82, 1903, or 1905–06. Early Soviet sources speak of 180,000–200,000 victims and more than 300,000 orphaned children. The more recent *Jewish Encyclopedia* records that “according to various estimates between 70,000 and 180,000–200,000 perished” (p. 172). Who was responsible for these atrocities?

Collating various Jewish sources, a contemporary historian estimates the number of mass pogroms at 900, among which 40 percent were carried out by the forces of Petliura and the [Ukrainian National] Directory, 25 percent by [irregular] detachments commanded by Ukrainian bosses, 17 percent by Denikin’s [White] Armies, and 8.5 percent by Budienny’s First Cavalry and other Red forces. (pp. 172–73)

In other words, the great majority of pogroms of this period were not connected with the White movement at all. Those carried out by Ukrainian separatist forces were not only the most numerous but also distinguished for their deliberate cruelty and the methodical extermination of women, children, and the elderly. Sometimes they were not even accompanied by pillaging (p. 160).

And, in spite of Lenin’s declared intentions, the Red forces did not remain innocent:

In the Spring of 1918 [before the other forces had gotten started!—FRD], pogroms accompanied by the slogan “down with the Jews and the bourgeois!” were fomented by Red Army detachments returning from Ukraine. Particularly cruel were the pogroms perpetrated by the First Cavalry at the end of August 1920 during their retreat from Poland. But these pogroms fomented by the Red Army have remained nearly hidden from history. (p. 173)

So what about that 17 percent of pogroms due to the White Army?

Solzhenitsyn devotes eleven pages to the story of the Jews and the White movement. This material is difficult to summarize. The author quotes divergent and even contradictory testimonies without always taking sides. At one moment the subject is the "Volunteer Army," a little farther along it the "White Army." The reader is never told that the former was a part of the latter, nor what the other parts were.

A recent scholarly study affirms that "in its first year of existence [1918], the White movement was practically free of any anti-Semitism. . . . But in 1919 [the decisive year of the war] things changed radically" (p. 163). The White Army was hypnotized by Trotsky and Nakhamkis [editor of *Izvestia*], which led it to identify Bolshevism as a whole with the Jews. The divisions fighting in Ukraine were probably also influenced by the local tradition of anti-Semitism (p. 164).

The Jewish doctor Daniel Pasmanik, who served the Whites for a time, recalled:

The Volunteer Army systematically refused to accept into its ranks Jewish ensigns and cadets, including those who had valiantly fought the Bolsheviki in October 1917. This was a severe moral blow to the Jews. I will never forget when eleven Jewish ensigns came to see me in Simferopol to complain that they had been excluded from the armed service and relegated to the rear as cooks. (p. 168)

D. Linski reports that Jews were not allowed to occupy administrative functions, nor accepted in the propaganda department of the Volunteer Army. But he denies that the Army published anti-Semitic propaganda or let attacks against Jews go unpunished (p. 169).

The Volunteer Army was, both militarily and morally, the soundest part of the White forces in Southern Russia. But they were insufficient to stand up to the Red Army by themselves. A number of Cossack divisions were enrolled to fight in the Ukraine, to the West of the Volunteers. These men were motivated by the desire for plunder as much as by opposition to bolshevism. It was in their area that most (perhaps all) of the "White pogroms" occurred.¹

¹ This is essentially the version accepted by Richard Pipes in *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 104-12. Pipes denies that the Volunteer Army perpetrated pogroms – something Solzhenitsyn appears to accept (cf. pp. 164, 167).

General Denikin, overall leader of the White forces in Southern Russia, expressed shame over the pogroms committed by men nominally under his command, and no historian seems to suspect him of having ordered them (although some argue that he might have done more to stop them).

It is frequently asserted that the conduct of the White Army virtually forced the Jews of Southern Russia to side with the Bolsheviks. Solzhenitsyn remarks: "We cannot say that nothing drove them to make this choice; we also cannot say there was no other solution" (p. 149). In any case, it is difficult to see how the Whites could have *forced* anyone to take an active role in the Cheka.

Strengthening the public perception of Bolshevism as a Jewish movement were the brief Communist takeovers of Bavaria and Hungary in 1919. The proportion of Jews in the Bolshevik movement in Hungary was said to be about 95 percent; in the German Communist Party it was also greatly out of proportion. "That the directors of the communist revolts were Jews—this was one of the main reasons for the revival of political anti-Semitism in post-revolutionary Germany" (p. 153). In the 1920s, "the assimilation of Bolshevism to Judaism became a fashion followed by everyone," i.e., it was not peculiar to traditionally anti-Semitic milieus (p. 188).

About two million persons fled Bolshevik Russia during the years 1918–22, with most settling in Western Europe. As Russia fell eerily silent—apart from the monotonous drone of the regime itself—all aspects of the revolution continued to be enthusiastically debated among the exiles, both Jewish and Gentile. Jews numbered some 200,000 among the refugees (i.e., 10 percent), and about half of them went to Germany. They were particularly active in the field of publishing: "In 1922, these publishers brought out more Russian books and publications [in Berlin] than German language editors did in all of Germany" (pp. 182–83). A surprising number of the Jewish exiles continued to cherish an idealized image of Soviet Russia as a promised land of equality and social justice. Among the Jewish refugees who settled in the United States, notes the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, "pro-Bolshevik ideas had no difficulty proliferating" (p. 196). "One cannot say that the Jewish emigration [as a whole] was pro-Bolshevik," concludes Solzhenitsyn, "but for it the Bolshevik regime was not the principal enemy, and many were those who maintained a benevolent attitude towards it" (p. 196).

