The Jewish Century

Freudianism in its use of modern medicine as the instrument of salvation. Ultimately, it surpassed them all in being able to offer a simple secular solution to the problem of the origins of evil in the modern world. A universe presided over by Man received an identifiable and historically distinct group of human beings as its first flesh-and-blood devil. The identity of the group might change, but the humanization and nationalization of evil proved durable. When the Nazi prophets were exposed as impostors and slain in the apocalypse they had unleashed, it was they who emerged as the new devil in a world without God—the only absolute in the Post-Prophetic Age.

Thus, in the wake of World War I, Jews had found themselves at the center of both the crisis of modern Europe and the most far-reaching attempts to overcome it. Strikingly successful at the pursuits that made up the foundations of modern states—entrepreneurship (especially banking) and the professions (especially law, medicine, journalism, and science)—they were excluded from the modern nations that those states were supposed to embody and represent. In a Europe that draped the economy of capitalism and professional expertise in the legitimacy of nationalism, Jews stood abandoned and unprotected as a ghostly tribe of powerful strangers. In one nation-state, their exclusion would turn into the main article of nationalist faith and a methodical extermination campaign. But exclusion could also become a form of escape and liberation. For most European Jews, this meant three pilgrimages to three ideological destinations. Freudianism became associated with a nonethnic (or multiethnic) liberalism in the United States; Zionism represented a secular Jewish nationalism in Palestine; and Communism stood for the creation of a nation-free world centered in Moscow. The story of twentieth-century Jews is a story of one Hell and three Promised Lands.

Chapter 3

BABEL'S FIRST LOVE: THE JEWS AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

> Suddenly I heard a voice beside me saying: "Excuse me, young man, do you think it is proper to stare at strange young ladies in that way?"
>
> —I. S. Turgenev, "First Love"

At the turn of the twentieth century, most of Europe's Jews (5.2 out of about 8.7 million) lived in the Russian Empire, where they constituted about 4 percent of the total population. Most of Russia's Jews (about 90 percent) resided in the Pale of Settlement, to which they were legally restricted. Most of the Jews in the Pale of Settlement (all but about 4 percent, who were farmers and factory workers) continued to pursue traditional service occupations as middlemen between the overwhelmingly agricultural Christian population and various urban markets. Most of the Jewish middlemen bought, shipped, and resold local produce; provided credit on the security of standing crops and other items; leased and managed estates and various processing facilities (such as tanneries, distilleries, and sugar mills); kept taverns and inns; supplied manufactured goods (as peddlers, shopkeepers, or wholesale importers); provided professional services (most commonly as doctors and pharmacists), and served as artisans (from rural blacksmiths, tailors, and shoemakers to highly specialized jewelers and watchmakers). The proportion of various pursuits could vary, but the association of Jews with the service sector (including small-scale craftsmanship) remained very strong.[1]

As traditional Mercurians dependent on external strangeness and internal cohesion, the majority of Russian Jews continued to live in segregated quarters, speak Yiddish, wear distinctive clothing, observe complex dietary taboos, practice endogamy, and follow a vari-

ety of other customs that ensured the preservation of collective memory, autonomy, purity, unity, and a hope of redemption. The synagogue, bathhouse, heder, and the home helped structure space as well as social rituals, and numerous self-governing institutions assisted the rabbi and the family in regulating communal life, education, and charity. Both social status and religious virtue depended on wealth and learning; wealth and learning ultimately depended on each other.

The relations between the majority of Pale Jews and their mostly rural customers followed the usual pattern of Mercurian-Apollonian coexistence. Each side saw the other as unclean, opaque, dangerous, contemptible, and ultimately irrelevant to the communal past and future salvation. Social contact was limited to commercial and bureaucratic encounters. Non-Jews almost never spoke Yiddish, and very few Jews spoke the languages of their Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Moldovan, or Belorussian neighbors beyond "the minimum of words which were absolutely necessary in order to transact business."[2] Everyone (and most particularly the Jews themselves) assumed that the Jews were nonnative, temporary exiles; that they depended on their customers for survival; and that the country—however conceived—belonged to the local Apollonians. The history of the people of Israel relived by every Jew on every Sabbath had nothing to do with his native shtetl or the city of Kiev; his sea was Red, not Black, and the rivers of his imagination did not include the Dnieper or the Dvina. "[Sholem Aleichem's] Itzik Meyer of Kasrilevke was told to feel that he himself, with wife and children, had marched out of Egypt, and he did as he was told. He felt that he himself had witnessed the infliction of the ten plagues on the Egyptians, he himself had stood on the farther shore of the Red Sea and seen the walls of water collapse on the pursuers, drowning them all to the last man—with the exception of Pharaoh, who was preserved as an eternal witness for the benefit of the Torquemadas and the Romanovs."[3]

The most prominent—and perhaps the only—local Apollonians retained by the Jewish memory were the Cossack looters and murderers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the most frequently invoked of them all (as the modern equivalent of the

biblical Haman) was Bohdan Khmelnytsky—the same Bohdan Khmelnytsky whom most Ukrainian-speakers remembered as their deliverer from Catholic captivity and (for a short time) Jewish scheming and spying. Overall, however, the Jews were as marginal to the Eastern European peasant imagination as the Eastern European peasants were to the Jewish one. Apollonians tend to remember battles with other Apollonians, not bargaining with Mercurians (while the Mercurians themselves tend to remember the days when they were Apollonians). The villains of Cossack mythology are mostly Tatars and Poles, with Jews featured episodically as Polish agents (which, in the economic sense, they were—especially as estate leaseholders and liquor-tax farmers).[4]

Most Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of the Pale of Settlement shared the same fundamental view of what separated them. Like all Mercurians and Apollonians, they tended to think of each other as universal and mutually complementary opposites: mind versus body, head versus heart, outsider versus insider, nomadic versus settled. In the words of Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog (whose account is based on interviews with former shtetl residents),

> A series of contrasts is set up in the mind of the shtetl child, who grows up to regard certain behavior as characteristic of Jews, and its opposite, as characteristic of Gentiles. Among Jews he expects to find emphasis on intellect, a sense of moderation, cherishing of spiritual values, cultivation of rational, goal-directed activities, a "beautiful" family life. Among gentiles he looks for the opposite of each item: emphasis on the body, excess, blind instinct, sexual license, and ruthless force. The first list is ticketed in his mind as Jewish, the second as goyish.[5]

Seen from the other side, the lists looked essentially the same, with the values reversed. Intelligence, moderation, learning, rationalism, and family devotion (along with entrepreneurial success) could be represented as cunning, cowardice, casuistry, unmanliness, clannishness, and greed, whereas the apparent emphasis on the body, excess, instinct, license, and force might be interpreted as earthiness, spontaneity, soulfulness, generosity, and warrior strength (honor). These oppositions were informed by actual differ-

ences in economic roles and values; sanctified by communal traditions and prohibitions; reinforced by new quasi-secular mythologies (as Marxists and various nationalists employed them more or less creatively but without substantive revisions); and reenacted daily, ritually, and sometimes consciously in personal encounters as well as in prayers, jokes, and gestures.

The non-Jewish words for "Jew" were all more or less pejorative, often diminutive, permanently associated with particular modifiers ("cunning," "mangy"), and used productively to coin new forms (such as the Russian *zhidit'sia*, "to be greedy"). The Jews were equally disparaging but, like all Mercurians, more intensely concerned with pollution, linguistic as well as sexual and dietary. Not only were *goy* ("Gentile"), *sheigets* ("a Gentile young man"), and *shiksa* (a Gentile [i.e., "impure"] woman) generally pejorative terms that could be used metaphorically to refer to stupid or loutish Jews; much of the colloquial Yiddish vocabulary dealing with *goyim* was cryptic and circumlocutory. According to Hirsz Abramowicz, Lithuanian Jews used a special code when talking about their non-Jewish neighbors: "They might be called *sherets* and *shrotse* (reptiles); the word *shvester* (sister) became *shvesterlo*; *foter* (father) *foterlo*; *muter* (mother), *muterlo*, and so on. *Khasene* (wedding) became *khaserlo*; *geshtorbn* (died) became *gefaln* (fell), *geboyrn* (born) became *geflamt* (flamed)." Similarly, according to M. S. Altman, when Jews of his shtetl referred to Gentiles' eating, drinking, or sleeping, they used words normally reserved for animals. The Yiddish for the town of Bila Tserkva ("White Church") was *Shvartse tume* ("Black filth," the word *tume* generally denoting a non-Jewish place of worship).[6]

The reason for this was ritual avoidance (as well as, possibly, secrecy): words relating to the goyim and their religion were as unclean and potentially dangerous as the goyim themselves. (The same devices, including cryptic calques for place-names, are commonly used in "Para-Romani" languages.)[7] M. S. Altman's grandmother "never called Christ anything other than *mamser*, or 'the illegitimate one.' Once, when there was a Christian procession in the streets of Ulla [Belorussia], with people carrying crosses and

icons, Grandma hurriedly covered me with her shawl, saying: 'May your clear eyes never see this filth.' "[8]

There were, of course, other reasons to avoid Christian processions. In Joachim Schoenfeld's native shtetl of Sniatyn, in eastern Galicia,

> When a priest was on his way to administer extreme unction to a dying Christian soul, the Jews, as soon as they heard the ringing of the bell by the deacon accompanying the priest, left the streets quickly and locked the doors of their homes and stores lest the Christians, who knelt in the streets in front of the passing priest, would accuse them of not having behaved with dignity at such a moment by remaining standing when everybody else was kneeling. This would have been enough to set anti-Jewish disturbances in motion. The same thing happened when a procession was marching through the streets bearing holy images and banners, for example, on the Corpus Christi holiday. No Jew would dare remain on the streets because he might be accused of host desecration.[9]

Traditional Jews warded off the impurity of strangers by using supernatural protection (as well as their much praised "Jewish heads"); their Apollonian neighbors tended to resort to physical aggression. Violence was an essential part of the relationship—rarely lethal but always there as a possibility, a memory, an essential part of peasant manhood and Jewish victimhood. In Sniatyn, "A Jewish boy would never venture into the streets inhabited by Christians, even when accompanied by an adult. Christian boys would make fun of them, call them names, throw stones at them, and set their dogs upon them. Also, for simple fun, Christian boys would drive pigs into the Jewish streets and throw manure through the open windows of Jewish homes."[10]

In Uzliany, not far from Minsk, "the most innocent threats Jews faced were boys' pranks: during Easter they would crack painted eggs against the teeth of the Jewish boys and girls who happened to be outside." Religious holidays, market days, weddings, departure of army recruits were all legitimate occasions for drinking, fighting, and, if Jews were close by, assaults on the Jews and their

property. The superiority of the "big soul" over the "little Jew" was most effectively expressed through violence—just as the superiority of the "Jewish head" over "stupid Ivan" was best achieved and demonstrated through negotiation and competition. Like all Mercurians and Apollonians, the Pale of Settlement Jews and their peasant neighbors needed each other, lived close to each other, feared and despised each other, and never stopped claiming their own preeminence: the Jews by beating the peasants in the battle of wits and boasting about it among themselves, the peasants by beating the Jews for being Jews and bragging about it to the "whole world." But mostly—for as long as the traditional division of labor persisted and they remained specialized Mercurians and Apollonians—the Jews and their neighbors continued to live as "two solitudes." Ivan rarely thought about Itzik Meyer unless he was drunk and feeling sorry for himself. For Itzik Meyer, thinking about Ivan was work, an inevitable part of the profane portion of the week.[11]

There was no meaningful way of measuring legal discrimination in the Russian Empire because there was no common measure that applied to all the tsar's subjects. Everyone, except for the tsar himself, belonged to a group that was, one way or another, discriminated against. There were no interchangeable citizens, no indiscriminate laws, no legal rights, and few temporary regulations that did not become permanent. There were, instead, several social estates with unique privileges, duties, and local variations; numerous religions (including Islam, Lamaism, and a wide assortment of "animisms") under different sets of regulations; countless territorial units (from Finland to Turkestan) administered in diverse ways; and variously described nationalities ("steppe nomads," "wandering aliens," Poles) with special restrictions and exemptions. Everyone being unequal, some groups were—in some sense and in some places—much more unequal than others, but in the absence of a single legal gauge, discriminating among them in any general sense is usually more painstaking than rewarding. Jews had more disabilities than most Orthodox Christian members of their estates (merchants and townsmen, in the vast majority of cases), but a comparison of their status with that of Tatar traders, Kirgiz pastoralists, "priestless" sectarians, or indeed the empire's Russian peasant majority (even after the abolition of serfdom) is possible only with regard to specific privileges and disabilities. The "prisonhouse of nations" was as large as the tsar's domain.

Among the tsar's subjects were several groups that were predominantly or exclusively Mercurian: from various Gypsy communities (extremely visible in "bohemian" entertainment, as well as the traditional smithing and scavenging trades); to small and narrowly specialized literate Mercurians (Nestorians/Assyrians, Karaites, Bukharans); to Russia's very own Puritans, the Old Believers (prominent among the wealthiest industrialists and bankers); to such giants of Levantine commerce as the Greeks (active in the Black Sea trade, especially in wheat export) and the Armenians (who dominated the economy of the Caucasus and parts of southern Russia).

But of course the most prominent Mercurians of the Russian Empire were the Germans, who, following Peter the Great's reforms, had come to occupy central roles in the imperial bureaucracy, economic life, and the professions (very much like Phanariot Greeks and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire). Relying on ethnic and religious autonomy, high literacy rates, strong communal institutions, a sense of cultural superiority, international familial networks, and a variety of consistently cultivated technical and linguistic skills, the Germans had become the face (the real flesh-and-blood kind) of Russia's never-ending Westernization. Not only was the university matriculation rate among Russia's Baltic Germans the highest in Europe (about 300 per 100,000 total population in the 1830s at Dorpat University alone); Germans composed approximately 38 percent of the graduates of Russia's most exclusive educational institution, the Tsarskoe Selo Lycée, and a comparable proportion of the graduates from the Imperial School of Jurisprudence. From the late eighteenth to the twentieth century, Germans constituted from 18 to more than 33 percent of the top tsarist officials, especially at the royal court, in the officer corps, diplomatic service, police, and provincial administration (including many

newly colonized areas). According to John A. Armstrong, all through the nineteenth century the Russian Germans "carried about half the burden of imperial foreign relations. Equally indicative is the fact that even in 1915 (during the World War I anti-Germanism), 16 of the 53 top officials in the Minindel [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] had German names." As one of them wrote in 1870, "we watched the success of Russia's European policy attentively, for nearly all our emissaries in all the principal countries were diplomats whom we knew on a first-name basis." In 1869 in St. Petersburg, 20 percent of all the officials in the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior were listed as Germans. In the 1880s, the Russian Germans (1.4 percent of the population) made up 62 percent of the high officials in the Ministry of Posts and Commerce and 46 percent in the War Ministry. And when they were not elite members themselves, they served the native landowning elite as tutors, housekeepers, and accountants. The German estate manager was the central Russian version of the Pale of Settlement's Jewish leaseholder.[12]

Not all praetorian guards—or "imperial Mamelukes," as one Slavophile called the Russian Germans—are Mercurians (as opposed to foreign mercenaries), and of course not all Mercurians serve as Mamelukes (even though most are qualified because the main eligibility requirement is demonstrable strangeness and internal coherence). The German barons in the Baltic provinces were not Mercurians, and neither were the German merchants in the German city of Riga or the many German farmers imported into the Russian interior. There is no doubt, however, that "the Germans" most urban Russians knew were quintessential Mercurian middlemen and service providers: artisans, entrepreneurs, and professionals. In 1869, 21 percent of all St. Petersburg Germans were involved in metalwork; 14 percent were watchmakers, jewelers, and other skilled craftsmen; and another 10–11 percent were bakers, tailors, and shoemakers. In the same year, Germans (who made up about 6.8 percent of the city's population) accounted for 37 percent of St. Petersburg's watchmakers, 25 percent of bakers, 24 percent of the owners of textile mills, 23 percent of the owners of metal shops and factories, 37.8 percent of industrial managers, 30.8 percent of engineers, 34.3 percent of doctors, 24.5 percent of schoolteachers, and 29 percent of tutors. German women made up 20.3 percent of "midlevel" medical personnel (doctor's assistants, pharmacists, nurses), 26.5 percent of schoolteachers, 23.8 percent of matrons and governesses, and 38.7 percent of music teachers. In 1905, German subjects of the Russian tsar accounted for 15.4 percent of corporate managers in Moscow, 16.1 percent in Warsaw, 21.9 percent in Odessa, 47.1 percent in Lodz, and 61.9 percent in Riga. In 1900, in the empire as a whole, the Russian Germans (1.4 percent of the population) made up 20.1 percent of all corporate founders and 19.3 percent of corporate managers (by far the greatest rate of overrepresentation among all ethnic groups). Many of Russia's most important academic institutions (including the Academy of Sciences) and professional associations (from doctors to geographers) were originally staffed by Germans and functioned primarily in German until about the middle of the nineteenth century and in some cases much later.[13]

Employed as Mercurians, they were, predictably enough, represented as such. Whereas much of Russian folklore recalled the battles against various steppe nomads (usually known as "Tatars"), the most important strangers of nineteenth-century high culture were, by a large margin, German: not those residing in Germany and producing books, goods, and songs to be imitated and surpassed, but the internal foreigners who served Russia and the Russians as teachers, tailors, doctors, scholars, governors, and coffin makers. And so they were, mutatis mutandis, head to the Russian heart, mind to the Russian soul, consciousness to Russian spontaneity. They stood for calculation, efficiency, and discipline; cleanliness, fastidiousness, and sobriety; pushiness, tactlessness, and energy; sentimentality, love of family, and unmanliness (or absurdly exaggerated manliness). They were the plenipotentiary ambassadors from the Modern Age, the *homines rationalistici artificiales* to be dreaded, admired, or ridiculed as the occasion demanded. In two of the most productive juxtapositions of Russian high culture, Tolstoy's somnolent Kutuzov restores true peace by ignoring the deadly expertise of his German war counselors, while Goncharov's bedridden Oblomov preserves a false peace by surrendering his life's love (and ultimately

life itself) to the cheerfully industrious Stolz. Kutuzov and Oblomov are one and the same person, of course—as are Stolz and the German generals. Neither set is complete, indeed conceivable, without its mirror image. The modern Russian state and the Russian national mythology of the nineteenth century were built around this opposition and forever discussed in its terms. Perhaps paradoxically in light of what would happen in the twentieth century, Germans were, occupationally and conceptually, the Jews of ethnic Russia (as well as much of Eastern Europe). Or rather, the Russian Germans were to Russia what the German Jews were to Germany—only much more so. So fundamental were the German Mercurians to Russia's view of itself that both their existence and their complete and abrupt disappearance have been routinely taken for granted. The absence of Mercurians seems as natural and permanent as their presence seems artificial and temporary.[14]

Until the 1880s, actual Jews were a marginal presence in the Russian state, thought, and street. The official policy was essentially the same as that toward other "aliens," oscillating as it did between legal separation and various forms of "fusion." The most radical means to those ends—punitive raids and cross-border deportations (such as the ones used against insurgents in Turkestan and the Caucasus) or forced conversions and linguistic Russification (such as those used against Aleuts and Poles, among others) were not applied to the Jews. Otherwise, the administrative repertoire was largely familiar: from separation by means of residential segregation, economic specialization, religious and judicial autonomy, administrative self-government, and institutional quotas, to incorporation by means of army conscription, religious conversion, government-run education, agricultural settlement, and the adoption of "European dress and customs." As was the case with Russia's many nomads, who were subject to most of the same policies, conscription was the most resented of all imperial obligations (although the Jewish complaints seemed to suggest a different—and characteristically Mercurian—reason by arguing that the draft was

incompatible with their economic role and traditional way of life). The official justifications for these policies were no less familiar: benefit to the treasury, protection of Orthodox Russians, and protection from Orthodox Russians in the case of separation; and benefit to the treasury, legal and administrative consistency, and the civilizing mission, in the case of incorporation. Jews were one of Russia's many "alien" groups: more "cunning" than most, perhaps, but not as "rebellious" as the Chechens, as "backward" as the Samoed, as "fanatical" as the Sart, or as ubiquitous or relentlessly *rationalistici artificiales* as the Germans. Anti-Semitism was common, but probably no more common than anti-Islamism, antinomadism, and anti-Germanism, which may have been more pervasive for being unself-conscious and unapologetic.

