

do they care. . . . We found," the commissioners added with reference to the general situation of Russian Jewry, "that America was by no means an unknown country to them, and that many of the families have relatives and friends in the United States" (cited in L. Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951], vol. 2, pp. 74-75). It is estimated that by 1914 some two million Jews left Russia. This selection is from the Warsaw newspaper *Hazfirah*; it cites, as a warning against precipitous emigration, a letter to the editor of *Novoe Vremya*, a daily newspaper in St. Petersburg. To strengthen the point of this letter, *Hazfirah* published an accompanying appeal for caution from a Jewish immigration relief committee in Memel, a port city in East Prussia. However, the threat of

pogroms exceeded that of poverty as seen by the following figures:

The yearly average of the Russian Jews going to the United States alone was 12,856 for 1881-1886; it reached 28,509 in the next five-year period, rose to 44,829 during 1891-1895 and declined (perhaps affected by an economic slump in America) to 31,278 from 1896 to 1900. The average yearly figures were 58,625 for 1901-1905; 82,223 for 1906-1910 and 75,144 for 1911-1914. Altogether nearly two million Jews left Russia from 1880 to 1914 (Hans Rogger, "Tsarist Policy on Jewish Emigration," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 3, no. 1 [1973], p. 28. See also W. W. Kaplun-Kogan, *Die juedischen Wanderbewegungen in der neuesten Zeit* [Bonn, 1919], especially pp. 19-25.)

BARON MAURICE DE HIRSCH

29. Appeal to the Jews in Russia (1891)¹

To my co-religionists in Russia: You know that I am endeavouring to better your lot. It is, therefore, my duty to speak plainly to you and to tell you that which it is necessary you should know.

I am aware of the reasons which oblige many of you to emigrate, and I will gladly do all in my power to assist you in your hour of distress. But you must make this possible for me. Your emigration must not resemble a headlong, reckless flight, by which the endeavour to escape from one danger ends in destruction.

You know that properly organised committees are shortly to be established in Russia, with the consent and under the supervision of the Imperial Russian Government. The duty of these committees will be to organise the emigration in a business-like way. All persons desirous of emigrating will have to apply to the local committees, who

alone will be authorised to give you the necessary facilities.

Only those persons who have been selected by the committees can have the advantage of the assistance of myself and of those who are working with me. Anyone who leaves the country without the concurrence of the committees will do so at his own risk, and must not count on any aid from me.

It is obvious that in the beginning the number of emigrants cannot be large; for not only must places of refuge be found for those who first depart, but necessary preparations be made for those who follow. Later on the emigration will be able to assume larger proportions.

Remember that I can do nothing for you without the benevolent and gracious support of the Imperial Russian Government.

In conclusion, I appeal to you. You are the

Source: *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), September 18, 1891, p. 13.

inheritors of your fathers, who for centuries, have suffered so much. Bear this inheritance yet awhile with equal resignation.

Have also further patience, and thus render it possible for those to help you who are anxious to do so.

I send you these words of warning and of

encouragement in my own name and in the name of thousands of your co-religionists. Take them to heart and understand them.

May the good God help you and me, and also the many who work with us for your benefit with so much devotion.

NOTE

1. Baron de Hirsch (1831-1896), one of the wealthiest individuals of his time. A German Jewish financier, he devoted the larger portion of his life and vast fortune to philanthropy. He was the benefactor of a variety of Jewish causes, e.g., the Alliance Israélite Universelle; the Baron de Hirsch Fund in New York City, established to assist Jewish immigrants in the United States; and the Jewish Colonization Association, established in 1891 to facilitate and organize the mass emigration of Jews from Russia and to encourage their rehabilitation in agricultural colonies, particularly in Argentina and Brazil. He chose these countries because they contained an abundance of unpopulated land suitable for agriculture and because

their governments were eager to receive immigrants. The Baron hoped to divert the flow of Jewish immigration to these areas, for he felt the crowding of hundreds of thousands of pauperized Jews into the cities of North America was bound to lead to antisemitism. A life of farming, even with the Baron de Hirsch's generous assistance, in an unknown distant land, appealed to relatively few immigrants. America continued to be the main destination. This letter, which originally appeared in Russian and Yiddish, was addressed to the prospective emigrants from Russia, appealing to them to cooperate with the Jewish Colonization Association.

SIMON DUBNOW

30. Autonomism (1901)¹

. . . Autonomy as a historic claim is thus the firm and inalienable right of each national individuality; only its forms depend on the status which a nationality has within a multinational state. . . . In view of its condition in the Diaspora, Jewish nationality cannot strive for territorial or political isolation, but only for social and cultural autonomy. The Jew says: "As a citizen of my country I participate in its civic and political life, but as a member of the Jewish nationality I have, in addition, my own national needs, and in

this sphere I must be independent to the same degree that any other national minority is autonomous in the state. I have the right to speak my language, to use it in all my social institutions, to make it the language of instruction in my schools, to order my internal life in my communities, and to create institutions serving a variety of national purposes; to join in the common activities with my brethren not only in this country but in all countries of the world and to participate in all the organizations which

Source: Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History, Essays on Old and New Judaism*, ed. Koppel S. Pinson (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 136-39. Copyright 1958 by the Jewish Publication Society. Reprinted by permission of the Jewish Publication Society.

serve to further the needs of the Jewish nationality and to defend them everywhere."