I. M. Biekerman relates a characteristic anecdote:

When a well-known Jewish public figure proposed to a Jewish religious dignitary, in one of the European capitals, to organize a meeting to protest the execution of Orthodox priests in Russia, the latter, upon reflection, answered that this amounted to combating the Bolsheviks, which he considered it impossible to do since the fall of Bolshevism would lead to the return of pogroms. (p. 198)

This Biekerman, along with Pasmanik and Linski, helped to found an extraordinary group called "The Patriotic Alliance of Russian Jews." In 1923 they issued a manifesto stating that "for the Jews as for all the nations which inhabit Russia, Bolshevism is the worst of all possible evils" (p. 200).

Jews must fight those who are perverting Russia, shoulder-to-shoulder with all anti-Bolsheviks. A fraternal combat against a common enemy will clear the air and considerably weaken the wave of anti-Semitism which has been unleashed. (p. 203)

Later that year this group had published in Berlin a six-author volume entitled *Russia and the Jews*. Says Solzhenitsyn:

In the entire history of relations between Jews and Russians, I know of nothing comparable to this collection. For the Jews in the emigration, it had the effect of a bomb. Just imagine how painful it was to hear these words from Jewish mouths, from within the Jewish world.

As for us Russians, we should not take this collection lightly. On the contrary, it should serve as an example for us: of how, even while loving one's own people, one may speak of one's own errors and, where necessary, do so without indulgence. And without placing oneself apart, without dissociating oneself from one's people. (p. 204)

Solzhenitsyn makes extensive use of this group of writers as sources throughout the first half of his second volume. Admirable as they may have been, they were isolated voices within the Jewish emigration. The author fills a page and a half with the dismissive or vituperative comments they elicited from other Jews (pp. 209-10).

The decade of the 1920s also witnessed a mass migration of Jews

from the former Pale toward the cities of Central Russia: ordinary Russians spoke (or perhaps whispered) of a Jewish “conquest” of the cities. For example, in 1920 there were 28,000 Jews in Moscow; in 1923 there were 86,000; in 1926, 131,000; in 1933, 226,500. City residence allowed them better access to consumer goods and to professional advancement (pp. 218, 224).

Jewish representation in the Communist Party was about proportional to their share of the *urban* population. But with 83 percent of Jews living in towns, they were one of the most urbanized nationalities in the Soviet Union. So overall they were overrepresented in Party ranks by a factor of about 6.5 (p. 219).

The four largest nationalities represented in the Party in 1922 were Russians (72 percent), Ukrainians (5.9 percent), Jews (5.2 percent), and Latvians (2.5 percent). This means that for one thousand Russians there were 3.8 Communists, while for one thousand Jews there were 8.1. The disproportion was greater at higher levels in the Party. Jews made up 18.3 percent of the voting delegates at the XIth Party Congress that year, and 26 percent of the new Central Committee elected by this Congress (pp. 225–26).

During these years, the role of national minorities in the secret police declined overall: from 50 percent at the time of the Red Terror to 30–35 percent by the mid-1920s. Even so, the number of Jews continued to increase (pp. 227–28).

New class origin criteria for admission to universities were established. The sons of even “petty bourgeois” Russians—shopkeepers and such—were barred from advancement. On the other hand

... these discriminatory measures were not extended to Jews because they belonged to a “nation persecuted by the tsarist regime.” The Jewish youth, even of *bourgeois origin*, were greeted with open arms in the universities. Jews were forgiven for not being *proletarian*. (p. 221)

Thus, 15.4 percent of students enrolled in institutions of higher learning in 1926–27 were Jewish, while Jews constituted just 1.82 percent of the population. The situation was even more lopsided than these numbers reveal, because the Russians who did get admitted were “proletarians,” i.e., not the cognitive elite of the Russian nation.

Such circumstances were both noticed and resented by the rest of the population. The “new anti-Semitism” was not a continuation of

the pre-Revolutionary variety, but affected demographic groups that had been entirely free of anti-Semitism in earlier days. The matter went undiscussed in the official Soviet press for several years.

Exposés first appeared in Paris by 1922. The revelations of socialists Yekaterina Kuskova and Sergei Maslov profoundly shocked the exiled intelligentsia, for whom it had always been an article of faith that anti-Semitism was caused by "autocracy."

Even among the children of radical families, wrote Kuskova, all the talk is of the Jewish invasion: "*they* have shown their true face, *they* have made us suffer!" She maintained that an actual majority of the population had become anti-Semitic, and the younger generation more than their elders.

Maslov stated that "the power of the Yids" was a common expression. "Among the reasons for this universal Judeophobia," he explained, "is the Jews' strong national solidarity" which "appears especially in the recruitment of administrative agents." In a Jewish functionary: "Soviet power reveals its bad side most ostentatiously. The intoxication of power acts more strongly on Jews" (pp. 241-44).