And yet there is clearly good reason to argue that the Jews were, in some sense, first among nonequals. They were by far the largest community among those that had no claim to a national home in the Russian Empire; by far the most urbanized of all Russian nationalities (49 percent urban in 1897, as compared to 23 percent for Germans and Armenians); and by far the fastest growing of all national or religious groups anywhere in Europe (having grown fivefold over the course of the nineteenth century). Most important, they were affected by Russia's late-nineteenth-century modernization in ways that were more direct, profound, and fundamental than most other Russian communities, because their very existence as a specialized caste was at stake. The emancipation of the serfs, the demise of the manorial economy, and the expansion of the economic role of the state rendered the role of the traditional Mercurian mediator between the countryside and the town economically irrelevant, legally precarious, and increasingly dangerous. The state took over tax collection, liquor sales, and some parts of foreign trade; the landlord had less land to lease or turned into a favored competitor; the peasant had more produce to sell and turned into a favored competitor (by doing much of the selling himself); the Christian industrialist turned into an even more favored—and more competent—competitor; the train ruined the peddler and the wagon driver; the bank bankrupted the moneylender; and all of these things taken together forced more and more Jews into arti-

sanal work (near the bottom of the Jewish social prestige hierarchy), and more and more Jewish artisans into cottage-industry production or wage labor (in craft shops and increasingly factories). And the more Jews migrated to new urban areas, the more frequent and massive was violence against them.[15]

The imperial state, which presided over Russia's industrialization and thus the demise of the traditional Jewish economy as well as the killing and robbing of individual Jews, did its best to prevent the former middlemen from finding new opportunities. Jews were barred from government employment (including most railway jobs), all but fifteen of Russia's provinces, more than one-half of the Pale's rural districts, and a variety of occupations and institutions. Their access to education was limited by quotas, and their membership in professional organizations was subject to arbitrary regulation. The ostensible—and, apparently, true—reason for these policies was to protect Christian merchants, students, and professionals from Jewish competition, and Christian peasants from Jewish "exploitation." The state that had used the Jews to extract revenue from the peasants was trying to protect the peasants it still depended on from the Jews it no longer needed. The more it protected the peasants, the graver the "Jewish problem" became. The imperial government did not instigate Jewish pogroms; it did, however, help bring them about by concentrating the Jewish population in selected places and occupations and by insisting on separation even as it fostered industrial growth. Fin de siècle Hungary and Germany (and later most of Russia's western neighbors) contributed to the growth of political anti-Semitism by combining vigorous ethnic nationalism with a cautiously liberal stance toward Jewish social and economic mobility; late imperial Russia achieved a comparable result by combining a cautious ethnic nationalism with a vigorous policy of multiplying Jewish disabilities.[16]

The most dramatic and easily observable Jewish response to this double squeeze was emigration. Between 1897 and 1915, about 1,288,000 Jews left the Russian Empire, most of them (more than 80 percent) to the United States. More than 70 percent of all Jewish immigrants to the United States came from the Russian Empire; almost one-half of all immigrants from the Russian Empire to the

United States were Jews (with Poles a distant second with 27 percent, and Finns third with 8.5 percent). The Russian Jews had the highest gross emigration rate (proportion of emigrants to the overall home population) of all immigrants to the United States; during the peak period of 1900–1914, almost 2 percent of all Jewish residents of the Pale of Settlement were leaving every year. The overwhelming majority of them never came back: the Russian Jewish rate of return was the lowest of all immigrant groups in the United States. They left with family members and joined other family members when they arrived. Between 1908 and 1914, according to official statistics, "62% of the Jewish immigrants to the United States had their passage paid by a relative and 94% were on their way to join a relative." As Andrew Godley put it, "Because the costs of moving and settling were reduced by the existence of the informal networks of kith and kin, chain migrants generally arrived with less in their pockets. The Jews arrived with least because of all the immigrants they could count most on a welcome reception. The density of social relations among the East European Jews subsidized both passage and settlement. Such extensive chain migration allowed even the poorest to leave."[17]

Not all—not even most—migrants went abroad. Throughout the Pale of Settlement, Jews were moving from rural areas into small towns, and from small towns to big cities. Between 1897 and 1910, the Jewish urban population grew by almost 1 million, or 38.5 percent (from 2,559,544 to 3,545,418). The number of Jewish communities with more than 5,000 people increased from 130 in 1897 to 180 in 1910, and those over 10,000, from 43 to 76. In 1897, Jews made up 52 percent of the entire urban population of Belorussia-Lithuania (followed by Russians at 18.2 percent), while in the fast-growing New Russian provinces of Kherson and Ekaterinoslav, 85 to 90 percent of all Jews lived in cities. Between 1869 and 1910, the officially registered Jewish population of the imperial capital of St. Petersburg grew from 6,700 to 35,100. The actual number may have been considerably higher.[18]

But the extraordinary thing about the social and economic transformation of the Russian Jews was not the rate of migration, which was also high in Austria, Hungary, and Germany, or even "proletar-

ianization," which was also taking place in New York. The extraordinary thing about the social and economic transformation of the Russian Jews was how ordinary it was by Western standards. Pogroms, quotas, and deportations notwithstanding, the Russian Jews were generally as keen on, and as successful at, becoming urban and modern as their German, Hungarian, British, or American counterparts—which is to say, much keener and much more successful at being capitalists, professionals, myth keepers, and revolutionary intellectuals than most people around them.

The Jews had dominated the commercial life of the Pale for most of the nineteenth century. Jewish banks based in Warsaw, Vilna, and Odessa had been among the first commercial lending institutions in the Russian Empire (in the 1850s, Berdichev had eight active and well-connected banking houses). In 1851, Jews had accounted for 70 percent of all merchants in Kurland, 75 percent in Kovno, 76 percent in Mogilev, 81 percent in Chernigov, 86 percent in Kiev, 87 percent in Minsk, and 96 percent each in Volynia, Grodno, and Podolia. Their representation in the wealthiest commercial elite was particularly strong: in Minsk and Chernigov provinces and in Podolia, all "first guild" merchants without exception (55, 59, and 7, respectively) were Jews. Most were involved in tax-farming, moneylending, and trade (especially foreign trade, with a virtual monopoly on overland cross-border traffic), but the importance of industrial investment had been rising steadily throughout the century. Before the Great Reforms, most of the industry in western Russia had been based on the use of serf labor for the extraction and processing of raw materials found on noble estates. Originally, Jews had been involved as bankers, leaseholders, administrators, and retailers, but already in 1828–32, 93.3 percent of the nonnoble industrial enterprises in Volynia (primarily wool and sugar mills) were owned by Jews. Their reliance on free labor made them more flexible with regard to location, more open to innovation, and ultimately much more efficient. In the sugar industry, Jewish entrepreneurs had pioneered a system of forward contracts, the use of extended warehouse networks, and the employment of traveling salesmen working on commission. By the late 1850s, all serf-based wool mills in the Pale of Settlement had gone out of

business. Meanwhile, Jewish entrepreneurs had been able to win lucrative government contracts by speeding up their operations, relying on international connections for credit, and organizing complex networks of trustworthy subcontractors.[19]

The Russian industrialization of the late nineteenth century opened up new opportunities for Jewish businessmen and benefited tremendously from their financial backing. Among Russia's greatest financiers were Evzel (Iossel) Gabrielovich Gintsburg, who had grown rich as a liquor-tax farmer during the Crimean War; Abram Isaakovich Zak, who had begun his career as Gintsburg's chief accountant; Anton Moiseevich Varshavsky, who had supplied the Russian army with food; and the Poliakov brothers, who had started out as small-time contractors and tax farmers in Orsha, Mogilev province.

Several Jewish financiers from Warsaw and Lodz formed the first Russian joint-stock banks; Evzel and Horace Gintsburg founded the St. Petersburg Discount and Loan Bank, the Kiev Commercial Bank, and the Odessa Discount Bank; Iakov Solomonovich Poliakov launched the Don Land Bank, the Petersburg-Azov Bank, and the influential Azov Don Commercial Bank; and his brother Lazar was the main shareholder of the Moscow International Merchant Bank, the South Russia Industrial Bank, the Orel Commercial Bank, and the Moscow and Yaroslavl-Kostroma Land Banks. The father and son Soloveichiks' Siberian Commercial Bank was one of Russia's most important and innovative financial institutions. Other prominent Russian financiers included the Rafalovichs, the Vavelbergs, and the Fridlands. In 1915–16, when the imperial capital was still formally closed to all but specially licensed Jews, at least 7 of the 17 members of the St. Petersburg Stock Exchange Council and 28 of the 70 joint-stock bank managers were Jews or Jewish converts to Christianity. When the merchant of the first guild Grigorii (Gersha Zelik) Davidovich Lesin arrived in St. Petersburg from Zhitomir in October 1907 to open a banking house, it took a special secret police investigation by two different agencies to persuade the municipal authorities, who had never heard of him, to issue the licence. By 1914, Lesin's bank had become one of the most important in Russia.[20]

Nor was finance the only sphere of Jewish business expertise. According to the premier economic historian of Russian Jewry (and first cousin to Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin), Arcadius Kahan, "There was hardly an area of entrepreneurial activity from which Jewish entrepreneurs were successfully excluded. Apart from the manufacturing industries in the Pale of Settlement, one could have encountered them at the oil wells of Baku, in the gold mines of Siberia, on the fisheries of the Volga or Amur, in the shipping lines on the Dnepr, in the forests of Briansk, on railroad construction sites anywhere in European or Asiatic Russia, on cotton plantations in Central Asia, and so forth."[21]

The earliest, safest, most profitable, and ultimately the most productive investment was directed toward railroad construction. Benefiting from the example and direct financial backing of the Rothschilds, Pereires, Bleichröders, and Gomperzes (as well as the budgetary munificence of the imperial government, especially the War Ministry), some Russian-based Jewish bankers built large fortunes while connecting disparate Russian markets to each other and to the outside world. Consortia of Jewish financiers and contractors built the Warsaw-Vienna, Moscow-Smolensk, Kiev-Brest, and Moscow-Brest lines (among many others), while the "railroad king" Samuil Poliakov founded, constructed, and eventually owned a number of private railroads, including the Kursk-Kharkov-Rostov and the Kozlov-Voronezh-Rostov lines. According to H. Sachar, "it was the initiative of Jewish contractors that accounted for the construction of fully three-fourths of the Russian railroad system."[22]

Other important areas of massive Jewish investment included gold mining, commercial fishing, river transportation, and oil production. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Gintsburgs controlled a large portion of the Siberian gold industry, including the Innokentiev mines in Yakutia, Berezovka mines in the Urals, the South Altai and Upper Amur concerns, and largest of them all, the Lena goldfields (which they abandoned in 1912 after a scandal following the massacre of striking miners). The Gessen brothers pioneered new insurance schemes to expand their shipping business connecting the Baltic and the Caspian seas. The Margolins reorganized the transportation system on the Dnieper. And in the Caucasus oil industry, Jewish entrepreneurs were central participants in the Mazut Company and the Batum Oil Association. The Rothschilds, who backed both enterprises, went on to absorb them into their Shell Corporation.[23]

Many of these people competed fiercely with each other, dealt extensively with non-Jewish businessmen and officials, and had varying attitudes toward Judaism and the Russian state, but they obviously constituted a business community that both insiders and outsiders recognized as such, more or less the way Swann would. There was no Jewish master plan, of course, but there was, in the Russian Empire and beyond, a network of people with similar backgrounds and similar challenges who could, under certain circumstances, count on mutual acknowledgment and cooperation. Like all Mercurians, the Jews owed their economic success to strangeness, specialized training, and the kind of intragroup trust that assured the relative reliability of business partners, loan clients, and subcontractors. And like all Mercurians, they tended to think of themselves as a chosen tribe consisting of chosen clans—and to act accordingly. Most Jewish businesses (like the Armenian and Old Believer ones, among others) were family businesses; the larger the business, the larger the family. The Poliakovs were related to each other as well as to the Varshavskys and the Hirsches. The Gintsburgs were related to the Hirsches, Warburgs, Rothschilds, Fulds, the Budapest Herzfelds, the Odessa Ashkenazis, and the Kiev sugar king Lazar Izrailevich Brodsky ("Brodsky himself," as Sholem Aleichem's Tevye used to call him).[24]

Indeed, even Tevye, as a member of the tribe, might be able to partake of Brodsky's wealth and fame—the way he might benefit from the largesse of his Yehupetz customers or the advice of his Russian-educated writer friend (Sholem Aleichem's narrator). To quote Kahan again, Russia's industrialization

> actually widened the areas of choice for Jewish entrepreneurs. If few of them actually built railroads, many established subcontracting enterprises that supplied the railroad industry. If very few could enter oil production, many could establish themselves in oil processing,

transportation, and marketing. If the basic chemicals required large capital outlays, smaller-size operations and more specialized enterprises using basic chemicals were open for Jewish entrepreneurship. Thus a large area for Jewish entrepreneurial activity was made available and was stimulated by Russian industrialization.[25]

For most Jews, especially the artisans, the collapse of the Jewish economic niche in Eastern Europe meant emigration and proletarianization. For an important minority—a much larger one than among most other groups—it stood for new social and economic opportunities. In 1887 in Odessa, Jews owned 35 percent of factories, which accounted for 57 percent of all factory output; in 1900, half of the city's guild merchants were Jews; and in 1910, 90 percent of all grain exports were handled by Jewish firms (compared to 70 percent in the 1880s). Most Odessa banks were run by Jews, as was much of Russia's timber export industry. On the eve of World War I, Jewish entrepreneurs owned about one-third of all Ukrainian sugar mills (which accounted for 52 percent of all refined sugar), and constituted 42.7 percent of the corporate board members and 36.5 percent of board chairmen. In all the sugar mills in Ukraine, 28 percent of chemists, 26 percent of beet plantation overseers, and 23.5 percent of bookkeepers were Jews. In the city of Kiev, 36.8 percent of all corporate managers were Jews (followed by Russians at 28.9 percent). And in 1881 in St. Petersburg (outside the Pale), Jews made up about 2 percent of the total population and 43 percent of all brokers, 41 percent of all pawnbrokers, 16 percent of all brothel owners, and 12 percent of all trading house employees. Between 1869 and 1890, the proportion of business owners among St. Petersburg Jews grew from 17 percent to 37 percent.[26]

The "Jewish economy" was remarkable for its high rate of innovation, standardization, specialization, and product differentiation. Jewish enterprises tended to find more uses for by-products, produce a greater assortment of goods, and reach wider markets at lower prices than their competitors. Building on previous experience and superior training, utilizing preexisting "ethnic" connections and cheap family labor, accustomed to operating on low profit

margins, and spurred on by (sometimes negotiable) legal restrictions, they were—as elsewhere—better at being "Jewish" than most of their new-minted and still somewhat reluctant competitors. In purely economic terms, their most effective strategy was "vertical integration," whereby Jewish firms "fed" each other within a particular line, sometimes covering the entire spectrum from the manufacturer to the consumer. Jewish craftsmen produced for Jewish industrialists, who sold to Jewish purchasing agents, who worked for Jewish wholesalers, who distributed to Jewish retail outlets, who employed Jewish traveling salesmen (the latter practice was introduced in the sugar industry by "Brodsky himself"). In many cases, including such Jewish specialties as the marketing of sugar, timber, grain, and fish, the integrated cycle did not include production and often ended with export, but the principle was the same.[27]

Vertical integration is a very common Mercurian practice, used to great effect by many "middleman minorities" in a variety of locations. In late imperial Russia, where state-run industrialization did battle with a largely unreformed rural economy, experienced Mercurians were in a particularly strong position to benefit from the coming of capitalism. The official view was doubtless correct even though it was official: in a world of universal mobility, urbanity, and marginality, most Russian peasants and their descendants (who embodied the "Orthodoxy" and "nationality" parts of the autocracy's doctrine as well as the "nation" of intelligentsia nationalism) were at an obvious disadvantage compared to all literate service nomads and especially the Jews, who were by far the most numerous, cohesive, exclusive, and urban of Russia's Mercurians. By the outbreak of the Great War, the tsar's Jewish subjects were well on their way to replacing the Germans as Russia's model moderns (the way they had done in much of East-Central Europe). If not for the relentless official restrictions (and the fierce competitiveness and cultural prominence of the Old Believer dissenters), early twentieth-century Russia would probably have resembled Hungary, where the business elite was almost entirely Jewish.