During the "period of isolation" the Jews enjoyed in great measure the right of national autonomy, although in outmoded forms, but they lacked civic and political rights. During the "period of assimilation" they began to participate in the civic and political life of the countries in which they lived, but many became alienated from the chosen inheritance of the nation, from its internal autonomy, which, in their limited view, did not accord with civic emancipation already granted or about to be granted by law. In this manner old Jewry sacrificed its civic rights for its national rights, and new Jewry its national rights for its political or civic rights. The period of autonomy now approaching does not tend to either of the two extremes of the previous epochs, which had rendered the life of the Jewish people defective and impaired. The new epoch must combine our equal civic and political rights with the social and cultural autonomy enjoyed by other nationalities whose historical conditions resemble our own. The Jews must demand simultaneously all civic, political and national rights, without renouncing one for the other as had been the case in the past.

The chief axiom of Jewish autonomy may thus be formulated as follows: Jews in each and every country who take an active part in civic and political life enjoy all rights given to the citizens, not merely as individuals, but also as members of their national groups.

Now that we have succeeded in establishing the principle of autonomy, we must analyze the problem of how it can be realized under the conditions in which the Jewish nationality finds itself. Here we have to differentiate between two kinds of national minorities in a multi-national state: (1) a territorial minority, which is a minority as compared with the total population of the commonwealth, but which constitutes a majority in its own historical state or province; (2) a non-territorial minority, scattered over

various provinces without being a majority in any. Nationalities of the first kind require regional autonomy where they are settled, nationalities of the second kind must have communal and cultural autonomy. . . .

The fiction of the "religious community" was bound to be destroyed together with the fiction of the "religious society," not in the sense of a disruption of the religious service, but of a removal of the religious label from secular institutions. It is necessary to reconstruct the shattered autonomy in forms which are adapted to modern social conditions. In countries of German culture, the nationalist Jews must convert their religious communities into national communities [*Volks-gemeinden*]. Even before such a change can be effected officially, with the approval of the government, it is possible on the basis of the existing laws guaranteeing freedom of association, to widen perceptibly the circle of activities of the communities, and, at the same time, to wage a parliamentary battle for the recognition of the fullest measures of secular national communal autonomy. . . . Real and broad autonomy is especially possible in countries in which the principle prevails that the government does not interfere in the private lives of its citizens, and where authoritarian governments or exaggerated concentrations of power do not exist. In such countries, especially in the United States of America, Jews could enjoy a large measure of self-administration even now if they only were willing to advance beyond the confines of the "religious community." . . .

There is no need to demonstrate that national-cultural autonomy is of singular value to the Jewish masses concentrated in eastern Europe. Here the Jews do not yet have full rights as citizens and, therefore, the extension of the autonomy of their communities meets with external difficulties. Over and against this, however, there are strong inner tendencies in that direction among the Jewish masses which are attracted to the modern national movement. . . .

NOTE

1. Simon Dubnow (1860-1941), Russian Jewish historian, author of the monumental *World History of the Jewish People* (10 volumes, written in Russian but first published in German, 1925-1929; published in English in 1967). From 1897 to 1902 he published a series of articles on the Jewish question in the Russian Jewish journal *Voskhod*. In these articles, drawing upon his study of Jewish history, Dubnow developed a conception of the Jewish people as a "spiritual community," which, despite its dispersion throughout the world, enjoys a national cohesion by virtue of historical, cultural and religious bonds. As such, the Jewish people does not require the material framework of a common territory and of political independence to preserve its national existence. Through spiritual nationhood, the Jewish people, according to Dubnow, have entered a higher stage of history, anticipating the future of all nations. Notwithstanding his historical optimism, Dubnow recog-

nized the pressures of assimilation in a secular age and accordingly held that although the Jews will remain politically and territorially members of the respective states of their dispersion, they should enjoy cultural autonomy. The historical and theoretical bases of the concept of extra-territorial, cultural (as opposed to political!) autonomy were expounded in his fourth article (1901), excerpts of which are presented here. Dubnow sought to realize his program through the political efforts of the Society for Full and Equal Rights of the Jewish People in Russia, an association of non-socialist Jews founded in 1905, and of the Jewish People's Party, which he helped establish in 1906. Although he was not successful in the sphere of practical politics, Dubnow's theory of autonomism exercised a seminal influence on the Bund's nationality policy (see document 31 in this chapter) and on the Helsingfors Program of the Zionists (see document 32 in this chapter).

THE BUND

31. Decisions on the Nationality Question (1899, 1901, 1905, 1910)¹

The Third Party Convention (December 1899):² . . . The Bund has inscribed on its banner the demand for equal civil rights for the Jews. At the Convention the opinion was expressed that Jewish Social Democracy deals with the needs of the Jewish proletariat in too narrow a manner. Many of the most significant rights to be obtained with the fall of the autocratic regime [of the tsar], it was observed, would, as regards the Jewish workers, remain but a dead letter, if com-

plete national emancipation, e.g., freedom to use their own national language, is not also granted them. Accordingly, one comrade³ insisted that there be a greater emphasis on the national aspect of the Bund's program, for the Jewish proletariat must demand national emancipation as well as equal civil rights. Civil rights, he said, are not enough to enable the Jewish proletariat to protect its own interests. Germany is a prime example of this. Whereas in Germany

Source: [Protocol of third convention of the Bund] (Kovno, December 1899), in *Materialy k istorii yevreiskago vobochago dvizhenii* (St. Petersburg, 1906), vol. 1, pp. 74-76. Trans. by R. Weiss. [Resolution of fourth convention of the Bund] (Bialystok, May 1901), in *Der yidisher arbeter*, no. 2 (1901), pp. 97-102. Trans. by P. Mendes-Flohr. [Resolution of the sixth convention of the Bund] (Zurich, October 1905), in *Der yidisher arbeter*, ed. M. Rafes (Moscow, 1925), vol. 1, p. 321. Trans. by D. Goldman. [Resolution of eighth conference of the Bund] (Vienna, October 1910), in M. Rafes, *Ocherki po istorii Bunda* (Moscow, 1923), pp. 393-95. Trans. by R. Weiss.