The New Economic Policy (NEP), launched by Lenin in the spring of 1921, was a tactical retreat on the economic front which allowed limited private enterprise while the Communists strengthened their political grip on the country. This reversal of policy created, as an unintended effect, new occasions for Judeophobia. Solzhenitsyn remarks:

One often saw Jews among those who first enriched themselves under NEP. The hatred directed against them was also due to their operating within the field of Soviet institutions, not only those of the market: many of their undertakings were made easier by the relations they enjoyed with those in the Soviet apparatus. (p. 255)

Beginning around 1926, the regime openly admitted the existence of the "new anti-Semitism" and sought to combat it. A leader in this counter-attack was Yuri Larin, previously best known as the man behind "War Communism," the policies which wrecked the Russian economy between 1918 and 1921. In 1929, he published a book on *The Jews and Anti-Semitism in the USSR*. He reports hearing questions such as these in communist meetings: "Why don't you see Jews in waiting lines? Why are the Jews rich? Why do they have their own bakeries? Why do the Jews seek out easy work? Why do they avoid physical

work? Why do the Jews help each other out, while Russians do not?" (p. 246). A current saying in Moscow ran: "Siberia for the Russians, Crimea for the Jews" (p. 245).

With typical Bolshevik paranoia, Larin thought he could glimpse behind these suggestions "the hand of a clandestine counter-revolutionary organization . . . systematic propaganda orchestrated by secret organizations emanating from the White Army" (which, of course, had been driven out of Russia nine years before [pp. 246, 251]). Larin recommended applying "Lenin's Law," meaning a decree of 1918 authorizing the shooting of anti-Semites without trial.

In fact, the Soviet Penal Code of 1926 contained provisions against "incitement to national hatred and divisiveness" [have the EU bureaucrats been studying Soviet law?], expanded in 1927 to include "diffusion, authorship or *possession* of written documents" (p. 252, italics added). Solzhenitsyn remarks: "The most rabid anti-Semite could not have discovered a better means of getting the people to identify Soviet power with that of the Jews" (p. 253).

There were also, of course, plenty of ordinary Jews who had been left behind and forgotten by the revolution: older people attached to the old places and ways, or families with numerous children. They sank into utter destitution, completely dependent on charity from abroad (which was still operating in the 1920s). G. Simon, an older émigré who returned as an American businessman in the late 1920s, published a book about these forgotten Jews under the sarcastic title *The Jews Reign in Russia*: "The only refuge for Jews," he wrote, "is the graveyard" (pp. 253–54, 257).

The idea of making farmers out of the Jews was once again in fashion during the 1920s. It did not originate with the Jews themselves but was based upon ideological considerations. Ignoring the decades-long efforts of the previous century, the Party claimed that Jews had been prevented from taking up agriculture, and so forced to become "exploiters." Extensive lands were set aside for them in the Crimea, and money poured in from abroad. The regime sought by this means to steal the Zionists' thunder and tie the fate of the Jews even more firmly to that of Soviet rule. These Crimean lands were taken back just a few years later at the time of collectivization (pp. 262–68).

A more serious effort concerned the establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidjan on the Chinese border in Eastern Siberia. This territory was once described by Khrushchev as a fertile land with a southern climate, well-watered and sunny, with immense

forests and rivers brimming with fish. A more objective source calls it a "partly marshy stretch of taiga." Great efforts were made in the 20s and 30s to encourage Jews to settle there, but the majority either returned home or moved on to larger cities such as Vladivostok (pp. 268-70). This Jewish Autonomous Region still nominally exists, with a Jewish population of just over 1 percent.

In the first years of the new regime there existed a "Jewish Section" within the Party, "more fanatical than the Soviet authorities themselves, and sometimes ahead of them in their projects." But there seemed to be contradictory tendencies to the Jewish Sections' activity:

On the one hand, an intense activity of communist propaganda in Yiddish, a pitiless war against Judaism, traditional Jewish education, independent Jewish organizations, political parties and movements, Zionism and Hebrew ["a reactionary and counter-revolutionary language"]. On the other hand, a refusal of assimilation, support for the Yiddish language and culture, the organization of a Soviet Jewish system of education, Jewish scientific research, and action to improve the economic condition of Soviet Jews. (p. 271)

Many members of the Jewish Section were former Bund members. One Jewish author remarks approvingly that "under the proletarian sauce, [the action of the Jewish section] carried the clear mark of Jewish national identity" (p. 272). For a time, important works on pre-Revolutionary Jewish history were supported by the Jewish Section; Solzhenitsyn makes use of some of this material himself in his first volume. There was also a very active Yiddish Theater scene, which lasted into the 1930s, and heavy Jewish involvement in early Soviet Cinema that went far beyond the well-known works of Eisenstein.

The Jewish Section took a special interest in combating its ideological rival, Zionism. They lobbied the regime to take a hard line with an ideology so incompatible with Marxist internationalism, but for several years the upper echelons of the Party showed unwonted leniency in the matter. Zionists maintained a Central Bureau in Moscow until 1924. One Zionist party, Poalei-Zion, was officially permitted to exist until 1928. Harsh punishments for Zionist activity were relatively rare, in part because the Zionists had so many friends abroad.