The same was true of the other pillar of the modern state, the professionals. Between 1853 and 1886, the number of all *gymnasium* students in the Russian Empire grew sixfold. During the same

period, the number of Jewish *gymnasium* students increased by a factor of almost 50 (from 159, or 1.3 percent of the total, to 7,562, or 10.9 percent). By the late 1870s, they made up 19 percent of the total *gymnasium* population in the Pale of Settlement, and about one-third in the Odessa school district. As the Odessa writer Perets Smolenskin wrote in the early 1870s, "All the schools are filled with Jewish students from end to end, and, to be honest, the Jews are always at the head of the class." When the first classical *gymnasium* opened in 1879 in Nikolaev (also in New Russia), 105 Jews and 38 Christians enrolled.[28] And when the narrator of Babel's "The Story of My Dovecot" passed his entrance exam to that *gymnasium* in 1905, old "Monsieur Lieberman," his Torah teacher,

> gave a toast in my honor in the Hebrew language. The old man congratulated my parents in this toast and said that I had vanquished all my enemies at the exam, had vanquished the Russian boys with fat cheeks and the sons of our coarse men of wealth. Thus in ancient times had David, King of Judah, vanquished Goliath, and just as I had triumphed over Goliath, so would our people by the strength of their intellect vanquish the enemies who had encircled us and were thirsting for our blood. Having said this, Monsieur Lieberman began to weep and, while weeping, took another sip of wine and shouted "Vivat!"[29]

The higher one moved within the expanding Russian education system, the higher the proportion of Jews and the more spectacular their triumph over the imperial Goliath and the Russian boys with fat cheeks. The share of Jewish students in the *gymnasia* was greater than in the *Realschulen*, and their share in the universities was higher than in the *gymnasia* (partly because many Jewish children began their education in heders, yeshivas, or at home—with or without the help of a Monsieur Lieberman). Between 1840 and 1886, the number of university students in Russia increased sixfold (from 2,594 to 12,793). The number of Jews among them grew over a hundred times: from 15 (0.5 percent of the total) to 1,856 (14.5 percent). At Odessa University, every third student in 1886 was Jewish. Jewish women represented 16 percent of the students

at the Kiev Institute for Women and at Moscow's Liubianskie Courses, 17 percent at the prestigious Bestuzhev Institute, and 34 percent at the Women's Medical Courses in St. Petersburg.[30]

As elsewhere, the most popular careers were those in law and medicine. In 1886, more than 40 percent of the law and medical students at the universities of Kharkov and Odessa were Jewish. In the empire as a whole, in 1889 Jews accounted for 14 percent of all certified lawyers and 43 percent of all apprentice lawyers (the next generation of professionals). According to Benjamin Nathans, "during the preceding five years, 22% of those admitted to the bar and an astounding 89% of those who became apprentice lawyers were Jews." Jews constituted 49 percent of all lawyers in the city of Odessa (1886), and 68 percent of all apprentice lawyers in the Odessa judicial circuit (1890). In the imperial capital, the proportion of Jewish lawyers was variously estimated at 22 to 42 percent, and of apprentice lawyers, at 43 to 55 percent. At the very top, 6 out of 12 senior lawyers chosen in the mid-1880s to lead seminars for apprentice lawyers in St. Petersburg were Jews. The wave of quotas in the 1880s succeeded in slowing down the Jewish advance in the professions but failed to halt it, partly because a growing number of Jews went to German and Swiss universities, and because some of them practiced illegally. Between 1881 and 1913, the share of Jewish doctors and dentists in St. Petersburg grew from 11 and 9 percent to 17 and 52 percent.[31]

Equally impressive and, in the European context, familiar, was the entry of Jews into Russian high culture. The commercialization of the entertainment market and the creation of national cultural institutions transformed a traditional Mercurian specialty into an elite profession and a powerful tool of modern mythmaking. The Rubinstein brothers founded the Russian Music Society and both the Moscow and St. Petersburg conservatories; the Gnesin sisters created the first Russian music school for children, and Odessa's violin teacher, P. S. Stoliarsky, or "Zagursky," as Babel called him, "supplied prodigies for the concert stages of the world. From Odessa came Mischa Elman, Zimbalist, and Gabrilowich. Jascha Heifetz also began among us." As did David Oistrakh, Elizaveta

Gilels, Boris Goldstein, and Mikhail Fikhtengolts, after Babel's departure from the city.[32] "Zagursky ran a factory of child prodigies, a factory of Jewish dwarves in lace collars and patent-leather shoes. He sought them out in the slums of the Moldavanka and in the evil-smelling courtyards of the Old Market. Zagursky would provide early instruction, after which children would be sent to Professor Auer's in St. Petersburg. In the souls of these tiny runts with swollen blue heads there dwelt a powerful harmony. They became celebrated virtuosi."[33]

Even more remarkable was the success of some scions of the Pale in the world of visual arts (for which there was no Jewish tradition). Because Jewish bankers became prominent as art patrons, Jewish faces became prominent on Russian portraits (including some of the most canonical ones by Valentin Serov, himself the son of a Jewish mother). But much more prominent in every way were Jewish artists, or rather Russian artists of Jewish origin. Leonid Pasternak from Odessa ranked with Serov as one of Russia's most admired portraitists; Léon Bakst (Lev Rozenberg, from Grodno) was the premier Russian stage designer; Mark Antokolsky from Vilna was acclaimed as the greatest Russian sculptor of the nineteenth century; and Isaak Levitan from Kibartai in Lithuania became the most beloved of all Russian landscape painters (and still is). The Kiev and Vitebsk prerevolutionary art schools produced at least as many celebrated artists as Odessa did musicians (Marc Chagall, Iosif Chaikov, Ilya Chashnik, El Lissitzky, Abraham Manievich, Solomon Nikritin, Isaak Rabinovich, Issachar Rybak, Nisson Shifrin, Alexander Tyshler, Solomon Yudovin). Meanwhile, Odessa produced almost as many artists (including Boris Anisfeld, Isaak Brodsky, Osip Braz, and Savely Sorin, in addition to Pasternak) as it did musicians (or poets). And this not counting Natan Altman from Vinnitsa, Chaim Soutine from Minsk, or David Shterenberg from Zhitomir. All of these artists and musicians had to deal with anti-Jewish laws and sentiments, and some of them left the Russian Empire for good. But probably most of them would have agreed with the critic Abram Efros, who said, referring to Shterenberg, that the best thing to do was "to be born in Zhitomir, study in Paris, and become an artist in Moscow." The Russian fin de siècle—

literary as well as artistic—is as difficult to imagine without the refugees from the "ghetto" as are its German, Polish, or Hungarian counterparts.[34]

Before one could become a Russian artist, however, one had to become Russian. As elsewhere in Europe, the Jewish success in Russian business, the professions, and the arts (often in that order within one family) was accompanied by a mastery of the national high culture and an eager conversion to the Pushkin faith. In St. Petersburg, the proportion of Jews who spoke Russian as their native language increased from 2 percent in 1869 to 13 percent in 1881, to 29 percent in 1890, to 37 percent in 1900, to 42 percent in 1910 (during the same period, the share of Estonian-speaking Estonians grew from 75 to 86 percent, and Polish-speaking Poles, from 78 to 94 percent). Jewish youths learned Russian by themselves, in schools, from tutors hired by their parents, from mentors they met in youth circles, and, in wealthy families, from their Russian nannies, who would, in later recollections, become copies of Pushkin's Arina Rodionovna. Lev Deich's father, for example, was a military contractor who made his fortune during the Crimean War, performed Jewish rituals "for business purposes," had learned Russian by himself, spoke it "without an accent, and in appearance—a broad flat beard, a suit, etc.—looked like a perfectly cultured person, a Great-Russian or even a European entrepreneur." His son, the famous revolutionary, had a Polish governess, a "tutor in general subjects," and, as a small child, a Russian nanny "with pleasant features" whom "we children loved very much, both for her kind, friendly nature and especially for the wonderful folktales she told us." Having graduated from a Russian *gymnasium* in Kiev, he became a populist (a socialist millenarian by way of Russian nationalism) who believed that "as soon as Jews began to speak Russian, they would, just as we had, become 'people in general,' 'cosmopolites.' " Many of them did.[35]

Meanwhile, the students at the Vilna and Zhitomir rabbinical seminaries (after 1873, teacher training colleges) were being con-

verted to the religion of the Russian language even as they were being taught to be experts on things Jewish. Joshua Steinberg, the renowned Hebrew scholar who taught at Vilna to a mostly skeptical audience, had learned Russian, according to Hirsz Abramowicz, "from the Synodical translation of the Bible, and throughout his life he used its archaic sentence structure and distinctive biblical expressions when he spoke." He spoke it with "traces of a Jewish accent," but he spoke it (and apparently nothing else) with his family and in his classes, where students spent the bulk of their time translating the texts of Isaiah and Jeremiah into Russian and then back into Hebrew. The idea was to teach Hebrew, but the main result was to make Russian available to countless heder-educated youngsters, the majority of whom never enrolled in the seminary (while the majority of those who did never meant to become rabbis). In the words of Abramowicz, "many of these impoverished young autodidacts learned Russian from his Hebrew-Russian and Russian-Hebrew dictionaries and from his grammar of the Hebrew language, written in Russian, of which they often memorized entire pages."[36]

Young Jews were not just learning Russian the same way they were learning Hebrew: they were learning Russian in order to replace Hebrew, as well as Yiddish, for good. Like German, Polish, or Hungarian in other high-culture areas, Russian had become the Hebrew of the secular world. As Abram Mutnikovich, a Bund theorist, put it: "Russia, the wonderful country. . . . Russia, which gave mankind such a poet of genius as Pushkin. The land of Tolstoy. . . ." Jabotinsky did not approve of the confusion of "Russian culture" with "the Russian world" (including its "dreariness and philistinism"), but then Jabotinsky, unlike Mutnikovich, spoke Russian as a native language, and the particular confusion he was proposing (of Jewish biblical culture with the Jewish world) was different from the Russian kind only to the extent that it was not pret-a-porter and went more naturally with Swann's nose, or the Jewish "hump," as he called it. It was Abraham Cahan, the future New York journalist, who seemed to speak for most Jewish youngsters in the Pale when he described his most fateful experience growing up in Vilna in the 1870s: "My interest in Hebrew evaporated. My burning ambition became to learn Russian and thus to become an educated person." At about the same time, in the Białystok *Realschule*, the future "Dr. Esperanto" was writing a Russian tragedy in five acts.[37]

Russian was the language of true knowledge and of "the striving for freedom" (as the populist terrorist and Siberian ethnographer Vladmir Iokheleson put it). It was a language, as opposed to the "words composed of unknown noises"—"a language, and thus something rooted and self-assured." Osip Mandelstam's mother had been saved by Pushkin: she "loved to speak and rejoiced in the rootedness and the sound of Great-Russian speech, slightly impoverished by intelligentsia conventions. Was she not the first in her family to master the clear and pure Russian sounds?" His father, on the other hand, had barely emerged from "the Talmudic thicket" and thus "had no language at all: just a kind of tongue-tiedness and tonguelessness. It was a completely abstract, invented language; the ornate and convoluted speech of an autodidact, in which ordinary words are intertwined with the ancient philosophical terms from Herder, Leibniz, and Spinoza; the overwrought syntax of a Talmudist; the artificial sentence not always spoken to the end—whatever it was, it was not a language, either Russian or German." Learning how to speak proper Russian (or, for the previous generation, German) meant learning how to speak. Abraham Cahan, who was about the same age as Mandelstam's father, remembered the thrill of becoming articulate: "I felt the Russian language was becoming my own, that I was speaking it fluently. I loved it."[38]

A true conversion to a modern nationalism—and thus world citizenship—could be accomplished only through reading. Speaking was a key to reading; reading was a key to everything else. When F. A. Moreinis-Muratova, the future regicide raised in a very wealthy traditional household, read her first Russian book, she "felt like somebody who lived underground and suddenly saw a beam of bright light." All early Soviet memoirs (Moreinis-Muratova's was written in 1926) travel from darkness to light, and most describe revelation through reading. The Jewish ones (Soviet as well as non-Soviet and native as well as nonnative speakers of Russian) are remarkable for their explicit emphasis on language, on learning new words as a fundamental way of "striving for freedom." The Jewish

tradition of emancipation through reading had been extended to the emancipation from the Jewish tradition.[39]

In Babel's "Childhood. At Grandmother's," the little narrator did his studying under his grandmother's watchful eye.

> Grandmother would not interrupt me, God forbid. Her tension, her reverence for my work would make her face look foolish. Her eyes—round, yellow, transparent—would never leave me. Whenever I turned a page, they would slowly follow my hand. Anyone else would have found her relentlessly observant, unblinking gaze very hard to take, but I was used to it.
>
> Then Grandmother would listen to me recite my lessons. It must be said that she spoke Russian poorly, mangling words in her own peculiar way, mixing Russian with Polish and Yiddish ones. She was not literate in Russian, of course, and would hold the book upside down. But this did not prevent me from reciting the lesson to her from beginning to end. Grandmother would listen, understanding none of it, but the music of the words was sweet to her, she was in awe of learning, believed me, believed in me, and wanted me to become a "big man"—that was her name for a rich man.[40]

The boy in the story was reading Turgenev's "First Love." And because Turgenev's "First Love" was the boy's first love, Babel's "First Love" was a version of Turgenev's, except that the boy was even younger. The woman he loved was named Galina Apollonovna (daughter of Apollo), and she was happily married to a young officer who had just returned from the Russo-Japanese war.

> She could not take her eyes off her husband because she had not seen him for a year and a half, but I dreaded that look and kept turning away and trembling. In the two of them, I saw the wonderful and shameful life of all the people in the world. I wanted to fall into a magic sleep so that I could forget about this life that exceeded all my dreams. Galina Apollonovna used to walk around the room with her hair down, wearing red slippers and a Chinese robe. Beneath the lace of her low-cut gown one could see the hollow between the top parts of her white, heavy, swollen breasts. Her robe was embroidered with pink silk dragons, birds, and trees with gnarled trunks.[41]

Before he could partake of the "wonderful and shameful life of all the people in the world," however, he had to overcome his tonguelessness: the violent, throat-stopping hiccups that came upon him the day his grandfather was murdered, his father humiliated, and his doves smashed against his temple—the day he felt such "bitter, ardent, and hopeless" love for Galina Apollonovna.

That first victory—over the "tongue-tiedness and tonguelessness," Turgenev's "First Love," and the "Russian boys with fat cheeks"—always came in due course, usually at a *gymnasium* exam. In a kind of ecstatic Russian bar mitzvah, Jewish adolescents recited specially selected sacred texts to mark their initiation into the wonderful and shameful life of all the people in the world. Babel's narrator was examined by the teachers Karavaev and Piatnitsky. They asked him about Peter the Great.

> Everything I knew about Peter the Great I had memorized from Putsykovich's textbook and Pushkin's verses. I was reciting those verses in a violent sob, when suddenly human faces came rolling into my eyes and mixed themselves up like cards from a new deck. As they were shuffling themselves in the back of my eyes, I shouted out Pushkin's stanzas with all my might, trembling, straightening up, hurrying. I kept shouting them for a long time, and no one interrupted my demented muttering. Through a crimson blindness, through the sense of freedom that had taken possession of me, all I could see was Piatnitsky's bent-down, old face, with its silver-streaked beard. He did not interrupt me but merely said to Karavaev, who was rejoicing for my sake and for Pushkin's,
>
> "What a people," whispered the old man, "these little Jews of yours. There's a devil in them."[42]

Perhaps by coincidence, Samuil Marshak, the famous Soviet children's writer, drew the same question at his exam. He, too, chose to recite Pushkin's verses, possibly the same ones from "Poltava."

> I inhaled as deeply as I could and began not too loudly, saving my breath for the heat of battle. It seemed to me that I had never heard my own voice before.

In flares of dawn the east is burning
Along the ridges, down the dales
The cannon growl. With purple churning
The smoke of salvos skyward sails
And drapes the slanting sun in veils.

I had read these verses and recited them by heart over and over again at home, although no one had ever assigned them to me. But here, in this large room, they sounded clearer and more joyous than ever.

I was looking at the people seated at the table, and it seemed to me that, just as I did, they saw before them the smoke-covered battlefield, the flames from the salvos, and Peter on his steed.

A war-steed presently is brought;
High-bred, but docile to his weight,
As if it sensed the touch of fate,
The charger shudders; eyes athwart,
It struts amid the dust of battle,
Proud of the hero in its saddle.

No one interrupted me; no one asked me to stop. Triumphant, I recited the victorious lines:

He bids the lords beneath his scepters,
Both Swede and Russian, to his tent;
And gaily mingling prey and captors
Lifts high his cup in compliment
To the good health of his "preceptors."

I stopped. With Pushkin's powerful help, I had defeated my indifferent examiners.[43]

Admitted to the life of all the people in the world, they had a whole world to discover. And the world, as Galina Apollonovna's robe suggested, contained dragons, birds, gnarled trees, and countless other things that Apollonians called "nature." "What is it that you lack?" asked the copper-shouldered and bronze-legged Efim Nikitich Smolich of Babel's bewildered little boy, who wrote tragedies and played the violin but did not know how to swim.

"Your youth is not the problem, it will pass with the years . . . What you lack is a feeling for nature."

He pointed with his stick at a tree with a reddish trunk and a low crown.

"What kind of tree is that?"

I did not know.

"What's growing on that bush?"

I did not know that, either. We were walking through the little park next to Aleksandrovsky Avenue. The old man poked his stick at every tree; he clutched my shoulder every time a bird flew by and made me listen to the different calls.

"What kind of bird is that singing?"

I was unable to reply. The names of trees and birds, their division into species, the places birds fly to, where the sun rises, when the dew is heaviest—all these things were unknown to me.[44]

Babel was a city boy. Abraham Cahan's autobiographical narrator, who was born in a small shtetl in rural Lithuania, did not know the names for daisies or dandelions.

I knew three flowers but not by their names. There was the round, yellow, brushlike blossom that turned into a ball of fuzz that could be blown into the wind. Its stem had a bitter taste. There was the flower that had white petals around a yellow button center. And the flower that looks like a dark red knob. When I grew older I learned their Russian names and, in America, their English names. But in that early time we didn't even know their Yiddish names. We called all of them "tchatchkalech," playthings.[45]

This was not something Zagursky could fix. This called for Efim Nikitich Smolich, the Russian man who had a "feeling for nature" and could not stand the sight of splashing little boys being pulled to the bottom of the sea by "the hydrophobia of their ancestors—Spanish rabbis and Frankfurt money changers."

In the athletic breast of this man there dwelt compassion for Jewish boys. He presided over throngs of rickety runts. Nikitich would gather them in the bug-filled hovels of the Moldavanka, take them

to the sea, bury them in the sand, do exercises with them, dive with them, teach them songs and, roasting in the direct rays of the sun, tell them stories about fishermen and animals. Nikitich used to tell the grown-ups that he was a natural philosopher. The Jewish children would roll with laughter at his tales, squealing and snuggling up to him like puppies. . . . I came to love that man with the love that only a boy who suffers from hysteria and migraines can feel for an athlete.[46]

Most Pale of Settlement Jews who entered Russian life had their own mentors of things Apollonian, guides into neutral spaces, and discoverers of "divine sparks." Babel the narrator had Efim Nikitich Smolich; Babel the writer had Maxim Gorky (to whom "The Story of My Dovecot" is dedicated). Abraham Cahan had Vladmir Sokolov, "the model of what man would be like when the world would turn socialist" and the person who introduced him, "on the basis of equality," to "officers, students, several older persons and even a few ladies, most of them gentiles." Moreinis-Muratova had her parents' tenant, a naval officer who gave her Russian books and once took her to the theater to see an Ostrovsky play (which impressed her so much she "thought of nothing else for several months"). And the Yiddish poet Aron Kushnirov, along with so many others, had World War I.

> It was so hard, but now it's very easy,
> It's been so long, but I have not forgotten
> The lessons I have learned from you, my tough old rabbi:
> My sergeant major, Nikanor Ilyich!

Levitan had Chekhov; Bakst had Diaghilev; Leonid Pasternak had Tolstoy; and Antokolsky and Marshak, among many others, had Vladmir Stasov. Russian high culture was discovering the "powerful harmony" in the souls of Jewish "runts" even as they were discovering Russian high culture—as their first love. For Leonid Pasternak, Tolstoy embodied "the principle of love for one's neighbor"; for the sculptor Naum Aronson, the commission to make a bust of Tolstoy was tantamount to joining the elect. "I had great hopes and ambitions but would never have aspired to sculpt

the gods—for that is what Tolstoy was for me. Even to approach him seemed blasphemous."[47]

He did sculpt him, however, carving out his own place in eternity as he did so. Osip Braz painted the likeness of Chekhov that became the icon that every Russian grows up with. Marshak was to his *gymnasium* teachers what Peter the Great had been to his haughty Swedish "preceptors." And Isaak Levitan became the official interpreter of the Russian national landscape—and thus a true national divinity in his own right.

Tolstoy was prepared to do his part. When Stasov told him about the young Marshak's great promise (of "something good, pure, bright, and creative"), Tolstoy seemed doubtful: "Oh, these Wunderkinder!" As Stasov wrote to Marshak:

> I feel the same way; I, too, have been disappointed before. But this time I defended and shielded my new arrival, my new joy and consolation! I told him that, to my way of thinking, there was a real golden kernel here. And my LEO seemed to incline his powerful mane and his regal eyes in my direction. And then I told him: "Do this for me, for the sake of everything that is sacred, great, and precious; here, take a look at this little portrait, which I have just received, and let your gaze, by fixing on this young, vibrant little face, be a long-distance blessing for him!" And he did as I asked, and looked for a long time at the tender face of a child / young man who is only beginning to live.[48]

Not everyone could be anointed by a god, but there was no lack of would-be godfathers and priests, as young Jewish men and women continued to join the faith that most of them (including Abraham Cahan in New York) would profess for the rest of their lives. Babel's life, like everybody else's, began on Pushkin Street.