The Jewish religion was not (as is sometimes asserted) spared persecution during these years, but the regime's policies were certainly

milder and less consistent here than in regard to Orthodox Christianity. The fanatics of the Jewish Section called upon the Party to adopt a policy of “equal persecution” for Judaism, but this took a long time to happen. Synagogues are said to have been more numerous at the end of the 20s than in 1917: two new Synagogues were constructed in Moscow. Prayer books and religious calendars continued to be published. The authorities occasionally even permitted unleavened bread to be imported for Passover celebrations.

The central Synagogues of Vitebsk, Minsk, Gomel, Karkhov, Bobruisk, and Kiev, however, were all closed. Others were plundered: although Synagogues typically contained fewer valuables than Christian Churches, menorahs were frequently made of silver. In 1921, the Jewish Section of Kiev organized a bizarre “public trial of Judaism,” culminating in a “death sentence” handed down by Jewish Communists. This “trial” was later repeated in other towns. *Heders* and *yeshivot* were ordered closed, but continued to operate clandestinely for many years. The Jewish Sections arranged things so that Jews’ days off work never fell on the Sabbath. On the high holy days, they sometimes entered Synagogues to disrupt services.

Solzhenitsyn concludes: “in those years, we all wanted to chase out God” (p. 287). He says surprisingly little about the brutal campaign against the Orthodox Church or any Jewish role in it.

In 1926, the Party downgraded the Jewish Section to a Jewish Bureau. In 1930, it was altogether abolished. (Other national “Sections” were suffering the same fate around the same time.)

Despite their unfortunate history as agriculturalists, many Jews obtained high positions in the Commissariat of Agriculture. There are bizarre stories of peasants being ordered by these authorities to shear their sheep at the onset of the Russian Winter or receiving *roasted* Sunflower seeds for planting (p. 243). Eventually, Commissars with Jewish names such as Schlichter, Epstein, and Kritzman were to preside over collectivization, destroying the independence of the peasants who constituted 80 percent of the Russian population (pp. 292–93).

In summarizing the situation of Jews in the Soviet Union of the 20s, Solzhenitsyn writes:

A myth is in course of formation: “the Jews were always second class citizens under the Soviet regime.” And rare indeed are those who are willing to admit not only the participation of Jews in the deeds perpetrated by the barbaric young State, but also

the virulence which certain of them demonstrated.

In the 1990s, a Jewish author [G. Shurmak] declared: "For decades, Jews were proud of their compatriots who made a brilliant career out of the revolution, without much reflecting upon what that career cost the Russian people in real suffering. . . . It is striking with what unanimity my compatriots deny any responsibility in the Russian history of the twentieth century."

Words like these could be salvation for our two peoples if they were not so hopelessly rare. Because it is the truth: in the course of the twenties, numerous were the Jews who rushed to serve the Bolshevik Moloch, without thinking of the unhappy country which would provide the field for their experiments any more than of the consequences which would result for themselves. (pp. 298–99)

By the end of the 1920s, the New Economic Policy had served its purpose. Stalin, now an unrivalled dictator, inaugurated a policy of collectivization and industrialization. This required an influx of technical expertise from abroad, most especially from the United States. Ignoring Marx's inconvenient teaching that capitalism was always the deadly enemy of socialism, the Soviet Union traded enthusiastically with the West, most often getting equipment and technical expertise in exchange for raw materials.

Before the Revolution, American financiers had refused, at considerable cost to themselves, to have dealings with the "barbaric" Russia of pogroms and Jewish Settlement Laws. But the Soviet campaign against Zionism and Judaism met with little indignation in the West. The general impression was that the Soviet regime was not oppressing the Jews—and was maintaining them in positions of power. The regime did what it could to reinforce this impression. In 1931 Stalin issued for the foreign press a special statement condemning anti-Semitism. And in 1936, Molotov delivered the following tirade (as Solzhenitsyn calls it) to the XVIIIth Party Congress:

Our fraternal sentiments with regard to the Jewish people come from their having given birth to the genius who conceived the communist liberation of humanity [Marx], from their having given the world eminent men in the domain of science, technology, the arts, and valiant heroes of the revolutionary struggle and, in our country, they have produced and still produce new

directors and remarkable organizers whose talents are exercised in every branch of the edification and defense of the cause of socialism. (p. 304)

These words may have been intended to mark off the Soviet regime from Hitlerism in the eyes of the West, says Solzhenitsyn, but they also correspond to reality.

Today, the author asserts, it is often stated in Russia that the Jews were chased out of key positions in the 30s and had no further part in the direction of the country. Solzhenitsyn, however, denies that any significant decline in Jewish power occurred before the Great Purge of 1937–38, and provides statistics to back up the claim: e.g., the participation of Jews in the Party's Central Committee held steady at one-sixth from 1930 to 1934. In the Commissariats of Commerce and Provisioning, Jewish participation hovered between one-third and one-half. A contemporary historian, L. Krichevsky, has written that "the first half of the 30s is marked by an increase in the role of Jews within the security organs [the secret police]. On the eve of the most massive repressions [1937–38], 407 high-level Chekists received decorations: among them, 56 (13.8 percent) were Jews" (p. 314).

The author famously included pictures of six Jewish Chekists of the 30s as an illustration in *The Gulag Archipelago*. This is what first gave rise to the legend of "Solzhenitsyn's anti-Semitism." In the present book he tells us the story behind these pictures: he did not collect and assemble them himself, but copied the set of six directly from a self-glorifying album the security organs themselves published in 1936! (pp. 317, 363).

We must not leave out the story of Isai Davidovich Berg, inventor of the *gas chamber on wheels*. Frustrated at the inability of the execution squad to keep up with the numbers of "counter-revolutionaries" his men kept bringing them, this dedicated Chekist developed a vehicle which could deliver victims ready for burial. It was disguised as a bread-van. In spite of his inventiveness, Berg himself was shot in 1939.

The author reviews more than one attempt to portray the Jewish Communists of the 1930s as victims. Solomon Schwartz asserts that "under Soviet conditions, [the Jews] had no chance to survive except State service," to which Solzhenitsyn responds:

One is ashamed to read this. What sort of situation of oppression and despair is it which leaves you no other chance of survival

than to occupy positions of privilege? What about the rest of the population? They enjoyed full liberty to wear themselves out on collective farms and in prison camps, digging ditches with pick-axes, carrying loads on the sites of the five-year plans . . . (p. 335)

Jews, being so prominent in the Party, were numerous among those killed in the Great Purge of 1937–38. Before it, they had been at the head of 50 percent of the principal services for internal affairs; by January 1, 1939 they occupied only 6 percent of these positions (p. 320). It is remarkable that no one seems to assert a specifically anti-Semitic motive behind the purge, although Stalin certainly had no fondness for Jews.

The Israeli writer Yu. Margolin is another who tries to engage our sympathy for the Jewish Communists, "victims of the Soviet dictatorship, used and then liquidated without pity when they were no longer useful." Solzhenitsyn is not buying it:

A lovely explanation! But were these persons really *used* for twenty years? Did they not pour all their zeal into being the *engine of that same dictatorship*, and before being "no longer useful," did they not take a vigorous part in the destruction of religion and culture, in the annihilation of the intelligentsia and several million peasants? (p. 323)

For the same reasons, he has little pity for purged Jewish Chekists: "one cannot agree—it would not be decent, not honest—to include among the *persecutions* of the Jews the fact that they were chased out of the organs of repression" (p. 322).

The years following the Great Purge saw the continued decline in Jewish Party membership, as well as the closing of many of the remaining synagogues. In 1939, the *numerus clausus* system was reintroduced for Jews in Soviet Universities. Nevertheless, "up to the war, the great majority of Soviet Jews remained sympathetic to Soviet ideology and in agreement with the regime" (p. 348). And the sympathy of European Jews for the Soviet Union experienced a new upsurge in these years, courtesy of Hitler. During the period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, following the German invasion of Western Poland, some two million Jews fled east into the Soviet Union.

At this point in his narrative, the author includes a chapter on the Jews' situation within the Gulag, the "archipelago" of prison camps

scattered across Soviet Russia. He begins:

If I had never spent time there myself, I would not have been able to write this chapter. Before camp, I thought like everyone else: one *must not notice* nationality; there are no nations, just humanity. But they send you to camp and you learn that if you belong to a *good* nation you are lucky, you can rest easy, you will survive. But if your nation is *that of everyone*—there is no use blaming anybody for the consequences. (p. 357)

In the Soviet camps, the Russians were the “nation of everyone.” More compact or tribally-minded peoples managed to look out for one another in the harsh conditions of camp life, and so stood a better chance of survival.

Readers of *The Gulag Archipelago* will recall the “trusties,” prisoners who collaborated with their keepers in return for favors which to outsiders may seem ridiculously small, but which often meant the difference between life and death. (The young Solzhenitsyn, still a believer in Communism, actually served as a trusty in the early part of his time in the camps—a story he relates at length in *The Gulag Archipelago*.)

Trusties were often chosen on the basis of nationality:

Any old prisoner who has had the full experience of camp life will confirm that certain nationalities were much better represented among the trusties than among the general prison population. Thus, you found almost no Balts, although they were quite numerous among the prisoners. There were always Russians, of course, but in a small proportion compared to their numbers in the camp (and they had often been recruited among the *bien-pensants* of the Party). On the other hand, there were many Jews, Armenians, Georgians; also a lot of Azerbaijanis and Caucasian mountain people. (p. 357)

On this subject Solzhenitsyn writes something which has evoked more outrage among Russian Jews than anything else in his thousand-page work:

If I had wanted to generalize by saying that the Jews in the camps had a particularly harsh life, no one would have stopped me, and I would not have been covered with reproaches for

having generalized unjustly. But in the camps I knew it was different: insofar as one can generalize, the Jews lived there with less hardship than others. (pp. 358–59)

He relates the story of a Latvian with the convenient name Bernstein, one of his informants in writing *The Gulag Archipelago*, who believes he only survived the camp because in the most difficult times he could turn to the Jews for help (p. 360).

Once again, Solzhenitsyn digs up an example of a Jewish author writing of the Jewish collaborators with sympathy rather than shame: a certain unfortunate named Belinkov "got cast out among the most despised category, the 'trusties.'" The author comments: "one must have lost all sense of humor to write [such a thing]. Cast out among the trusties – what an expression! 'Lowered to the masters?'" (p. 359).