> I stood there alone, clutching my watch, and suddenly, with a clarity such as I had never experienced before, I saw the soaring columns of the Duma, the illuminated foliage on the boulevard, and Pushkin's bronze head touched by a dim reflection of the moon. For the first time in my life, I saw the world around me the way it really was: serene and inexpressibly beautiful.[49]

Raisa Orlova's mother, Susanna Averbukh, died in 1975, at the age of eighty-five. As she lay dying, she asked her daughter to read some Pushkin to her. "I read Pushkin. She started reciting along: line by line, stanza by stanza. She knew these poems from her childhood, from her father. . . . Perhaps she had read Pushkin to my father on their honeymoon?"[50]

Converting to the Pushkin faith meant leaving the parental home. If the Russian world stood for speech, knowledge, freedom, and light, then the Jewish world represented silence, ignorance, bondage, and darkness. In the 1870s and 1880s, the revolution of young Jews against their parents reached Russia—eventually in the form of Marxism but most immediately as Freud's family romance. The Jews who shared Mandelstam's reverence for the "clear and pure Russian sounds" tended to share his horror of the "Judean chaos" of their grandmother's household.

> She kept asking: "Have you eaten? Have you eaten?"—the only Russian words she knew. But I did not like the old people's well-spiced delicacies, with their bitter almond taste. My parents had gone into the city. Every now and then, my mournful grandfather and my sad, fussy grandmother would try speaking with me, only to give up and ruffle their feathers like little old birds in a huff. I kept trying to explain to them that I wanted to be with my mother, but they did not understand. Then I attempted to represent visually my desire to leave by using my middle and index fingers to imitate walking across the table.
>
> Suddenly, Grandfather opened a chest drawer and pulled out a black-and-yellow shawl. He threw it over my shoulders, and made me repeat after him words composed of unfamiliar noises. But then, annoyed by my babble, he became angry and shook his head in disapproval. I felt frightened and suffocated. I do not remember how my mother rescued me.[51]

Modernity meant universal Mercurianism under the nationalist banner of a return to local Apollonianism. The Jews marched under

the same (i.e., somebody else's) banner; for them, the joyous return to Russian togetherness meant a permanent escape from the Jewish home. It meant becoming Apollonian—even as they triumphed over the Russian boys with fat cheeks in the marketplace of universal Mercurianism. Their image of home abandoned (regardless of whether they ended up as socialists, nationalists, or trained specialists) was an abridged version of the traditional Apollonian view of Jewish life as babbling, clannish, bad-smelling, pointlessly intricate, lifelessly rational, relentlessly acquisitive, and devoid of color. Babel's grandmother in Odessa was far from Mandelstam's in Riga, but the staging is painfully familiar: "the darkening room, Grandmother's yellow eyes, her small figure wrapped in a shawl, bent and silent in the corner, the hot air, the closed door . . ." And the dream of conquering the world while remaining locked up: " 'Study,' she says with sudden vehemence. 'Study, and you will achieve everything—wealth and fame. You must know everything. All will prostrate and abase themselves before you. Everyone should envy you. Don't trust people. Don't have any friends. Don't give them any money. Don't give them your heart.' "[52]

What matters is not whether Babel's grandmother really said anything of the sort; what matters is how Babel, Mandelstam, and so many others remembered their grandmothers. Lev Deich believed that Jews provided "sufficient reasons for the hostility against them" because of their "preference for unproductive, light, and more profitable occupations." Vladmir Yokhelson, as a student at the Vilna Rabbinical Seminary, considered Yiddish artificial, Hebrew dead, Jewish traditions valueless, and Jews in general a "parasitical class." I. J. Singer, in *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, represented Jewish religion and Jewish business as equally "devious," built on "snares, loaded questions, contradictions," and mostly concerned with "promissory notes, reparations, contamination, and purity." And Lev Trotsky was probably at his most orthodox as a Marxist when he said about his father, David Bronstein: "The instinct of acquisitiveness, the petit-bourgeois outlook and way of life—from these I sailed away with a mighty push, never to return." The life of all the people in the world did not include Jewish parents. Babel's "Awakening" ends in the same way as Trotsky's: "Aunt Bobka held

me tightly by the hand, to make sure I did not run away. She was right. I was plotting an escape."[53]

Most such plots were successful because the jailers' only weapon consisted of monologues "composed of unfamiliar noises." Their language was either artificial or dead, and their children could not bring themselves to speak it, even if they knew how. When Abraham Cahan was packing for his "historic trip to Petersburg," his father, with whom he was not on speaking terms, came to help. "I wanted to make peace with my father. But somehow I couldn't. My aunt and my mother pushed me toward him; my uncle pleaded with me. It was no good; I couldn't move from the spot." Moreinis-Muratova's father, an Odessa grain exporter, was much more learned but equally impotent. "Leaving my blind father so soon after he lost our mother was extraordinarily difficult, especially because I loved and respected him very much. I knew that for him my departure would be worse than my death, because it meant disgrace for the family. But I felt it was my duty to leave home and earn my own living."[54]

Every Jewish parent was a King Lear. Jacob Gordin's most famous New York play was his 1898 *The Jewish Queen Lear*, based on his 1892 *The Jewish King Lear*. By far the most successful production of Mikhoels's State Jewish Theater in Moscow was Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1935). And of course the central text of Yiddish literature, Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye the Milkman*, is itself a version of *King Lear*—as are countless family chronicles written in Tevye's shadow.[55]

Bound by the Bard, Jewish fathers were prey to their own foolishness. According to Cahan, all Jewish families were unhappy in two different ways: "There were the families in which children addressed their parents as 'tate' and 'mama.' In the other group, parents were called 'papasha' and 'mamasha,' and it was these families that sent their boys to receive the new, daring, gentile education." As G. A. Landau put it,

> How many Jewish parents of the bourgeois or townsman classes did not watch with sympathy, often pride, or at least indifference how their children were being branded with one of the assorted brands of one of the assorted revolutionary-socialist ideologies? . . . In fact, they themselves were products of the grandiose cultural and domestic revolution that had brought them, within one or two generations, from an Orthodox shtetl in Lithuania or a Hasidic one in Poland to a Petersburg bank or district court, a Kharkov shop or dental office, the stock exchange or a factory.

They did not even have to travel very far. Cahan's pious and penniless father was no "papasha," and all he had done was move twenty miles from Podberezy to Vilna, and yet he, too, made in 1871 the "astounding decision" to send his son to the state-run rabbinical school, knowing full well "that in that school all teaching was in Russian, that all the students were bareheaded and that along with the teachers they were clean-shaven and wrote and smoked on the Holy Sabbath. To send a youngster to the Rabiner school could only mean 'to turn him into a goy.' " Had he known what he was doing? Cahan did not know. " 'Tis the time's plague that madmen lead the blind"—or so Landau would imply, writing in postrevolutionary exile as an anti-Bolshevik Russian "intelligent" of Jewish extraction. Cahan himself, however, never regretted either his father's decision or his own departure from home (even as he bemoaned, time and again, his emigration from Russia to America). Neither did Deich, Babel, Yokhelson, Moreinis-Muratova, or her brother, M. A. Moreinis, who had left their blind father one day before she did. To say nothing of Trotsky, and perhaps even Trotsky's parents, who felt "ambivalent" as they sat at his trial in 1906. "I was an editor of newspapers, the chairman of the soviet, and I had a name as a writer. The old couple were impressed by all this. Over and over again, my mother tried to talk to the defense lawyers, hoping to hear more flattering things about me."[56]

Even Tevye the Milkman, in his darkest hour, was not sure. His daughter Chava had married a "gentile," and he had done the right thing by mourning her death and pretending "there had never been any Chava to begin with." But then again,

> "What are you doing, you crazy old loon?" I asked myself. "Why are you making such a production of this? Stop playing the tyrant, turn

your wagon around, and make up with her! She is your own child, after all, not some street waif. . ."

I tell you, I had even weirder thoughts than that in the forest. What did being a Jew or not a Jew matter? Why did God have to create both? And if He did, why put such walls between them, so that neither would look at the other even though both were his creatures? It grieved me that I wasn't a more learned man, because surely there were answers to be found in the holy books . . .[57]

The answers were, indeed, found in the holy books, but not the ones Tevye had in mind. The Jewish refugees from home were not just becoming students, artists, and professionals; they—including most students, artists, and professionals—were becoming members of the "intelligentsia."

The Russian intelligentsia was a community of more or less unattached intellectuals trained to be urban moderns in a rural empire; raised to be "foreigners at home" (as Herzen put it); suspended between the state and the peasants (whom they called "the people"); sustained by transcendental values revealed in sacred texts; devoted to book learning as a key to virtuous living; committed to personal righteousness as a condition for universal redemption; imbued with a sense of chosenness and martyrdom; and bound together by common rites and readings into fraternal "circles." They were, in other words, Puritans possessed by the spirit of socialism, Mercurians of recent Apollonian descent, the wandering Jews of Russian society. Homeless and disembodied, they were the People of the Book prophesying the end of history, chosen to bring it about, and martyred for both the prophesy and the chosenness. In this "ghetto of divine election," as the poetess Marina Tsvetaeva put it, "every poet is a Yid."

Never more so than in the 1870s and 1880s, when the actual Pale of Settlement Jews were beginning to migrate from one chosen people to another. Growing rapidly as a result of the democratization of the education system, underemployed by an economy that was growing much less rapidly, thwarted by an ancien régime that remained unrelentingly autocratic, outraged by the incompleteness of the Great Reforms and at the same time terrified at the prospect

of their success (which would result in a prosaic and retarded embourgeoisement), the intelligentsia was in the grips of an intense messianic expectation of a popular revolution.

Populism was a poor man's socialism, a violent response to a modernity that had not yet arrived. The universal brotherhood that was supposed to supplant capitalism was to be realized by the Russian peasant, whose very unfamiliarity with capitalism was a mark of election. The intellectuals, "spoilt for Russia by Western prejudices and for the West by Russian habit," would vindicate themselves and save the world by fusing their Western prejudices with Russian popular habit. Socialism was the reward for Russian nationalism. And Russian nationalism, in the case of the Russian intelligentsia, stood for a "bitter, ardent, and hopeless" devotion to the Russian peasants.[58]

Few passions are as bitter, ardent, and hopeless as the love of repentant Mercurians for their Apollonian neighbors. The members of the intelligentsia—like the Jews—saw the "people" as their opposites: heart to their head, body (and soul) to their mind, simplicity to their complexity, spontaneity to their consciousness, rootedness to their rootlessness. This relationship—often expressed in erotic terms—could be represented as mutual repulsion or perfect complementarity. The era of Populism, for both Russian and Jewish secular intellectuals, was a time of longing for an ecstatic and redemptive union with the "people." Tolstoy's self-reflexive Olenin, in *The Cossacks*, loves his "statuesque beauty" Maryanka, with her "powerful breasts and shoulders," as ardently and as hopelessly as Babel's hiccuping boy loves Galina Apollonovna. Or is it Babel's boy who loves Maryanka? By the time the civil war came, Babel was admiring the beauty of the Cossacks' "gigantic bodies" as ardently as Tolstoy had admired his "tall, handsome" Lukashka's "warlike and proud bearing." But perhaps not as hopelessly . . .[59]

There was one more thing the Russian radicals and Jewish fugitives had in common: they were at war with their parents. Starting in the 1860s, the inability of "fathers and sons" ("fathers and children," in Turgenev's original Russian title) to talk to each other became one of the central themes in intelligentsia culture. Nowhere else did the rebellious Jewish youngsters meet as many like-minded

peers as they did in Russia. Having abandoned their own blind fathers and "sad, fussy" mothers, they were adopted by the large fraternities of those who had left behind their gentry, priestly, peasant, and merchant parents. Hierarchical, patriarchal, circumscribed families were being replaced by egalitarian, fraternal, and open-ended ones. The rest of the world was to follow suit.

All modern societies produce "youth cultures" that mediate between the biological family, which is based on rigidly hierarchical role ascription within the kinship nomenclature, and the professional domain, which consists, at least in aspiration, of equal interchangeable citizens judged by universalistic meritocratic standards. The transition from son to citizen involves a much greater adjustment than the transition from son to father. Whereas in traditional societies one is socialized into the "real world" and proceeds to move, through a succession of rites of passage, from one ascriptive role to another, every modern individual is raised on values inimical to the ones that prevail outside. Whatever the rhetoric within the family and whatever the division of labor between husbands and wives, the parent-child relationship is always asymmetrical, with the meaning of each action determined according to the actor's status. Becoming a modern adult is always a revolution.[60]

There are two common remedies for this predicament. One is nationalism, with the modern state posing as a family complete with founding fathers, patriotism, a motherland, brothers-in-arms, sons of the nation, daughters of the revolution, and so on. The other is membership in a variety of voluntary associations, of which youth groups are probably the most common and effective precisely because they combine the ascription, solidarity, and intense intimacy of the family with the choice, flexibility, and open-endedness of the marketplace. What happened in late imperial Russia was that large numbers of young people who had been raised in patriarchal families and introduced to Western socialism rebelled against Russia's backwardness and Western modernity at the same time. They saw both evils as their own ("spoilt" as they were "for Russia by Western prejudices and for the West by Russian habit"), and they saw both of them as strengths, for that very reason. They were

going to save the world by saving themselves because Russia's backwardness was the most direct route to Western socialism—either because it was so communal or because, as Lenin would later discover, it was "the weakest link in the chain of imperialism." Suspended between the illegitimate patriarchies of the family and autocracy, they created a durable youth culture imbued with intense millenarian expectation, powerful internal cohesion, and a self-worship so passionate it could be consummated only through self-immolation. For Russia's young intellectuals, the halfway house of a generation had become a temple dedicated to eternal youth and human sacrifice.[61]

These were the neutral spaces—or the "little islands of freedom," as one participant called them—that most Jews entered as they made their way down Pushkin Street. Russia had fewer salons, museums, stock exchanges, professional associations, dental offices, and coffeehouses than the West; their social significance was limited, and Jewish access to them was made difficult by legal handicaps. The temple of youth, on the other hand, was both very large and genuinely welcoming. Jews were appreciated as Jews: a few revolutionaries interpreted the pogroms of the early 1880s as the expression of legitimate popular resentment against exploitation, but the dominant intelligentsia view was that most Jews belonged among the insulted and the injured—and thus among the virtuous. S. Ia. Nadson, the most commercially successful Russian poet of the nineteenth century, "grew up apart from that disparaged nation," to which, he thought, his ancestors had belonged,

> But when your foes, like packs of vicious hounds,
> Are tearing you apart, consumed by greed and hate,
> I'll humbly join the ranks of your determined fighters,
> A nation scorned by fate!

Nadson died of consumption when he was twenty-five years old—for "beautiful are the thorns of suffering for humanity." His fame lasted into the early twentieth century, and so did his image of a Jew weighed down by "the burden of woes" and the "futile expectation of deliverance." The more visible the Jews became as

bankers, brokers, doctors, lawyers, students, artists, journalists, and revolutionaries, the more focused Russian highbrow literature became on Jews as victims of abuse. For Chekhov, Uspensky, Garin-Mikhilovsky, Gorky, Andreev, Sologub, Korolenko, Kuprin, Staniukovich, Artsybashev, Briusov, Balmont, Bunin, and countless others (whatever their private ambivalence), the members of the "disparaged nation" had come out of Gogol's "Overcoat," not Gogol's *Taras Bulba* (which had attempted to transfer to high culture the rhetoric of Cossack resentment). There were some dignified old men with silver beards and some beautiful Rebeccas with fiery eyes, but the overwhelming majority were pathetic but irrepressible victims of insult and injury. Jews were not "the people," but they were good people.[62]

Overall, however, Jews were as marginal to the Russian literary imagination as "the Jewish question" was to the ambitions of most Jewish converts to Pushkin and/or the revolution. Most Jews joining reading circles, Russian schools, secret societies, and friendship networks sought admission—and were welcomed—not as Jews but as fellow believers in Pushkin and the revolution, fellow Mercurians longing for Apollonian harmony, fellow rebels against patriarchy, and fellow sufferers for humanity.

In the small towns of the Pale of Settlement, secular education often began at home or in all-Jewish reading circles, sometimes led by a student in the role of the yeshiva rabbi. "I remember as if it were today," wrote one circle participant, "with what remarkable feeling of fear and awe I and other students sat on a wooden bench near a large brick oven that was hardly warm. Opposite us, at a table, sat a young man of twenty-seven or twenty-eight." As another memoirist said of her circle leader, "his knowledge was unlimited. I believed that, were there only a few more like him, one could already begin the revolution." The main subjects were the Russian language, Russian classical literature, and a variety of socialist texts, mostly Russian but also translations from English and German. Better Russian led to more and more reading, and reading usually

led to an epiphany similar to the one the future revolutionary M. I. Drei experienced upon reading D. I. Pisarev's "Progress in the World of Plants and Animals":

> All the old, traditional views that I had uncritically accepted as a child evaporated like smoke. The world lay before me, simple and clear, and I was standing in the midst of that world, serene and self-confident. There was nothing mysterious, frightening, incomprehensible left in the world for me, and I thought, like Goethe's Wagner, that I knew a great deal already and would in due course know everything . . . It seemed to me that there were no gaps in my worldview, that doubts and hesitations were no longer possible, and I had found, once and for all, firm ground to stand on . . .
>
> Now, looking back [in 1926 in Moscow], I realize that that was the best time of my life. Never again would I experience the kind of intense exhilaration that is produced by the first awakening of the mind and the first revelation of truth.[63]

With the help of an awakened mind, European dress, fluency in Russian, and another, often non-Jewish, mentor, large numbers of Jewish autodidacts and circle veterans moved into one of the "little islands of freedom" within the Russian radical youth culture (where they met, among others, the Russian-speaking children of previous migrants). "They talked to me as to an equal!" wrote Abraham Cahan. "As if I were one of their own! No distinction between Jew and gentile! In the spirit of true equality and brotherhood!" The circles' cause, whatever their particular brand of socialism, was to remake the world in their own image, to topple all fathers and usher in the kingdom of eternal youth.

> Life took on new meaning. Our society was built on injustices that could be erased. All could be equal. All could be brothers! Just as all were equal and brothers in Volodka's home. It could be done! It must be done! All must be ready to sacrifice even life itself for this new kind of world.
>
> I divided the world into two groups: "they" and "we." I looked on "them" with pity and scorn. I thought of any friend of mine who was one of "them" as an unfortunate being. At the same time my

new belief brought out my better nature, made me more tolerant, led me to speak gently even when mixing scorn with sympathy. A kind of religious ecstasy took hold of me. I did not recognize my former self.[64]

Mandelstam's mother, "the first in her family to master the clear and pure Russian sounds," was in Vilna at about the same time: a bit more literary and less revolutionary, perhaps, but could one really tell the difference?