Solzhenitsyn also tells us about the Jews Vladimir Efroimson and Yakov Davidovich Grodzensky who refused to become trusties when they could have. Efroimson wished to dissipate the animosity toward Jews in the camp resulting from so many being trusties. The Jewish trusties mocked him and resented him for making them look bad. The rest explained his behavior by saying that he was not a "real" Jew, or was a "degenerate" Jew. Solzhenitsyn comments:

Animated by the highest motives, Efroimson and Grodzensky did the noblest and most just thing any Jews could do—loyally share the common fate . . . and they were not understood by either side! For it is always this way in History: the paths of self-limitation, renunciation of oneself, are arduous—they lend themselves to sarcasm—but they are the only paths which can save humanity.

As for me, I shall never forget these examples, and shall put my hope in them. (p. 365)

Most of Solzhenitsyn's Jewish sources concede that the Soviet authorities did a commendable job of evacuating Jews from the western regions of Russia at the beginning of the German invasion of 1941, given the constraints upon transport and the other urgent demands being made upon it. About 2,226,000 Jews were successfully evacuated. Another 2,739,000 Jews, mostly from borderlands recently reacquired following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, had to be left to face the German occupation (p. 375).

“During 1941–42,” writes Solzhenitsyn, “the Soviet authorities gladly allowed the synagogues of Moscow, Leningrad, and Kharkov to fill up and the Jewish Passover to be celebrated” (p. 379). Yiddish newspapers were published again. A Jewish Antifascist Committee was set up to publicize anti-Jewish atrocities committed by the invaders: “the effect produced in the West surpassed all Moscow’s expectations. . . . In allied countries, Jewish organizations were created to gather funds for the Red Army” (p. 383). The Soviet regime even cooperated with the Zionist movement for several years.

Popular anti-Semitism increased during the war years. It was commonly asserted, e.g., that Jews avoided service at the front. Solzhenitsyn goes through the statistics carefully and concludes that such accusations are unfounded. He presents evidence that some 430,000 Jews fought in the Red Army during the war, with 270 Jewish Generals and Admirals among them (pp. 388–98).

Part of the German plan of occupation was to get the local populations to initiate pogroms. This was intended to create the impression that anti-Jewish actions were undertaken spontaneously by the nations which Germany had “liberated from Jewish Bolshevism.” In their reports to Berlin, however, SS officials reported that this task was “quite difficult” in Lithuania, “much more difficult” in Latvia, and impossible in Byelorussia. Neither did they have success when they reached Great Russia. In Ukraine, the German plan enjoyed some success, especially among the Ukrainian separatists, but the SS had to take matters into their own hands eventually. Only the Crimean Tatars proved zealous in massacring the local Jews. On the whole, the German attempt to hide behind proxies was a failure (pp. 403–408).

There is nothing in Solzhenitsyn’s pages which could serve as grist for the mill of “holocaust revisionism,” nor does he ever suggest that German National Socialism was preferable to Soviet Communism.

As is widely recognized, the postwar years up to the death of Stalin were marked by an official campaign against the Jews. This was the responsibility of the dictator himself, as Solzhenitsyn explains:

[T]he very structure of the totalitarian regime meant that the weakening of the Jewish share in the leadership of the country could only be initiated by Stalin himself.

But neither Stalin’s devious character nor the hardened character of Soviet propaganda allowed an open course of action. The first transformations in the composition of the State apparatus

occurred—almost imperceptibly, it is true—after the rapprochement of Stalin with Hitler in 1939. The Jew Litvinov was replaced by Molotov and “purges” took place in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. And military and diplomatic academies were closed to Jews.

From the end of 1942, actions were taken to remove Jews from artistic institutions such as the Bolshoi, the Moscow Conservatory, [and] the Moscow Philharmonic. Later there were attempts to initiate a prorated repartitioning of [Party] cadres according to national origin, which in practice amounted to removing Jews from decision-making positions. Over the course of the years and according to circumstances, Stalin sometimes encouraged and sometimes hindered these initiatives. (pp. 424–25)

An important turning point was the arrival of Golda Meir in Moscow as Israeli ambassador. She received a triumphal welcome from the entire Jewish community, and petitions for emigration to Israel began pouring in to the authorities. Meanwhile, as Stalin was preparing for a possible war with the United States, the Israeli government was sending out pro-Western signals. Jews arrested around 1950 are said to have been confronted by their interrogators with their alleged unwillingness to fight against Israel’s ally America.

Undoubtedly frightened by the effervescence reigning among the Jews, Stalin—beginning at the end of 1948, and for the rest of his life—drastically changed his policies with regard to them. But in his own manner: acting drastically but without announcement, radically but by little steps, and in apparently secondary domains. (p. 430)

In January 1949, *Pravda* published a long article entitled “On an Antipatriotic Group of Theater Critics.” These theater critics, it was reported, hid their true identity behind pseudonyms. Thus, the critic Kholodov was really Meierovich; Yasny was Finkelstein; Svetov was Scheidman, and so forth. Shortly thereafter, *Pravda* launched a campaign against “rootless cosmopolitans.” At first, no one had any idea who the “rootless cosmopolitans” were. Eventually an official list of them was published, and every name was recognizably Jewish.

At the same time, the regime started making bizarre claims that Russians had been responsible for various advances in civilization.

For example: Soviet textbooks began teaching that Russian scientists had invented the radio and the automobile. Those taken in by published accounts of “Solzhenitsyn’s Great-Russian chauvinism” may wish to note his curt dismissal of this “imbecilic and ludicrous glorification of Russian ‘superiority’ in all domains” (p. 434).

Between 1948 and 1953, Jews were kicked out of the higher circles of production, administration, cultural and ideological activities *en masse*; access to a whole series of higher education establishments was limited or simply refused them. Responsible posts in the KGB, the organs of the Party and of the Army were closed to them. (p. 437)

By the fall of 1952, Stalin was acting against the Jews openly. A show trial of an innocent group of Jewish doctors was inaugurated with great fanfare in January 1953. On February 9th, a bomb exploded outside the Soviet embassy in Tel-Aviv and the Soviet Union broke off relations with Israel.

Then, suddenly, it was all over. Stalin suffered a debilitating stroke at the end of February and died on March 6, 1953.

It has often been asserted that only Stalin’s death at this juncture saved the Jews from mass deportation to Siberia or the Far North the following summer. Solzhenitsyn reports:

In a recent study, the historian G. Kostyrchenko, a great specialist in Stalin’s Jewish policy, refutes this “deportation myth” with very solid arguments, showing that no fact either then or now has come to light confirming it; and that in any case, Stalin did not have the means to put such a deportation into operation. (p. 442)

We simply do not know what further developments there would have been in the anti-Semitic campaign had Stalin lived longer. Following his death, the Jewish doctors, whose trial had been filling the newspapers for weeks, were quietly released. The official anti-Semitic campaign lost steam.

Solzhenitsyn devotes the last five chapters, totaling one hundred twenty pages, to the twenty years which followed Stalin’s death. The principal circumstance of interest during this period is the gradual withering of Jewish support for the government.

At the end of the 1960s [says Solzhenitsyn] one observation which strengthened me in the conviction that the jig was up for the Communist regime was to what an extent the Jews had turned their backs on it. And without them, Bolshevik fanaticism—which was showing its age and ceasing even to be a fanaticism—was seized by a very Russian nonchalance and a peculiarly Brezhnevian inertia. (p. 475)

Solzhenitsyn notes the prominence of Jews among the dissident movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. Four of the seven men who staged an unprecedented (for the USSR) protest on Red Square following the invasion of Czechoslovakia were Jewish. The Jew Semion Gluzman paid with his freedom for his campaign against the political use of psychiatric hospitals (pp. 483–84). Solzhenitsyn writes:

In this wasted country, still subject to repression, the Russian Social Fund to which I turned over all world rights to *The Gulag Archipelago* [after creating it himself!—FRD], began its aid to the persecuted, and Alexander Ginzburg, competent and devoted, was its first administrator. Among its benefactors have been many Jews and half-Jews (which has given occasion in certain Russian circles, blinded by their extremism, to stigmatize the fund as "Jewish"). (p. 513)

But Jewish abandonment of Communism was too frequently accompanied by the belief that the Communist regime was something uniquely and wholly Russian—in other words, that the Jewish people bore no responsibility for it. Solzhenitsyn cites a number of recent Jewish authors who have characterized the early Soviet regime as nothing more than another chapter in the long history of Jewish persecution. According to a certain Yu. Stern, "Soviet history is marked by a consistent will to break and exterminate the Jews." V. Boguslavsky tells his readers that "the Soviet regime ruined the Jews, deported them, destroyed families"—all of which was "just a normal disaster for the majority of the Jewish population." F. Kolker says that "among the numerous nationalities populating the Soviet Union, the Jews have always been considered apart, as the least 'trustworthy' element," to which the author replies in amazement "what sort of amnesia must one have suffered to write such things in 1983?" (pp. 478–79). Even the dissident Jewish songwriter Alexander Galich sings:

Never, Jews, shall you be chamberlains . . .
 Never shall you sit in Synod or Senate.
 Your seat shall be the Solovetsky Islands,² the Butyrka Prison.

“They have forgotten,” marvels the author, “quite sincerely – they have entirely forgotten. How difficult it is to remember the evil one has done!” (p. 490).

These blind assertions of national innocence are matched by a host of vitriolic remarks about Russia: “a country of slaves, a troop of traitors, informants, and hangmen,” according to Arkadi Belinkov (p. 497). N. Shapiro tells us that “in the labyrinthine depths of the Russian soul there invariably hides a pogromist . . . a slave and a tramp as well” (p. 498). The country is “a human pigsty,” according to G. Kopylov (p. 495). “They were crawling on all fours and bowing down to trees and stones, while we gave them the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” said Yakov Yakir, safely arrived in Tel Aviv, of his former fellow-countrymen (p. 498). “[Russian] Orthodoxy is a religion of savages,” according to M. Grobman. According to N. Shulgin, the Jewish involvement in early Communism prevented it from becoming much worse than it actually was (p. 494). Solzhenitsyn comments:

Let us note that none of these malevolent judgments upon the “Russian soul” provokes protest. If someone does not like anything Russian, holds it in contempt, or even says “Russia is a garbage dump,” this is not immoral in Russia. Here, no one addresses Presidents, Prime Ministers, Senators, or Congressmen to ask anxiously “what do you think of this incitation to hate a group of human beings because of their nationality?” (pp. 498–99)

Solzhenitsyn also remarks upon the following confusion in the Jewish attitude toward nationhood:

I have noticed that Jews more often than others insist that no attention must be paid to nationality. “What does it matter, one’s nationality?” they repeat; “national ‘traits,’ national ‘character’ – do these even exist?”