> The never-ending literary toil, the candles, the applause, the lit-up faces; the circle of a generation and, at the center, the altar—the lecturer's desk with its glass of water. Like summer insects over an incandescent lamp, the whole generation shriveled and burned in the flame of literary celebrations festooned with allegorical roses, each gathering having the feel of a cult performance and an expiatory sacrifice for the generation. . . .
>
> The eighties in Vilna as my mother remembered them. It was the same everywhere: sixteen-year-old girls trying to read John Stuart Mill, while at public recitals luminous personalities with bland features were playing the latest pieces by the leonine Anton, leaning heavily on the pedal and dying out on the arpeggios. But what actually happened was that the intelligentsia, with its Buckle and Rubinstein, led by luminous personalities and moved by a holy fool's recklessness, turned resolutely toward self-immolation. The People's Will martyrs, with Sofia Perovskaia and Zheliabov, burned in full view, like tall tar-coated torches, and the whole of provincial Russia with its "student youth" smouldered in sympathy. Not a single green leaf was to be left untouched.[65]

In the 1870s and 1880s, some of the rhetoric of self-sacrifice and equality was overtly Christian. O. V. Aptekman, whose father was "one of the pioneers of Russian education among the Jews of Pavlodar," found both the Gospel and the "people," in the shape of Parasha Bukharitsyna, "the radiant image of a peasant girl," in the Pskov province in 1874. "I was a socialist, and Parasha a Christian, but emotionally we were alike; I was ready for all kinds of sacrifices, and she was all about self-sacrifice. . . . And so my first pupil, Parasha,

accepted my interpretation of the Gospel and became a socialist too. I was in a state of exaltation, which was to some extent religious; it was a complex and rather confused mental state, in which a genuine socialist worldview coexisted with the Christian one."[66]

Solomon Vittenberg, according to his disciple M. A. Moreinis, was a promising Talmudist when, at the age of nine, he learned Russian and persuaded his parents to let him attend the Nikolaev *gymnasium*. In August 1879, on the night before his execution for an attempt on the life of Alexander II and one day after his refusal to convert to Christianity, he wrote to his friends (most of whom were young Jewish rebels):

> Dear friends! Naturally, I do not want to die. To say that I am dying willingly would be a lie on my part. But let this circumstance not cast a shadow on my faith or on the certainty of my convictions. Remember that the highest example of the love of humanity and self-sacrifice was, undoubtedly, the Savior. Yet even he prayed, "Take this cup away from me." Consequently, how can I not pray for the same thing? Like him, I tell myself: If no other way is possible, if for the triumph of socialism it is necessary that my blood be shed, if others can make the transition from the present order to a better one only by trampling over our dead bodies, then let our blood be shed, let it redeem humanity—for I do not doubt that our blood will fertilize the soil from which the seed of socialism will sprout and that socialism will triumph, and triumph soon. This is my faith. Here again I recall the words of the Savior: "Truly, I say unto you, not many of those present here relish death as the coming of the heavenly kingdom"—of this I am convinced as much as I am convinced that the earth moves. And when I climb the scaffold and the rope tightens around my neck, my last thought will be: "And still it moves and nothing in the world can stop its movement."[67]

Over the next four decades, direct references to religion among revolutionaries became less frequent, the image of the peasant girl became less radiant, and even the Nadson cult had trouble outliving Mandelstam's mother's youth, but the fire of self-sacrifice kept burning, and the combination of universal salvation, violence, and Galileo remained meaningful—until it hardened into Marxism.

The switch of allegiance in some (not all!) intelligentsia quarters from Populism to Marxism (beginning in the 1890s) involved a reallocation of redeemer status from the Russian peasant to the international proletariat. Urban collectivism and vertical cityscape replaced rural communalism and horizontal pastoral as the reflection of future perfection, and the angular male worker replaced the peasant girl (or the often feminized—"rotund"—peasant man) as the intellectual's corporal better half. Universal Mercurianism was going to be defeated not by traditional Apollonianism but by Mercurianism itself—or rather, by its quasi-Apollonian bastard child. The proletariat of the Marxist iconography was peculiar in that it was undeniably Apollonian and thus desirable (heart to the intelligentsia's head, body to its soul, spontaneity to its consciousness), while being just as undeniably Mercurian and thus modern (rootless, homeless, global). Eventually, Lenin would transform Marxism into a real social force by taking it halfway back to Populism: modern socialism was possible in backward Russia both in spite and because of its backwardness.

For the Jewish rebels, the fall from grace of the Russian peasant opened up new opportunities. Marxism (especially of the Menshevik variety) proved popular because it was consistent with the world of equality and brotherhood most young Jews wished to join, and possibly because it seemed to allow for the inclusion of the "Jewish masses" (none of whom qualified as peasants) among the saviors and the saved. Indeed, Bundism—the Yiddish-language Marxism aimed at the "Jewish Street"—built on the latter proposition to create an influential blend of Marxism and nationalism, whereby the Russian-educated Jewish intelligentsia would embrace the Jewish people and lead them to liberation either by teaching them Russian or by transforming Yiddish into a sacred language, with Sholem Aleichem as Pushkin. The Bund prospered briefly in the least urbanized and Russified parts of the Pale, where it tended to appeal to the secularized Jews who had not yet entered the all-Russian youth culture, but ultimately it could not compete with universalist (Russian or Polish) Marxism or Hebrew-based nationalism. Neither Marxism nor nationalism made much sense without a state.[68]

The Jewish nationalism that did offer a solution to the state problem was, of course, Zionism, which had the added advantage of proposing a vision of a consistently Apollonian Jewishness complete with warrior honor and rural rootedness. Spurred by the pogroms of 1903–06, Zionism succeeded in creating a radical youth culture comparable to the Russian one in its cohesion, asceticism, messianism, commitment to violence, and self-sacrificial fervor. Still, it attracted far fewer Jews, and the emigration to Palestine remained tiny compared to the exodus for America (characterized by low levels of income and secular education) and the big cities of the Russian Empire (shaped by government regulations and the high-culture hierarchy to favor the wealthier and the more educated). Zionism appealed to the young and the radical, but most of the young and the radical seemed to prefer "no distinction between Jew and gentile, in the spirit of true equality and brotherhood."

As time went on, this preference seemed to grow stronger. The spread of industrialization and secularization resulted in greater Russification, and greater Russification almost invariably led to world revolution, not nationalism. As Chaim Weizmann, himself a graduate of the Pinsk *Realschule*, wrote to Herzl in 1903,

> In western Europe it is generally believed that the large majority of Jewish youth in Russia is in the Zionist camp. Unfortunately, the opposite is true. The larger part of the contemporary younger generation is anti-Zionist, not from a desire to assimilate as in Western Europe, but through revolutionary conviction.
>
> It is impossible to calculate the number of victims, or describe their character, that are annually, indeed daily, sacrificed because of their identification with Jewish Social Democracy in Russia. Hundreds of thousands of very young boys and girls are held in Russian prisons, or are being spiritually and physically destroyed in Siberia. More than 5,000 are now under police surveillance, which means the deprivation of their freedom. Almost all those now being victimized in the entire Social Democratic movement are Jews, and their number grows every day. They are not necessarily young people of proletarian origin; they also come from well-to-do families, and incidentally not infrequently from Zionist families. Almost all students belong to the

revolutionary camp; hardly any of them escape its ultimate fate. We cannot enter here into the many factors, political, social, and economic, that continuously nourish the Jewish revolutionary movement; suffice to say that the movement has already captured masses of young people who can only be described as children.

Thus, during my stay in Minsk, they arrested 200 Jewish Social Democrats, not one of whom was more than 17 years old. It is a fearful spectacle, and one that obviously escapes West European Zionists, to observe the major part of our youth—and no-one would describe them as the worst part—offering themselves for sacrifice as though seized by a fever. We refrain from touching on the terrible effect this mass-sacrifice has upon the families and communities concerned, and upon the state of Jewish political affairs in general. Saddest and most lamentable is the fact that although this movement consumes much Jewish energy and heroism, and is located within the Jewish fold, the attitude it evidences towards Jewish nationalism is one of antipathy, swelling at times to fanatical hatred. Children are in open revolt against their parents.[69]

Not all those victimized "in the entire Social Democratic movement" were Jews, of course, but it is true that Jewish participation in the Russian "mass-sacrifice" was very substantial in absolute terms and much larger than the Jewish share of the country's population. The Jews did not start the revolutionary movement, did not inaugurate student messianism, and had very little to do with the conceptual formulation of "Russian Socialism" (from Herzen to Mikhailovsky), but when they did join the ranks, they did so with tremendous intensity and in ever growing numbers. No history of Russian radicalism is conceivable without the story of the Jewish children's "open revolt against their parents."

In the 1870s, the overall Jewish share in the Populist movement probably did not exceed 8 percent, but their participation in the student "pilgrimage to the people" circles (the "Chaikovtsy") was much greater. According to Erich Haberer,

> Jews comprised a staggering 20 per cent of all Chaikovtsy (that is, 22 out of 106 persons) who were definitely members or close associates of the organization in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, and Kiev. A breakdown by circles shows that they were well represented in each of these cities with 11 per cent in St. Petersburg, 17 per cent in Moscow, 20 per cent in Odessa, and almost 70 per cent in Kiev. Even more striking is the fact that in the persons of Natanson, Kliachko, Chudnovsky, and Akselrod they were the founders and for some time the leading personalities of these circles. This means that 18 per cent of Jewish Chaikovtsy (four out of twenty-two) belonged to the category of leaders.[70]

In the 1880s, Jews made up about 17 percent of all male and 27.3 percent of all female activists of the People's Will party, and about 15.5 percent and 33.3 percent of all male and female defendants at political trials. In the peak years of 1886–89, the Jews accounted for between 25 and 30 percent of all activists, and between 35 and 40 percent of those in southern Russia. The influential Orzhikh-Bogoraz-Shternberg group, centered in Ekaterinoslav and known for its uncompromising commitment to political terror, was more than 50 percent Jewish, and in the remarkable year of 1898, 24 out of 39 (68.6 percent) political defendants were Jews. Over the two decades 1870–90 Jews made up about 15 percent of all political exiles in Irkutsk province and 32 percent of those in Iakutsk province (probably up to half in the late 1880s). According to the commander of the Siberian military district, General Sukhotin, of the 4,526 political deportees in January 1905, 1,898 (41.9 percent) were Russians and 1,676 (37 percent) were Jews.[71]

With the rise of Marxism, the role of Jews in the Russian revolutionary movement became still more prominent. The first Russian Social Democratic organization, the Group for the Emancipation of Labor, was founded in 1883 by five people, two of whom (P. B. Axelrod and L. G. Deich) were Jews. The first Social Democratic party in the Russian Empire was the Jewish Bund (founded in 1897). The First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) was convened in 1898 in Minsk, at the initiative and under the protection of the Bund activists. At the party's Second Congress in 1903 (which included the Bund delegates), Jews made up at least 37 percent of the delegates, and at the last (Fifth) congress of the united RSDLP in 1907, about one-third of the del-

gates were Jews, including 11.4 percent of the Bolsheviks and 22.7 ercent of the Mensheviks (and five out of the eight top Menshevik :aders). According to the Provisional Government's commissar for ne liquidation of tsarist political police abroad, S. G. Svatikov, at :ast 99 (62.3 percent) of the 159 political émigrés who returned ɔ Russia through Germany in 1917 in "sealed trains" were Jews. The first group of 29 that arrived with Lenin included 17 Jews 58.6 percent). At the Sixth (Bolshevik) party Congress of July–ıugust 1917, which had a larger representation of grassroots do-nestic organizations, the Jewish share was about 16 percent overall, nd 23.7 percent in the Central Committee.[72]

Only in German-dominated Latvia, where nationalist resentment, workers' strikes, and a peasant war coalesced into a single novement under the aegis of the Bolsheviks, did the proportion of evolutionaries in the total population sometimes exceed the Jewsh mark. (Antistate activism among Poles, Armenians, and Georgians was not as high but still substantially higher than among Rus-ians because of the way national and social movements reinforced :ach other.) The Jewish reinforcement was of a different kind: similar to the Russian intelligentsia variety but much more widespread ınd uncompromising, it consisted in the simultaneous rejection of parental authority and autocratic paternalism. Most Jewish rebels did not fight the state in order to become free Jews; they fought :he state in order to become free from Jewishness—and thus Free. Their radicalism was not strengthened by their nationality; it was strengthened by their struggle against their nationality. Latvian or Polish socialists might embrace universalism, proletarian internationalism, and the vision of a future cosmopolitan harmony without ceasing to be Latvian or Polish. For many Jewish socialists, being an internationalist meant not being Jewish at all.[73]

The Russian Social Democrats, too, were fighting a lonely fight. Having rejected the Russian state as the prison-house of nations, declared war on Russian industrialization as both too brutal and too slow, given up on the Russian "people" as too backward or not backward enough, and placed their bets on a world revolution manufactured in Germany, they were perfectly "self-hating" in the Chaadaev tradition of the Russian intelligentsia. And yet, in most

cases, their rebellion against their fathers did not quite amount to patricide. The children might reject their parents' religion, habits, attachments, and possessions, but no one seriously proposed switching to the German language or tearing down Pushkin House, the true temple of national faith. Even Lenin believed that Tolstoy was "the mirror of the Russian Revolution" and that Russia's inadequacy might yet prove the world's salvation.

Large numbers of Jewish socialists (following the decline of the Bund after 1907, probably the majority) were more resolute and more consistent. Their parents—like Marx's—represented the worst of all possible worlds because they stood for backwardness and capitalism at the same time. Socialism, for them, meant (as Marx put it) the "emancipation from *haggling* and from *money*, i.e. from practical, real Judaism." Most radical Jewish memoirists remembered struggling with the twin evils of tradition and "acquisitiveness": as far as they were concerned, the Jewish tradition was about acquisitiveness, and acquisitiveness stripped of the Jewish tradition was distilled capitalism, i.e., "practical, real Judaism." The Jews, as a group, were the only true Marxists because they were the only ones who truly believed that their nationality was "chimerical"; the only ones who—like Marx's proletarians but unlike the real ones—had no motherland.

There is nothing specific to Russia about any of this, of course—except that the scale was much greater; the transition from the ghetto to the "life of all the people in the world" more abrupt; and the majority of neutral spaces small, barred, or illegal. The Jews were becoming modern faster and better than were Russian society, the Russian state, or indeed anybody else in Russia. This means that even under a liberal dispensation, the scarcity of neutral spaces would have affected them more than any other group. But the Russian regime was not liberal, and the fact that the Jews were legally excluded from some of those spaces meant that an even larger proportion ended up joining the "little islands of freedom." Anti-Jewish legislation did not start the "Revolution on the Jewish Street" (which often preceded any exposure to the outside world and was directed against Jewishness, not against anti-Jewish legislation), but it contributed a great deal to its expansion and radicalization.

What is remarkable about Jewish disabilities is not that they were worse than those of the Kirgiz, the Aleut, or indeed the Russian peasants, but that they were resented so much by so many. Unlike the Kirgiz, the Aleut, and the peasants, the Jews were moving successfully into elite institutions—only to encounter restrictions based on criteria they considered unfair (punishing success) or obsolete, and thus unfair (religion). The Jewish students, entrepreneurs, and professionals saw themselves as their colleagues' equals or betters, yet they were being treated like the Kirgiz, the Aleut, or the peasants. Those who made it anyway protested against discrimination; many of the others preferred world revolution.

But the Jews were not just the most revolutionary (along with the Latvians) national group in the Russian Empire. They were also the best at being revolutionaries. As Leonard Schapiro put it, "It was the Jews, with their long experience of exploiting conditions on Russia's western frontier which adjoined the pale for smuggling and the like, who organized the illegal transport of literature, planned escapes and illegal crossings, and generally kept the wheels of the whole organization running."[74]

As early as the mid-1870s, according to the People's Will operative Vladimir Yokhelson,

> Vilna became the main conduit for Petersburg's and Moscow's contacts with other countries. To transport books shipped through Vilna, Zundelevich would go to Koenigsberg, where he would meet with the medical student Finkelstein, who was the representative of the revolutionary presses from Switzerland and London. Finkelstein used to study at our rabbinical seminary but had emigrated to Germany in 1872, when an illegal library was found in the seminary's boarding school. . . . Our border connections were used to transport not only books, but also people.[75]

The Jewish revolutionary and educational networks—of people, books, money, and information—were similar to the traditional commercial ones. Sometimes they overlapped—as when students who were also revolutionaries crossed borders and stayed at the houses of their businessmen uncles; when the American soap (Naphtha) millionaire, Joseph Fels, underwrote the Fifth Congress

of the RSDLP; or when Alexander Helphand (Parvus), himself both a revolutionary and a millionaire, arranged Lenin's return to Russia in 1917. There was no master plan behind any of this, needless to say, but the fact that the overwhelming majority of ethnically Jewish revolutionaries in the Russian Empire were raised in self-consciously Jewish homes meant that they had acquired some traditional Mercurian skills.

Nor were mobility and secrecy the only traditional Mercurian skills that served the cause of the revolution. Most members of radical circles devoted themselves to the study of sacred texts, revered proficient interpreters of the scriptures, adapted everyday behavior to doctrinal precepts, debated fine points of theory, and divided the world between righteous insiders and lost or malevolent outsiders. Some were better at this than others: the children of intelligentsia parents had been raised on similar commitments, and so had the Jews (Christian dissenters, whom some revolutionary ideologists considered promising recruits, showed no interest in conversion). Even the poorest Jewish artisans joining little islands of freedom had an advantage over nonelite Apollonians because they were converting from one highly literate culture to another, from one debating society to another, from one chosen people to another, from traditional Mercurianism to the modern kind. In all the revolutionary parties, Jews were particularly well represented at the top, among theoreticians, journalists, and leaders. In Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, the Jews were at least as successful at questioning the Modern Age as they were at promoting it.

The remarkable rise of the Jews made a strong impression on Russian society. Highbrow fiction may not have noticed, but many newspapers did, as did various public intellectuals, professional associations, state agencies, political parties (after 1905), and, of course, all those who took part in the anti-Jewish urban riots (pogroms). Everyone agreed that Jews had a special affinity for the Modern Age, and most believed that it was a bad thing.

The reasons for the affinity were familiar. As I. O. Levin wrote ruefully in 1923, "One of the paradoxes of the Jewish fate is undoubtedly the fact that the same rationalism that was one of the causes of their outstanding role in the development of capitalism was also the cause of their no less outstanding participation in the movements directed against capitalism and the capitalist order."[76]

It was a bad thing because (a) the Modern Age, including both capitalism and revolution, was a bad thing, and (b) Jewish preeminence was a bad thing. As K. Pobedonostsev, the tutor and adviser of the last two tsars, wrote to Dostoevsky in 1879, "they have undermined everything, but the spirit of the century supports them." And as Dostoevsky, in his "Diary of a Writer," wrote to the whole reading public in 1877, the spirit of the century equaled "materialism, the blind, insatiable desire for *personal* material prosperity, the thirst for personal accumulation of money at all costs." Humans had always been that way, "but never before have these desires been proclaimed to be the highest possible principle with as much frankness and insistence as in our nineteenth century." Jews may or may not have caused this revolution (Dostoevsky's fiction seemed to suggest that they had not), but they were, he insisted, its truest and most dedicated apostles. "In the very work the Jews do (the great majority of them, at any rate), in their very exploitation, there is something wrong and abnormal, something unnatural, something containing its own punishment."[77]

Most Jewish rebels agreed with Dostoevsky regarding both the Modern Age (capitalism) and the Jewish role (acquisitiveness). Their remedy—world revolution—was a part of the disease as Dostoevsky had diagnosed it, but their aspiration—radical fraternity—was of course very similar to Dostoevsky's own vision of true Christian brotherhood. If the Jews were "possessed," so was Dostoevsky—and so were most of the Zionists, who agreed with Dostoevsky that the Modern Age was destroying the original brotherhood, that the diaspora Jewish society was abnormal and unnatural, and that world revolution was a dangerous chimera. Jabotinsky, like Weizmann, was greatly distressed by the overrepresentation of Jews among Russian socialists. The fact that most revolutionary agitators whom he saw during the "Potemkin days" of 1905 in the port of Odessa were "familiar types with their big round eyes, big ears, and imperfect 'r's" was a bad thing because only true national prophets were capable of leading the masses and because a revolution in somebody else's nation was not worth "the blood of our old men, women, and children."[78]

Most non-Jewish rebels agreed with Dostoevsky regarding capitalism but not (at least not publicly) regarding the Jews, whom they tended to represent exclusively as victims. In the world of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, nations were incomplete moral agents: they had virtues and vices, rights and duties, accomplishments and transgressions, but they did not have coherent or comprehensive means of atonement, remorse, penance, or retribution. Membership in a social class, which involved an element of free will, was more of a moral act than membership in a nation. One could, therefore, call for violent retribution against the bourgeoisie or endorse the assassination of anonymous state officials, but one could not, in good conscience, advocate collective responsibility for nations (formal war being a possible exception). Social guilt was a common and virtuous sentiment; national guilt a murky and distasteful one. Antibourgeois bigotry was an oxymoron; national bigotry was, in theory, a taboo (because it was a bourgeois vice). Or rather, it was a vice most of the time, and a virtual taboo with regard to the Jews. Anti-Germanism was taken for granted insofar as it expressed wartime patriotism and a general dislike of the *homo rationalisticus artificialis*; anti-Tatarism (from bloodthirsty history books to ironic portrayals of janitors) was noticed only by Tatars; and the routine attribution of permanent negative traits to various ethnic groups (especially the "Eastern" ones) was a perfectly acceptable means of cultural and moral self-identification. Only the Jews were (most of the time) off-limits—partly because so many of the revolutionary intellectuals' comrades (some of their best friends) were Jews or former Jews, partly because Jews were victims of state persecution, but mostly (since there were other ethnic victims of state persecution who were not off-limits) because they were both fellow elite members and victims of state

persecution. They were, uniquely, both remote and near. They were (still) internal strangers.

One reason why Jews were victims of state persecution was that so many of them were becoming elite members. Many of the state officials and leaders of professional associations who presided over Russia's modernization and generally associated the Modern Age with prosperity, enlightenment, liberty, and meritocratic fairness, were disturbed by the extraordinary rate of Jewish accomplishment and Jewish radicalism. Speaking in Kherson in 1875, the minister of enlightenment D. A. Tolstoy declared that the only meaningful educational criterion was academic performance. "Our *gymnasia* should produce aristocrats, but what sort? Aristocrats of the mind, aristocrats of knowledge, aristocrats of labor. God grant that we might have more such aristocrats." In 1882, the same official, as minister of internal affairs, wrote to the tsar commenting on both the Jewish love of learning and the Jewish role in revolutionary activities. By 1888, Tolstoy had become a champion of anti-Jewish admissions quotas. Similarly, the chair of the Governing Council of the St. Petersburg bar and Russia's most prominent lawyer, V. D. Spasovich, who believed in liberal meritocracy as a matter of principle, proposed corporate self-policing when it was revealed, in 1889, that out of 264 apprentice lawyers in the St. Petersburg judicial circuit, 109 were Russian Orthodox and 104 were Jews. "We are dealing with a colossal problem,' he said, "one which cannot be solved according to the rules of cliché liberalism."[79]

Spasovich's problem was possible government intervention. The government's problem was, as the finance minister Kokovtsev put it in 1906, that "the Jews are so clever that no law can be counted on to restrict them." And the main reason they needed to be restricted (according to most high government officials) was that they were so clever. To the extent that tsarist Russia was still a traditional empire, in which each faith and estate performed its own function, the Jews did not fit in because their function was now universal. And to the extent that Russia was a modernizing society with important oases of "cliché liberalism," the Jews did not fit in because they were so successful. In order to "open careers to talent," liberalism has to assume the interchangeability of citizens.

In order to ensure or simulate such interchangeability, it has to employ nationalism. In order to succeed as a creed, it has to remain innocent of the paradox involved. Throughout Europe, Jews revealed the unacknowledged connection between liberal universalism and ethnic nationalism by demonstrating talent without becoming interchangeable. In late imperial Russia, which was inching fitfully from ascriptive traditionalism to cliché liberalism, they became the perfect symbol of why the former was untenable and the latter dangerous.[80]

It was as such a symbol of perilous cleverness that Jews were killed, maimed, and robbed during the urban riots in the Pale in the final half-century of the empire's existence. The Odessa pogrom of 1871 was started by local Greeks, who were losing the competition over trade monopolies, but most of the perpetrators—then and later, as violence increased—were day laborers and other recent migrants from rural areas, who seemed to be losing the competition over modern life. To them, the Jews were the alien face of the city, the wielders of the invisible hand, the old Mercurian stranger turned boss. They were still dangerous traders, one way or another, but their ways were even more mysterious, and many of their children were revolutionaries—the very people, that is, who openly assaulted the sacred but outdated symbols of Apollonian dignity and ascendance: God and Tsar.[81]

When, in 1915, Maxim Gorky published a questionnaire on the "Jewish problem," the most common response was summarized by a reader from Kaluga: "The congenital, cruel, and consistent egoism of the Jews is everywhere victorious over the good-natured, uncultured, trusting Russian peasant or merchant." According to the vox populi from Kherson, the Russian peasant needed to be defended from the Jews because he was still "at an embryonic, infantile stage of development," and according to "U., a peasant," "Jews should undoubtedly receive equal rights but gradually and with great caution, not right away, or before long half of the Russian land, if not all of it, along with the ignorant Russian people, will pass into Jewish slavery." The reserve soldiers D. and S. proposed one solution: "Jews should be given a separate colony, or they'll reduce Russia to nothing." A "Mr. N." proposed another: "My Russian opinion is

that all Jews should be wiped off the face of the Russian Empire and that's the end of it."[82]

As everywhere in modern Europe, Jews were vulnerable as triumphant Mercurians without a special ghetto license. In Russia, more than anywhere else, the uprooted Apollonians lacked the rhetorical and legal protection of liberal nationalism—the reassurance that the new state belonged to them even as it seemed so alien; that modernization and homelessness were their gain, not loss; that universal Mercurianism was in fact revitalized Apollonianism. The protection the peasant migrants to the cities did receive (in the form of anti-Jewish restrictions) tended to be mostly counterproductive. The cities of the Pale were dominated by Jews, and more and more of their children, kept there by force and excluded ineffectively from neutral spaces, were joining the rebellion against God and Tsar.

The ones who paid the price were people like Babel's narrator's father, a small shopkeeper who was robbed and humiliated the day his little boy felt such bitter, ardent, and hopeless love for Galina Apollonovna.

> Through the window I could see the deserted street with the vast sky above it and my father with his red hair walking down the road. He did not have a hat, and his thin, flyaway red hair was sticking up; his paper shirtfront was all askew and fastened by the wrong button. Vlasov, an eternally drunken workman in wadded soldier's rags, followed closely on my father's heels.
>
> "Don't you see," he was saying in a hoarse, earnest voice, while touching my father gently with his hands, "We don't need freedom if it gives the Jews freedom to haggle . . . Just give the working man a little bit of life's brightness for his toil, for all this terrible hugeness . . . Just give him some, friend, just give him some, okay . ."
>
> The workman kept touching my father and imploring him about something, while on his face, flashes of pure drunken inspiration alternated with dejection and sleepiness.
>
> "We should all live like the Molokans," he muttered, as he swayed on his unsteady legs, "we've got to live like the Molokans, but without that Old-Believer God of theirs. It's only the Jews who profit from him, the Jews and nobody else . . ."

> And Vlasov started shouting in wild desperation about the Old-Believer God who had taken pity only on the Jews. Wailing and stumbling, Vlasov was still chasing after that mysterious God of his, when a Cossack mounted patrol appeared in front of him.

The Cossacks ignored both of them—the drunken pursuer who felt like a victim and begged his prey for mercy, and the tormented victim whose son was triumphing over the Russian boys with fat cheeks even as they were beating Jewish old men. The Cossacks "sat impassively in their high saddles, riding through an imaginary mountain pass and disappearing from view as they turned into Cathedral Street." The little boy was in Galina Apollonovna's kitchen. Earlier that day, he had been hit in the temple by a legless cripple with "a coarse face composed of red meat, fists, and iron." He had been hit with the very dove he had bought to celebrate his admission to the *gymnasium*. Owning doves had been the dream of his life. His dovecote had been built for him by his grandfather, Shoil, who had been murdered earlier that day.

> A goose was frying on the tiled stove; the walls were lined up with pots and pans; and next to the pans, in the cook's corner, was Tsar Nicholas, decorated with paper flowers. Galina washed off the remains of the dove that had dried on my cheeks.
>
> "You'll grow up to be a bridegroom, my pretty little one," she said, kissing me on the mouth with her full lips and turning away.[83]

Babel's narrator would, indeed, grow up to consummate his love for a Russian woman. But Galina Apollonovna was not the only Russian who loved him. There was Efim Nikitich Smolich, in whose athletic breast "there dwelt compassion for Jewish boys," and Piatnitsky, the old *gymnasium* inspector who loved Jewish boys for their love of Pushkin. When, after the exam, Babel's little boy "began to wake up from the convulsion of his dreams," he found himself surrounded by some "Russian boys."

> They seemed to want to push me around or perhaps just to play, but then Piatnitsky suddenly appeared in the corridor. As he passed me he halted for a moment, his frock-coat flowing down his back like a

slow, heavy wave. I glimpsed confusion in that vast, fleshy, lordly back of his, and approached the old man.

"Children," he said to the schoolboys, "I want you to leave this boy alone," and he put his plump, tender hand on my shoulder.[84]

And then there were those—a small minority—who did not pity the Jews for their weakness and their love of old Russia but admired them for their strength and their iconoclasm—those who welcomed the rise of the Modern Age and praised the Jews for bringing it about. They were the Marxists—the only members of the Russian intelligentsia who despised the Russian peasant and the Russian intelligentsia as much as they despised "rotten" liberalism. For them, the Modern Age stood for the transformation—by means of a more or less spontaneous universal patricide—of a city that was symmetrical, bountiful, and wicked into a city that was symmetrical, bountiful, and radiant. There were going to be no tribes under communism, of course, but there was no getting away from the fact that, in the Russian tradition, the symmetrical city, good or bad, was a German creature, and that the Jews, in the words of one of Gorky's correspondents, were "a German auxiliary mechanism."[85] What truly made a Bolshevik was not adherence to a particular dogma but an eager and unequivocal preference for Stolz over Oblomov—except that by the early twentieth century the iconic Stolz might very well be Jewish, not German (or he might be both, one being an auxiliary mechanism of the other). Germans still loomed larger than anybody else, but the Jews had their own special claim on urban virtue. As A. Lunacharsky summed up the story,

> Jews lived everywhere as strangers, but they introduced their urban commercial skills into the different countries of their diaspora and thus became the ferment of capitalist development in countries with lower, circumscribed, peasant culture. This is the reason why the Jews, according to the best students of human development, contributed to an extraordinary degree to progress, but this is also the reason why they drew upon themselves the terrible fury of, first, the lowly peasants, whom the Jews had exploited as traders, usurers, etc., and, second, of the bourgeoisie, which had emerged from the same peasantry.[86]

Lenin was not particularly interested in Jewish history. For him, what capitalism did was "replace the thick-skulled, boorish, inert, and bearishly savage Russian or Ukrainian peasant with a mobile proletarian." Proletarians had no motherland, of course, and there was no such thing as a "national culture," but if one had to think of mobile proletarians in ethnic terms (as the Bund "philistines" were forcing one to), then the Jews—unlike the Russians and Ukrainians—were very good candidates because of the "great, universally progressive traits in Jewish culture: its internationalism and its responsiveness to the advanced movements of the age (the percentage of Jews in democratic and proletarian movements is everywhere higher than the percentage of Jews in the total population)." All advanced Jews supported assimilation, according to Lenin, but it is also true that many of the "great leaders of democracy and socialism" came from "the best representatives of the Jewish world." Lenin himself did, through his maternal grandfather, although he probably did not know it. When his sister, Anna, found out, she wrote to Stalin that she was not surprised, that "this fact" was "another proof of the exceptional ability of the Semitic tribe," and that Lenin had always contrasted "what he called its 'tenacity' in struggle with the more sluggish and lackadaisical Russian character." Maxim Gorky, too, claimed that Lenin had a soft spot for "smart people" and that he had once said, "A smart Russian is almost always a Jew or somebody with an admixture of Jewish blood."[87]

We do not know whether Lenin actually said this, but we know that Gorky did, on numerous occasions. In the 1910s, Gorky was Russia's most celebrated writer, most revered prophetic voice, and most articulate and passionate Judeophile. He was not a member of the Bolshevik party, but he was close to the Bolsheviks where it counted: in his love of the mobile proletarian and his loathing for the Russian and Ukrainian peasant—"savage, somnolent, and glued to his pile of manure" (as Lenin put it elsewhere). Gorky was even more of a Nietzschean than most Bolsheviks: all tradition and religion stood for slavery and mediocrity, and the only proletarian worthy of the name was the etymologically correct proletarian, who embodied absolute freedom because he produced nothing but chil-

dren (*proles*). The only force capable of releasing the Promethean proletarian from the fetters of "leaden" philistinism was revolution, and the greatest revolutionaries in history had been the Jews.[88]

"The old, thick yeast of humanity, the Jews have always forced the spirit to rise by stirring up restless, noble ideas and inspiring people to seek a better life." Endowed with a "heroic" idealism, "all-probing and all-scrutinizing," the Jews have saved the world from submissiveness and self-satisfaction.

> This idealism, which expresses itself in their tireless striving to remake the world according to the new principles of equality and justice, is the main, and possibly the only, reason for the hostility toward Jews. They disturb the peace of the satiated and self-satisfied and shed a ray of light on the dark sides of life. With their energy and enthusiasm, they have given people the gift of fire and the tireless pursuit of truth. They have been rousing nations, not letting them rest, and finally—and this is the main thing!—this idealism has given birth to the scourge of the powerful; the religion of the masses, socialism.

Nowhere, according to Gorky, were the Jews needed as desperately and, for that very reason, treated as badly as in Russia, where somnolence (Oblomovism) was a treasured national trait, and the transition "from the swamp of oriental stagnation to the broad avenues of Western European culture" a particularly painful challenge. The Jewish prohibition "of all idle pleasure not based on work" is "precisely what we, Russians, lack." For "deep in the soul of every Russian, lord or peasant, there lives a small and nasty devil of passive anarchism, which instills in us a careless and indifferent attitude toward work, society, the people, and ourselves." The more evident is the fact that "the Jews are better Europeans than the Russians," and that, "as a psychological type, they are culturally superior to, and more beautiful than, the Russians," the greater the resentment of the somnolent and the self-satisfied.

> If some Jews manage to find more profitable and beneficial places in life, it is because they know how to work, how to bring excitement to the labor process, how to "get things done" and admire action. The Jew is almost always a better worker than the Russian. It is not something to get mad about; it is something to learn from. In the matter of both personal gain and service to society, the Jew invests more passion than the long-winded Russian and, in the final analysis, whatever nonsense anti-Semites may talk, they do not like the Jew because he is obviously better, more dexterous, and more capable than they are.[89]

The concept "self-hate" assumes that the unrelenting worship of one's ethnic kin is a natural human condition. To adopt the term for a moment, all national intelligentsias are self-hating insofar as they are—by definition—dissatisfied with their nation's performance relative to other nations or according to any number of doctrinal standards. Gorky's version—the bitter, ardent, and hopeless love of self-described Apollonians for beautiful Mercurians—was becoming increasingly common as more and more "passive anarchists" discovered the powerful but elusive charms of the Modern Age. Inseparable from nationalism (self-love), it was as painful and fragile an infatuation as the one that Mercurians had for Apollonians. The principal attributes of each side (heart/mind, body/soul, stability/mobility, and so on) never changed, but the intensity of mutual fascination increased dramatically—especially in Russia, where the local Apollonians were almost as unprotected by modern state nationalism as the traditional Mercurians were. To put it differently, the Jewish predicament in the age of universal Mercurianism was that they found themselves not only the best among equals but also the only ones without the cover of state nationalism (make-believe Apollonianism). The Russian predicament was that they found themselves not only the worst of all large European aspirants but also the only ones under an unreformed ancien régime (which comforted them not by calling them brothers but by insisting that they were eternal children). The result was love as well as hate: Gorky the self-hating Apollonian loved the Jews as much as Babel the self-hating Jew loved Galina Apollonovna.

The Great War spelled catastrophe for most of Russia's Mercurians. The war among nation-states proved disastrous not only for states without nations (the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman

empires), but also for nations without states, especially those that lived as Mercurian strangers among other nations. Fathers and sons (patriarchal empires) did worse than brothers (liberal nation-states), and those who had no family connection to their state did worst of all.

On the Caucasus front, the Ottoman massacres of Armenians and Assyrians led to the influx into Russia of large numbers of refugees, some of whom were later deported internally. But most refugees on Russian territory were entirely of Russia's own making. Over the course of the war, more than a million residents of the Russian Empire defined as alien on the basis of citizenship, nationality, or religion were forcibly expelled from their homes and subjected to deportation, internment, hostage taking, police surveillance, and confiscations of property, among other things. The overwhelming majority of them were Russian Germans and Jews, who were seen as potentially disloyal because of their ethnic connection to enemy subjects, but also—as in the case of the Ottoman Armenians—because they were visible and successful Mercurians. The most widely advertised part of the campaign against them was conducted under the banner of the struggle against "German dominance" in the economy and included the liquidation of firms with "enemy-subject" connections. Anti-Jewish and anti-German pogroms were a regular part of wartime mobilization. The largest of them—in terms of popular participation and financial damage—was the anti-German riot in Moscow on May 26–29, 1915, which resulted in the destruction of about eight hundred company offices and apartments. The common perception that the imperial court (along with its state, style, and capital) was in some sense German played an important part in its final downfall two years later.[90]

Total wars are won by modern nations, and modern nations consist of fraternal native sons. The tsarist state attempted to create a cohesive family by removing "nonnatives" without making meaningful concessions on the fraternity (equality of citizens) front. One result of this policy was the demise of the tsarist state. Another was the end of the special role of Germans as Russia's principal Mercurians. The third was the collapse of the Pale of Settlement and the emergence of the Jews as the Mercurians of a new multinational empire.

The Russian Revolution was a combination of popular uprisings, religious crusades, ethnic wars, colonial conquests, and clashing coalitions. One part of the mix was the Jewish Revolution against Jewishness. Wartime massacres and deportations accompanied by the militarization of apocalyptic millenarianism—anarchist, nationalist, and Marxist—transformed the decades-old rebellion of Jewish children into a massive revolution. During Russia's Time of Troubles of 1914–21, most Jews hid, fled, or moved; tens of thousands were killed. But among those who took up arms, the majority did not stay to defend their parents' lives and property. They had universal brotherhood to fight for.[91]

When Babel's narrator arrived with the Red Cavalry in Galicia, he found "eyeless, gap-toothed" synagogues "squatting on the barren earth"; "narrow-shouldered Jews loitering mournfully at the crossroads"; "hunched-shouldered Jews in waistcoats standing in their doorways like bedraggled birds"; and the all-pervasive smell of sour feces and rotten herring. "The shtetl stinks in the expectation of a new era, and walking through it, instead of human beings, are faded outlines of frontier misfortunes."