But, with my hand on my heart: it is precisely Jews who scrutinize and strain to discern national peculiarities more jealously,

² The location of the first Soviet labor camp for political prisoners, in the far north.

more attentively, more secretly than others: those of their own nation. (p. 502)

A new era was ushered in by the Six Day War, which

. . . shook the entire Jewish world as well as Soviet Jews with a violence of biblical proportions. Jewish national consciousness resurged and erupted like an avalanche. After the Six Day War, a lot of things changed. . . . An impulse to action had been given. Letters and petitions flooded into Soviet and international bodies. National life recommenced: on High Holy Days it became difficult to get into synagogues they were so crowded. Clandestine circles were formed to study Hebrew, Jewish history, and Jewish culture. (p. 476)

The ultimate effect of the Israeli victory upon Russian Jews was to inspire the emigration movement of the 1970s.

For many Jews, despite a material situation clearly more favorable than that of the great mass of the population, the feeling of being oppressed was quite real (p. 518). From the end of 1969, Jews by the dozens and by the hundreds began signing petitions addressed to "foreign public opinion." They demanded that they be allowed to leave for Israel. (p. 523)

They met with widespread sympathy. "To this day," marvels the author, "it is hard to believe how much publicity they enjoyed" (p. 531). The American Senate refused to ratify most favored nation trading status to the Soviet Union without adding the Jackson Amendment, requiring total freedom of Jewish emigration.

And there was no one to say out loud and clear: Gentlemen! Fifty-five years ago it was not tens of thousands but millions of our compatriots who could only dream of escaping from the hated Soviet regime. No one here was given the right to emigrate. And never once did the politicians, the public men of the West protest or propose to punish the Soviet Union even if only by commercial restrictions! Fifteen million peasants were exterminated during "dekulakization," six million were driven to famine in 1932, not to speak of mass executions and the millions

who ended up in camps. During this time you were glad to sign treaties with the Soviet leaders, grant them loans, shake their hands, seek their favor. And it was only when the Jews in particular had their rights infringed that the entire Western world was seized with a burning compassion and began to understand what this regime was made of. (p. 529)

Large scale Jewish emigration began in 1971, mostly not from the Russian center but from Georgia and the Baltic Republics: 13,000 the first year, 32,000 the second, and 35,000 the third. At first nearly all the Jews went to Israel. By March 1973, 700,000 requests to emigrate had been received.

The Yom Kippur War in the fall of 1973 damaged Israel's prestige, following which emigration slowed to 20,000 in 1974. By 1975–76, nearly 50 percent of emigrants went to countries other than Israel, principally the United States. After 1977, between 70 and 98 percent went directly to the United States (pp. 532–33).

"Only the first wave was motivated by an ideal," admits one Jewish author (pp. 534–35).

During the Gorbachev period, by about 1987, all restrictions upon Jewish emigration were lifted.

Henceforth, a radically new epoch in the history of the now free Russian Jews and of their relations with the new Russia has opened. This period has brought rapid and substantial changes, but it is still too short to anticipate the long-term results. . . . The development of this new theme would go beyond the span of life allotted this author. (pp. 567–68)

With these words, the work closes.

* * *

The themes of national repentance and mutual understanding resonate throughout *Two Hundred Years Together*. Solzhenitsyn emphasizes that they presuppose an effort of historical understanding. This outlook, no doubt, is due to memories of the Communist regime under which he grew up. The Bolsheviks sought to make a clean sweep of the past, and systematically falsified history in the pursuit of a "classless" or conflict free society. Such a mindset can still be found

in Russia; many reviewers warned that any study of the Russian-Jewish past would only lead to the revival of old hatreds.

In this context, the reader of *Two Hundred Years Together* may wish to ponder the following exchange from an interview Solzhenitsyn granted *Moskovskiy Novosti* (January 1-7, 2003) in connection with publication of the second volume:

Interviewer: The main premise of your wide-ranging work is this: the truth about the Russians' relationship with the Jews is morally vital. To whom? To history? To both nationalities?"

Solzhenitsyn: Any truth is morally vital to a person. Any truth in principle.

Solzhenitsyn also has some words for the academic critics who have caviled at the sparseness of his archival research. The type of historical understanding our age requires, both in Russia and in America, is at heart an act of the imagination, in which specialized research plays an important but limited role.

Interviewer: You have addressed a subject wherein you yourself often invoke such concepts as "spirit," "consciousness," and "historical fate." Were these nebulous notions not an impediment to your well-researched work, based on solid facts?

Solzhenitsyn: Far from being an impediment, they were, to a very large extent, a part of my underlying concept. My book aims to go deep into Jewish thoughts, feelings, ideas, and mentality – that is to say, the realm of the spiritual. In this sense the objective of my book is not, in fact, scientific, but artistic. It is basically an artistic work. Except that there are not two or three characters, but a great many characters, with various, most diverse feelings and ideas. Facts alone are not enough to understand them. . . . I went to them and felt an affinity with them, as one does with characters in a work of fiction. . . . Generally speaking, I regard the spirit and consciousness as the most substantial elements of history.

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