It was there, in the "stifling captivity" of Hasidism, among "the possessed, the liars, and the idlers" at the court of "the last rebbe of the Chernobyl dynasty," that he discovered the true prophet of the last exodus.

> Behind Gedali's back, I saw a youth with the face of Spinoza, the powerful brow of Spinoza, and the faded face of a nun. He was smoking and shivering like a runaway prisoner who has just been returned to his cell. Suddenly, ragged Reb Mordche ["a hunchbacked old man no taller than a boy of ten"] crept up to him from behind, tore the cigarette from his mouth and darted back toward me.
>
> "That's Elijah, the Rebbe's son," Mordche wheezed, as he brought close to me the bleeding flesh of his exposed eyelids, "the accursed son, the last son, the disobedient son . . ."
>
> And Mordche shook his small fist at the young man and spat in his face.[92]

This is act 1 of the Jewish Revolution as portrayed by the prophet's "brother," himself a prophet whose "stories were meant to outlive oblivion."[93] Another brother—the official "Young

Communist Poet" Eduard Bagritsky (Dziubin)—remembered his own childhood:

They tried to dry it out with their matzos,
They tried to trick it with their candlelight.
They shoved its face into their dusty tablets,
Those gates that would remain forever shut.
The Jewish peacocks on the chairs and sofas,
The Jewish milk forever going sour,
My father's crutch, my mother's lacy cap—
All hissed at me:
You wretch! You wretch!
. . . . . .
Their love?
But what about their lice-eaten braids,
Their crooked, jutting-out collar bones,
Their pimples, their herring-smeared mouths,
The curve of their horselike necks.
My parents?
But growing old in twilight,
Hunchbacked and gnarled, like savage beasts
The rusty Jews keep shaking in my face
Their stubble-covered fists.
. . . . . .
"You outcast! Pick up your miserable suitcase,
You're cursed and scorned!
Get out!"
I'm leaving my old bed behind:
"Get out?"
I will!
Good riddance!
I don't care![94]

He did get out—as did Elijah and, of course, Babel and his hero. What they found outside, after 1917, was much bigger than the wonderful and shameful life of all the people in the world; much bigger than Pushkin, Galina Apollonovna, and the little islands of freedom. What they found was the first of the twentieth century's

Wars of Religion, the last war to end all wars, the Armageddon on the eve of eternity.

For those who wished to fight, there was but one army to join. The Red Army was the only force that stood earnestly and consistently against the Jewish pogroms and the only one led by a Jew. Trotsky was not just a general or even a prophet: he was the living embodiment of redemptive violence, the sword of revolutionary justice, and—at the same time—Lev Davydovich Bronstein, whose first school had been Schufer's heder in Gromoklei, Kherson province. The other Bolshevik leaders standing closest to Lenin during the civil war were G. E. Zinoviev (Ovsei-Gersh Aronovich Radomyslsky), L. B. Kamenev (Rosenfeld), and Ya. M. Sverdlov.[95]

These were effects, not causes; icons of a much larger truth. The vast majority of Bolshevik party members (72 percent in 1922) were ethnic Russians; the highest rate of overrepresentation belonged to the Latvians (although after Latvia's independence in 1918, Soviet Latvians became a largely self-selected political émigré community); and none of the prominent Communists of Jewish background wanted to be Jewish. Which is precisely what made them perfect heroes for rebels like Eduard Bagritsky, who did not want to be Jewish, either. Trotsky declared his nationality to be "Social Democratic," and that was the nationality the Bolsheviks represented and Bagritsky fought for: "So that the unyielding earth / Would be drenched in blood, / And a brand-new virgin youth / Sprout up from the bones." Of those fighting on the bones of imperial Russia, the Bolsheviks were the only true priests at the temple of eternal youth, the only crusaders for universal brotherhood, the only party where Eduard Bagritsky and Elijah Bratslavsky could feel at home.[96]

When Babel's narrator next saw him, Elijah the Red Army soldier was dying from his wounds.

"Four months ago, on a Friday evening, Gedali the junk salesman brought me to your father, Rebbe Motale, but you were not in the Party then, Bratslavsky."

"I was in the Party then," the boy replied, clawing at his chest and writhing in fever, "but I could not abandon my mother . . ."

"And now, Elijah?"

"In a revolution, a mother is but an episode," he whispered softly. "My letter came up, the letter B, and our Party cell sent me to the front. . . ."

"And you landed in Kovel, Elijah?"

"I ended up in Kovel!" he screamed out in desperation. "The damned kulaks broke through our defenses. I took command of a scratch regiment, but it was too late. I didn't have enough artillery. . . ."

Elijah breathed his last. In his little trunk, "all kinds of things were piled up together—the Party propagandist's guidelines and the Jewish poet's notebooks. The portraits of Lenin and Maimonides lay side by side. . . . A lock of woman's hair was inserted in the book of the resolutions of the Sixth Party Congress, and the margins of Communist leaflets were crowded with the crooked lines of Hebrew verses."[97]

That there was a connection between Lenin and Maimonides (and the two Elijahs, of course) is Babel's conjecture; that there were many rebbes' sons in the Red Army is a fact. They fought against ancient backwardness and modern capitalism, against their own "chimerical nationality" and the very foundations of the old world (to paraphrase the "Internationale"). They had no Motherland; they had nothing but their chains to lose; and—unlike many other revolutionaries—they seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of proletarian consciousness, or Social Democratic patriotism.

When M. S. (Eli-Moishe) Altman, the future classicist, was nine years old, he organized a strike against autocracy in his heder. When he was a fourth-grade *gymnasium* student, he wrote a prizewinning essay about Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman." And when he was in Chernigov as a twenty-two-year-old medical student, he caught up with the revolution.

> I foresaw the Bolshevik victory long before the end of the war and printed a special leaflet warning the population of that fact. "We have come to stay!" I wrote in that leaflet. When the Bolsheviks finally did come, they were impressed by the leaflet and, having found out who the author of the warning was, appointed me, a nonmember, as the editor of their official newspaper, *The News of the Executive Committee of Chernigov Province*. My life changed completely. I became a fanatical believer in Lenin and the "world revolution" and walked around with such a revolutionary look on my face that the civilian population did not dare come near me. When "we" (the Bolsheviks) took Odessa, I remember staggering down the street like a drunk.[98]

Esther Ulanovskaia grew up in the shtetl of Bershad in Ukraine. As a little girl, she loved Tolstoy, Turgenev, and her grandfather, the rabbi. She dreamed of going to the university and then "straight to Siberia or the gallows."

> Everything about our shtetl annoyed and outraged me. . . . I wanted to fight for the revolution, the people. But "the people" was a rather abstract concept for me. The Jews who surrounded me were not the people—just a bunch of unpleasant individuals, some of whom I happened to love. But the muzhiks, who came to the shtetl on market days, got drunk, swore, and beat their wives, did not look like the people I read about in books, either. It is true that the shtetl Jews were kinder than the Ukrainian peasants, did not beat their wives, and did not swear. But the Jews represented the world I wanted to get away from.[99]

When she was thirteen, she moved to Odessa and joined the "Young Revolutionary International," most of whose members were Jewish teenagers. They already had one Vera (Faith) and one Liubov (Love, or Charity), so Esther became Nadezhda (Hope). "My name Esther ('Esterka' at home), and even its Russian version, Esfir, sounded bad to me. Back in the shtetl everyone had tried to adopt a Russian name; in Odessa, a Jewish name was a sign of frightful backwardness." The civil war provided all those who wanted to escape backwardness—but would never have reached Siberia or the gallows—with the opportunity for self-transformation, self-sacrifice, and ritual slaughter. Vera, Nadezhda, and Liubov, among many others, were moved by the desire to "avenge their comrades and, if necessary, die fighting." At one point, they entered a village, proclaimed Soviet power, and set up a blockade to prevent the peasants from taking their produce to town. There were about a hundred of

them, and they were well armed. "I don't know why we needed that blockade," wrote Nadezhda many years later. "I did not question anything and did not notice that the peasants were becoming unhappy." Nadezhda and her friends were fighting for the people in general and no one in particular. Many of them died fighting. Nadezhda survived and went on to become a Soviet secret agent in China, Europe, and the United States.[100]

Babel's narrator (like Babel himself, in December 1917) also escaped pogroms to join the secret police, or the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage. There, at the end of "The Road" (as the story is called), he found "comrades faithful in friendship and death, comrades the likes of whom are not to be found anywhere in the world except in our country." They would remain friends until Babel's death at their hands in January 1940. The first head of the interrogation team investigating Babel's "espionage activity" was a Jewish fugitive from backwardness.[101]

For many young Jews during the civil war, Pushkin Street became "the road" to the world revolution (or to combat against counterrevolution and sabotage, as the case might be). It seemed to be an inexorable, uninterrupted, and universal path of liberation, along which, "Locked in step, / Marched a yellow-faced Chinaman / And a Hebrew with a pale countenance" (as Iosif Utkin, another officially canonized Young Communist poet, put it). The journey was arduous, but the goal was never in doubt—for right there, by their side, was "the poet of the political department" leading the Bolsheviks "to where the shrapnel and the grenades whiz by." As Bagritsky wrote in 1924,

> I took revenge for Pushkin by the Black Sea,
> I carried Pushkin in the Urals through the woods,
> I crawled with Pushkin in the shallow, muddy trenches,
> Lice-eaten, starving, barefoot, and cold!
> My heart would pound wildly with elation,
> The flame of freedom would rise high within my breast,
> When, to the song of bullets and machine guns,
> I'd feel inspired to recite his ringing lines!

> The years roll on along their narrow road,
> New songs keep boiling up within my heart.
> . . . . . .
> The spring's in bloom—and Pushkin, now avenged,
> Is with us still, singing of liberty.[102]

The revolutions of 1917 did not have much to do with either Pushkin or the Jews. But the civil war that followed did. Most of the fighting took place in and around the old Pale of Settlement, where ethnic Russians were a minority and Jews made up a large proportion of the urban population. For Polish and Ukrainian nationalists and assorted peasant ("Green") armies, the Jews represented the old Mercurian foe, the new capitalist city, the expansion of Russian high culture, and, of course, Bolshevism (which represented all of the above insofar as it was the religion of the modern city, ethnically Social Democratic but for the time being Russian-speaking). For the Whites, whose movement was hijacked early on by Russian ethnic nationalists and imperial restorationists, the Jews represented all those things that used to be called "German" (a combination of old Mercurianism and new urbanism as a form of "foreign dominance") and, of course, Bolshevism, which appeared to be a particularly contagious combination of old Mercurianism and new urbanism as a form of foreign dominance. For all these groups, the Jews became an enemy that was easy to define and identify. The Ukrainian nationalists, in particular, could succeed only if they conquered the city, but Ukrainian cities were dominated by Russians, Poles, and Jews. The Russians and Poles had their own armies and were rather thin on the ground; the Jews were either Bolsheviks or defenseless shtetl dwellers. To the extent that they ceased to be defenseless, they tended to become Bolsheviks.

The early Bolsheviks did not normally classify their enemies in ethnic terms. The evil they were combating—"the bourgeoisie"—was an abstract concept not easily convertible into specific targets of arrests and executions. This was a serious weakness in a modern war of ascriptive extermination: not only were there no "bourgeois" flags, armies, or uniforms—there were no people in Russia who used the term to describe themselves and very few people who

could be thus described according to Marxist sociology. Eventually, this challenge would become grave enough to force the Soviet regime to modify its concept of evil, but during the civil war the Bolsheviks were able to make up in determination whatever they lacked in conceptual clarity.

The Whites, Greens, and Ukrainian nationalists never committed themselves to the wholesale extermination of the Jews. Their detachments murdered and robbed tens of thousands of Jewish civilians, and their secret services singled out certain groups (mostly Jews but also Latvians) for special treatment, but their leaders and their armies as political institutions were equivocal, defensive, or loudly (and sometimes sincerely) indignant on this score. In the end, the Jewish pogroms were seen as violations of discipline that demoralized the troops and undermined the movements' true objectives, which were fundamentally political. Proper enemies were people who held certain beliefs.[103]

The Bolshevik practice was much more straightforward. "The bourgeoisie" might be an elusive category, but no one apologized for the principle of their "liquidation" on the basis of "objective criteria." Property, imperial rank, and education unredeemed by Marxism were punishable by death, and tens of thousands of people were punished accordingly and unabashedly as hostages or simply as "alien elements" within reach. There were many Jews among the "bourgeois," but Jews as such were never defined as an enemy group. The Bolshevik strength lay not in knowing for sure whom to kill, but in being proud and eager to kill individuals as members of "classes." Sacred violence as a sociological undertaking was an essential part of the doctrine and the most important criterion of true membership.

This meant that Jews who wanted to be true members had to adopt physical coercion against certain groups as a legitimate means of dealing with difference. Or rather, they had to become Apollonians. As Babel's Arye-Leib put it, in one of the best-loved passages in Soviet literature:

> Forget for a while that you have glasses on your nose and autumn in your soul. Stop quarreling at your desk and stuttering in public. Imagine for a second that you quarrel in city squares and stutter on paper. You are a tiger, a lion, a cat. You can spend the night with a Russian woman, and the Russian woman will be satisfied.[104]

A substantial number of Jews heeded Arye-Leib's call. Their overall share of Bolshevik party membership during the civil war was relatively modest (5.2 percent in 1922), but their visibility in city squares was striking. After the February Revolution, all army officers had become suspect as possible "counterrevolutionaries"; the new soldiers' committees required literate delegates; many of the literate soldiers were Jews. Viktor Shklovsky, the literary scholar, estimated that Jews had made up about 40 percent of all top elected officials in the army. He had been one of them (a commissar); he also remembered having met a talented Jewish cellist who was representing the Don Cossacks. In April 1917, 10 out of 24 members (41.7 percent) of the governing bureau of the Petrograd Soviet were Jews.[105]

At the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets in June 1917, at least 31 percent of Bolshevik delegates (and 37 percent of Unified Social Democrats) were Jews. At the Bolshevik Central Committee meeting of October 23, 1917, which voted to launch an armed insurrection, 5 out of the 12 members present were Jews. Three out of seven Politbureau members charged with leading the October uprising were Jews (Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Grigory Sokolnikov [Girsh Brilliant]). The All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VtsIK) elected at the Second Congress of Soviets (which ratified the Bolshevik takeover, passed the decrees on land and peace, and formed the Council of People's Commissars with Lenin as chairman) included 62 Bolsheviks (out of 101 members). Among them were 23 Jews, 20 Russians, 5 Ukrainians, 5 Poles, 4 "Balts," 3 Georgians, and 2 Armenians. According to Nahum Rafalkes-Nir, who represented Poalei-Zion, all 15 speakers who debated the takeover as their parties' official representatives were Jews (in fact, probably 14). The first two VtsIK chairmen (heads of the Soviet state) were Kamenev and Sverdlov. Sverdlov was also the Party's chief administrator (head of the Secretariat). The first Bolshevik bosses of Moscow and Petrograd were Kamenev and Zinoviev. Zinoviev was also

the chairman of the Communist International. The first Bolshevik commandants of the Winter Palace and the Moscow Kremlin were Grigorii Isakovich Chudnovsky and Emelian Yaroslavsky (Minei Izraelevich Gubelman). Yaroslavsky was also the chairman of the League of the Militant Godless. The heads of the Soviet delegation at the Brest-Litovsk negotiations were Adolf Ioffe and Trotsky. Trotsky was the face of the Red Army.[106]

When, in March 1919, the Petrograd Soviet, headed by Zinoviev, launched a competition for the best portrait of "a hero of our age," the suggested list of heroes included Lenin, Lunacharsky, Karl Liebknecht, and four Bolsheviks raised in Jewish families: Trotsky, Uritsky (the head of Petrograd's secret police, assassinated in August 1918), V. Volodarsky (Moisei Goldstein, Petrograd's chief censor as the commissar of print, propaganda, and agitation, assassinated in June 1918), and Zinoviev himself.[107]

The Jewish share of the Party's Central Committee in 1919–21 remained steady at about one-fourth. In 1918, about 54 percent of all Petrograd Party officials described as "leading" were Jews, as were 45 percent of city and provincial Party officials and 36 percent of the Northern District commissars. Three out of five members of the presidium of the Petrograd trade union council in 1919, and 13 out of 36 members of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet in 1920 were Jews. In 1923 in Moscow, Jews made up 29 percent of the Party's "leading cadres" and 45 percent of the provincial social security administration. Their share in the city Party organization (13.5 percent) was three times their share in the general population. Almost half of them were under twenty-five years old (43.8 percent of men and 51.1 percent of women); 25.4 percent of all female Bolsheviks in Moscow were of Jewish background. According to the historian of Leningrad Jewry Mikhail Beizer (and not accounting for pseudonyms),

> It may have seemed to the general population that the Jewish participation in Party and Soviet organs was even more substantial because Jewish names were constantly popping up in newspapers. Jews spoke relatively more often than others at rallies, conferences, and meetings of all kinds. Here, for example, is the agenda of the Tenth City Conference of the Young Communist League (Komsomol), held in Petrograd on January 5th, 1920: Zinoviev made a speech on the current situation, Slosman read the report of the city Komsomol committee, Kagan spoke on political and organizational matters, Itkina greeted the delegates on behalf of female workers, and Zaks represented the Central Committee of the Komsomol.[108]

The secret police did less quarreling in public squares, but it was one of the most public symbols of Bolshevik power. The proportion of Jews in the Cheka as a whole was not very high (compared to what White propaganda often alleged): 3.7 percent of the Moscow apparatus, 4.3 percent of Cheka commissars, and 8.6 percent of senior ("responsible") officials in 1918, and 9.1 percent of all members of provincial Cheka offices (Gubcheka) in 1920. As in the Party, the majority of Cheka members were Russians, and by far the most overrepresented group were the Latvians, consistently and successfully cultivated by Lenin as the Praetorian Guards of the Revolution (35.6 percent of the Moscow Cheka apparatus, 52.7 percent of all Cheka senior officials, and 54.3 percent of all Cheka commissars, as compared to about 0.09 percent in the country as a whole and about 0.5 percent in Moscow). But even in the Cheka, Bolsheviks of Jewish origin combined ideological commitment with literacy in ways that set them apart and propelled them upward. In 1918, 65.5 percent of all Jewish Cheka employees were "responsible officials." Jews made up 19.1 percent of all central apparatus investigators and 50 percent (6 out of 12) of the investigators employed in the department for combating counterrevolution. In 1923, at the time of the creation of the OGPU (the Cheka's successor), Jews made up 15.5 percent of all "leading" officials and 50 percent of the top brass (4 out of 8 members of the Collegium's Secretariat). "Socially alien" Jews were well represented among the Cheka-OGPU prisoners, too, but Leonard Schapiro is probably justified in generalizing (especially about the territory of the former Pale) that "anyone who had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the Cheka stood a very good chance of finding himself confronted with and possibly shot by a Jewish investigator."[109]

Specifically, and very publicly, Jewish names (and some transparent Jewish pseudonyms) were associated with two of the most dramatic and symbolically significant acts of the Red Terror. Early in the civil war, in June 1918, Lenin ordered the killing of Nicholas II and his family. Among the men entrusted with carrying out the order were Sverdlov (head of the the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in Moscow, formerly an assistant pharmacist), Shaia Goloshchekin (the commissar of the Urals Military District, formerly a dentist), and Yakov Yurovsky (the Chekist who directed the execution and later claimed to have personally shot the tsar, formerly a watchmaker and photographer). It was meant to be a secret operation, but after the Whites reoccupied Ekaterinburg, they ordered an official investigation, the results of which, including the Jewish identities of the main perpetrators, were published in Berlin in 1925 (and eventually confirmed). At the end of the civil war, in late 1920–early 1921, Béla Kun (the chairman of the Crimean Revolutionary Committee) and R. S. Zemliachka (Rozaliia Zalkind, the head of the Crimean Party Committee and the daughter of a well-off Kiev merchant) presided over the massacre of thousands of refugees and prisoners of war who had stayed behind after the evacuation of the White Army. For her part in the operation, Zemliachka received the highest Soviet decoration: the Order of the Red Banner. She was the first woman to be thus honored.[110]

But Jewish revolutionaries did not just tower over city squares—they were prominent in the revolutionary remaking of those squares. Natan Altman, who had begun his artistic career by experimenting with Jewish themes, became the leader of "Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda," the founder of artistic "Leniniana" (Lenin iconography), and the designer of the first Soviet flag, state emblem, official seals, and postage stamps. In 1918, he was put in charge of an enormous festival marking the first anniversary of the October Revolution in Petrograd. Fourteen kilometers (8.7 miles) of canvas and enormous red, green, and orange cubist panels were used to decorate—and reconceptualize—the city's main square in front of the Winter Palace. The spatial center of imperial statehood was transformed into a stage set for the celebration of the beginning

of the end of time. El Lissitzky (Lazar Markovich [Mordukhovich] Lisitsky) also abandoned the attempt to create a Jewish national form in order to embrace the international artistic revolution and the world revolution as a work of art. His much celebrated "prouns" (the Russian acronym for "projects for the affirmation of the new") included designs for "Lenin's podiums" (huge leaning towers meant to soar above city squares) and the most iconic of all revolutionary posters: "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge" (the Whites being represented by a white circle).[111]

The revolutionary rebirth was accompanied by revolutionary renamings, which reflected the degree of Jewish prominence. In Petrograd alone, Palace Square, decorated by Natan Altman, became Uritsky Square; the Tauride Palace, where the Provisional Government had been formed and the Constituent Assembly dispersed, became Uritsky Palace; Liteinyi Avenue became Volodarsky Avenue; the palace of Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich became Nakhamkes Palace; the Admiralty Embankment and Admiralty Avenue were named after Semen Roshal; Vladimir Square and Vladimir Avenue were named after Semen Nakhimson; and the new Communist Workers' University (along with various streets and the city of Elisavetgrad) was named after Zinoviev. The royal residences Pavlovsk and Gatchina became Slutsk and Trotsk, respectively. Vera (Berta) Slutskaia had been the secretary of the Vasileostrovsky District Party Committee.[112]

Finally, to return to Arye-Leib's injunction and Babel's first love, there was the matter of spending the night with a Russian woman. Between 1924 and 1936, the rate of mixed marriages for Jewish males increased from 1.9 to 12.6 percent (6.6 times) in Belorussia, from 3.7 to 15.3 percent (4.1 times) in Ukraine, and from 17.4 to 42.3 percent (2.4 times) in the Russian Republic. The proportions grew higher for both men and women as one moved up the Bolshevik hierarchy. Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Sverdlov were married to Russian women (Kamenev was married to Trotsky's sister). The non-Jews Andreev, Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Kirov, Kosarev, Lunacharsky, Molotov, Rykov, and Voroshilov, among others, were married to Jewish women. As Lunacharsky (the commissar of en-

ightenment) put it, echoing Lenin's and Gorky's views but also speaking from personal experience,

> It is with great joy that we view the immense increase in the number of Russo-Jewish marriages. This is the right path. Our Slavic blood still has a lot of peasant malt; it is thick and plentiful, but it flows a little slowly, and our whole biological rhythm is a little too rustic. On the other hand, the blood of our Jewish comrades is very fast flowing. So let us mix our blood and, in this fruitful mixture, find the human type that will include the blood of the Jewish people like delicious, thousand-year-old human wine.[113]

The special relationship between Bolsheviks and Jews—or rather, between the Bolshevik and Jewish revolutions—became an important part of the revolutionary war of words. Many Whites and other enemies of the Bolsheviks equated the two and represented Bolshevism as a fundamentally Jewish phenomenon. This was an effective argument insofar as it made use of some obvious facts to describe the revolution as a form of foreign invasion to be repelled by true patriots. The problem with the argument—for those willing to argue—was the equally obvious size and composition of the Red Army. No one ever claimed that Babel's "Red Cavalry" stories about a Jew trying to join revolutionary Cossacks should have been about a Cossack trying to join revolutionary Jews. And even N. A. Sokolov, the Kolchak government investigator of the tsar's murder who made the point of referring to various rescue efforts as "attempts by the Russian people to save the royal family," made it clear that the Jewish commissars Goloshchekin and Yurovsky had no trouble finding eager regicides (and convinced Bolsheviks) among local factory workers.[114]

Another view assumed that the civil war was, indeed, civil in the sense of being fratricidal, but argued that the Jews bore a special responsibility for the outcome because the Bolshevik doctrine was evil and because the Jews were overrepresented among its authors and principal practitioners. The best-known defense of this view

was offered by the prominent monarchist, Russian nationalist, and anti-Semite V. V. Shulgin in a book written in France in 1927. The book was called *What We Do Not Like Them For.* Addressing "them" directly, Shulgin wrote:

> We do not like the fact that you took too prominent a part in the revolution, which turned out to be the greatest *lie and fraud.* We do not like the fact that you became *the backbone and core of the Communist Party.* We do not like the fact that, with your discipline and solidarity, your persistence and will, you have consolidated and strengthened for years to come the maddest and bloodiest enterprise that humanity has known since the day of creation. We do not like the fact that this experiment was carried out *in order to implement the teachings of a Jew, Karl Marx.* We do not like the fact that this whole terrible thing was done *on the Russian back* and that it has cost us Russians, all of us together and each one of us separately, unutterable losses. We do not like the fact that you, Jews, a relatively small group within the Russian population, participated in this vile deed *out of all proportion to your numbers.*[115]

What could be done about this? Probably for the first time in the history of Russian political writing, Shulgin proposed an explicit and comprehensive defense of the principle of ethnic responsibility, ethnic guilt, and ethnic remorse. Anticipating the standard reasoning of the second half of the century, he argued that whereas legally sons should not have to answer for their fathers, morally they should, and do, and always will. Family responsibility is as necessary as it is inescapable, he argued. If Lindbergh's mother is rightfully proud of her son, then Lenin's mother should be ashamed of hers. Nations are families too:

> It cannot be otherwise. All of us, whether we like it or not, reinforce this link every day of our lives. Some miserable Russian exile in a seedy bistro may be "proud" of Russian vodka before some French lowlife. Did he make that vodka himself?! No, he did not, and neither did his father, his grandfather, his distant relative, or even some acquaintance of his; this vodka was invented by Russians about whom this "proud" individual knows absolutely nothing. So what is he

proud of? "What do you mean? Because I am Russian, too, by God!" This says it all, and the French lowlife does not question the Russian's right to be proud of "la vodka," because he agrees: every Russian has the right to be proud of anything done by any other Russian.

What does this mean? This means that all Russians, whether they like it or not, are connected to each other by a thread that is invisible but strong, because this *thread has a universal sanction and recognition.*[116]

The miserable exile is proud of vodka. Others are proud of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Rachmaninoff. "They are proud, and have every right to be." But if membership in a nation confers pride, it must, by the same token, impose responsibility. Being proud of Tolstoy, according to Shulgin, means sharing the blame for Rasputin and Bolshevism.

Shulgin's list of Russian crimes did not go beyond those two, which seems to mean that Russians had no one but themselves to apologize to. Not so with the Jews. Since most of the victims of the Red Terror were Russians, and many of the top perpetrators (especially in his native Kiev in 1919) were Jews, all Jews owed all Russians a formal mea culpa. As Shulgin wrote in his newspaper *Kievlianin* on October 8, 1919, in the middle of a brutal pogrom (and thus not without a touch of blackmail),

> Will they understand what they need to do now? Will all those Jews who contributed to the catastrophe be publicly cursed in all the Jewish synagogues? Will the bulk of the Jewish population renounce the creators of the "new" world with the same passion with which it assaulted the old? Will the Jews, beating themselves on the chest and covering their heads with ashes, repent publicly for the fateful role that the sons of Israel played in the Bolshevik frenzy?[117]

And if they do not—if they say that, after all, the Jews as a nation did not stage the Russian Revolution and should not answer for a few Jewish Bolsheviks, then the answer should be:

> Fine, *in that case* we did not stage the pogroms, either, and don't have anything to do with those few who did: Petliura's men, the Ossetians, and assorted riffraff along with them. We don't have any influence over them. Personally, we did not engage in any pogroms, we tried to prevent pogroms. . . . So if the Jews, all of them, do not plead guilty to the social revolution, then the Russians, all of them, will not plead guilty to the Jewish pogroms. . . .[118]

A few Russian Jewish intellectuals did plead guilty. In a 1923 collection published in Berlin, *Russia and the Jews*, they called on "the Jews of all countries" to resist Bolshevism and to admit the "bitter sin" of Jewish complicity in its crimes. In the words of I. M. Bikerman, "it goes without saying that not all Jews are Bolsheviks and not all Bolsheviks are Jews, but what is equally obvious is the disproportionate and immeasurably fervent Jewish participation in the torment of half-dead Russia by the Bolsheviks." It is true that the Jews suffered immeasurably from the pogroms, but was not the revolution "a universal pogrom"? "Or is condemning a whole social class to extermination . . . a revolution, and killing and robbing Jews a pogrom? Why such honor for Marx and his followers?" And why the continued claim that evil "always comes from others and is always directed at us"? These were very different Jews, after all. According to G. A. Landau, "We were amazed by what we had least expected to encounter among the Jews: cruelty, sadism, and violence had seemed alien to a nation so far removed from physical, warlike activity; those who yesterday did not know how to use a gun are now found among the executioners and cutthroats."[119]

Ia. A. Bromberg, a Eurasianist who did not contribute to *Russia and the Jews* but shared its goals, arguments, and prophetic style, devoted the most impassioned pages of his *The West, Russia, and the Jews* to this remarkable metamorphosis of Mercurians into Apollonians. "The author cannot help remembering his amazement, bordering on shock, at seeing, for the first time, a Jewish soldier as part of a commissar synod, before which he, as a prisoner of the Bolsheviks, was brought for yet another painfully meaningless interrogation." The formerly oppressed lover of liberty had turned into a tyrant of "unheard-of despotic arbitrariness"; the self-effacing negotiator had become the head of "the worst hooligan gangs"; the principled humanist was meting out forced labor for " 'economic espionage' and other fantastic crimes"; the pacifist and draft

ɔdger was haranguing the troops and leading "large military dechments"; and, most strikingly,

> The convinced and unconditional opponent of the death penalty not just for political crimes but for the most heinous offenses, who could not, as it were, watch a chicken being killed, has been transformed outwardly into a leather-clad person with a revolver and, in fact, lost all human likeness. Having joined the mob of other advocates and professionals of "revolutionary justice" representing younger and crueler nations, he is keeping, coldly and efficiently, as if they were regular statistics, the bloody count of the new victims of the revolutionary Moloch, or standing in a Cheka basement doing "bloody but honorable revolutionary work."[120]

The Jewish argument for Jewish "collective responsibility" (Lanlau's term) was the same as Shulgin's. Given what Bromberg called 'the old provincial passion for seeking out and extolling the Jews amous in various fields of cultural life," and especially "the shameess circus around the name of Einstein," one had no choice but to ıdopt the murderers too. In D. S. Pasmanik's words, "Is the Jewry esponsible for Trotsky? Undoubtedly so. Ethnic Jews not only do ıot renounce an Einstein or an Ehrlich; they do not even reject the ɔaptized Heine and Boerne. And this means that they have no right to disavow Trotsky and Zinoviev. . . . This means reminding the Polish hypocrites, who incite pogroms because of the murder of Budkiewicz, that the head of the Bolshevik inquisition, Dzerzhinsky, is a full-blooded Pole, and reminding the Latvians that, in Soviet Russia, they played the most shameful role of bloodthirsty executioners—along with the Chinese. In other words, we honestly admit our share of the responsibility."[121]

This position proved unpopular (though not entirely sterile).[122] It proved unpopular because it implied that everyone had something to apologize for but provided no universal gauge of culpability; because "an honest admission" seemed to depend on the universal demise of hypocrisy; because neither Shulgin nor "the Latvians" were in a hurry to do their part; because the pogroms had been specifically anti-Jewish while the Bolshevik terror was flexibly antibourgeois; because the Nazis would come to power within ten years; and because national canons consist not of "special, striking, or remarkable" deeds (as Jan T. Gross argues), but of pride-boosting and shame-suppressing tales of triumph, loss, and self-sacrifice. And because, ultimately, nations have no way of expiating their guilt. The language of Bikerman and others was the Christian language of sin, remorse, and penitence, which was meant to apply to mortal individuals with immortal souls. Members of nations might feel ashamed, but nations cannot go to confession, do penance, and eventually appear before their creator. No demand for a national apology can ever be fully complied with—because there is no legitimate source of penance, no agreed-upon quorum of penitents, and no universal authority to judge the sincerity of remorse.[123]

A much more common position among Jewish opponents of the Bolsheviks (and many future historians) was that Bolsheviks of Jewish descent were not Jews. Jewishness, they implied, in a radical departure from the conventional view, was not inherited but freely adopted—and therefore just as freely discarded. Jews were not the Chosen People; Jews were people who chose to be Jews. For some, the choice involved religious observance; for others ("secular Jews"), it amounted to a particular political (moral) affiliation. Simon Dubnow denied the Jewish Bolsheviks the right to call themselves Jews, and the Zionist newspaper *Togblat* proposed, in the Bolshevik spirit, that only persons formally appointed by national parties be considered true representatives of the Jewish masses. This was, of course, the same view as that held by many Russian nationalists: Russian Bolsheviks cannot be Russians because their avowed aim is the destruction of the Russian state, Russian churches, Russian culture, and the Russian peasants (i.e., the "Russian people"). And if they are not Russians, they have got to be Jews.[124]

Another version of this approach was to divide the group in question into the authentic and inauthentic varieties. Lenin argued that each nation possessed two cultures—democratic (good) and bourgeois (bad); I. O. Levin identified Jewish Bolshevism with the "semi-intelligentsia" (as opposed to the real kind), which "had lost the cultural content of old Judaism while remaining alien not only to Russian culture but to any culture at all"; and Lev Kopelev's

mother used to explain to her maids and various acquaintances "that there are Jews and then there are Yids; the Jewish people have a great culture and have suffered a lot; Christ, Karl Marx, the poet Nadson, Doctor Lazarev (the best children's doctor in Kiev), the singer Iza Kremer, and our family are all Jews; those who scurry around in the marketplace or at the illegal stock exchange, or work as commissars in the Cheka are Yids."[125]

For the Bolsheviks and their friends, the prominence of Jewish revolutionaries could also be a political liability. In July 1917, Gorky, who never wavered in his admiration for the Jews, called on the Petrograd journalist I. O. Kheisin—who had written an article poking fun at the sickness of the imprisoned tsarina—to show "tact and moral sensitivity" lest anti-Semitic passions obscure the achievements of the revolution. In April 1922, after the civil war, he sent the following message to his friend Sholem Asch, to be passed on to the "Jewish workers of America":

> *The reason for the current anti-Semitism in Russia is the tactlessness of the Jewish Bolsheviks.* The Jewish Bolsheviks, not all of them but some irresponsible boys, are taking part in the defiling of the holy sites of the Russian people. They have turned churches into movie theaters and reading rooms without considering the feelings of the Russian people. The Jewish Bolsheviks should have left such things to the Russian Bolsheviks. The Russian peasant is cunning and secretive. He will put on a sheepish smile for your benefit, but deep inside he will harbor hatred for the Jew who raised his hand against his holy places.
>
> We should fight against this. For the sake of the future of the Jews in Russia, we should warn the Jewish Bolsheviks: "Stay away from the holy places of the Russian people! You are capable of other, more important, deeds. Do not interfere in things that concern the Russian church and the Russian soul!"
>
> Of course, the Jews are not to blame. Among Bolsheviks, there are many agents provocateurs, old Russian officials, bandits, and all kinds of vagabonds. The fact that the Bolsheviks sent the Jews, the helpless and irresponsible Jewish youths, to do these things, does smack of provocation, of course. But the Jews should have refrained. They should have realized that their actions would poison the soul of the Russian people. They should bear this in mind.[126]

The Jewish Bolsheviks were not amused. Esther Frumkina, one of the leaders of the Party's Jewish Section, accused Gorky of taking part in the "attack on the Jewish Communists for their selfless struggle against darkness and fanaticism," and Ilya Trainin, the editor of *The Life of Nationalities* and one of the top Bolshevik experts on the "national question," wrote that the "Stormy Petrel of the Revolution" had finally landed in the "swamp of philistinism." They did take his point, however. Trotsky, according to his own testimony, refused the post of commissar of internal affairs for fear of "providing our enemies with the additional weapon of my Jewishness" (despite Lenin's insistence that there was no task more important than fighting counterrevolution and "no better Bolshevik than Trotsky"). Meanwhile, the minutes of the Politburo meeting of April 18, 1919, included

> Comrade Trotsky's statement that Latvians and Jews constituted a vast percentage of those employed in Cheka frontal zone units, Executive Committees in frontal zones and the rear, and in Soviet establishments at the center; that the percentage of them at the front itself was a comparatively small one; that strong chauvinist agitation on this subject was being carried on among the Red Army men and finding a certain response there; and that, in Comrade Trotsky's opinion, a reallocation of party personnel was essential to achieve a more even distribution of party workers of all nationalities between the front and the rear.[127]

The Bolsheviks kept apologizing for the numbers of Jews in their midst until the subject became taboo in the mid-1930s. According to Lunacharsky:

> The Jews played such an outstanding role in our revolutionary movement that, when the revolution triumphed and established a state, a significant number of Jews entered the institutions of the state. They earned this right with their loyal and selfless service to the revolution. However, this circumstance is seen by anti-Semites as a strike against both the Jews and the revolution.

Moreover, the Jewish proletarian population is predominantly urban and advanced. Naturally, as our country grew and all manner of chains were removed, this population rose in certain proportions to more or less leading positions.

Some conclude from this: "Aha, this means that the revolution and the Jews are in some sense identical!" This enables the counterrevolutionaries to talk about "Jewish dominance," although the explanation is very simple: our revolution was carried out by the urban population, which tends to predominate in leading positions and of which the Jews make up a significant percentage.[128]

Anti-Semites, ethnic nationalists, and advocates of proportional representation were not likely to be satisfied with such simple explanations, but then they would not rise in certain proportions to more or less leading positions until the late 1930s. In the meantime, the Jewish Communist would remain a highly visible part of the official iconography—as a heroic, often tragic figure or simply as a familiar face in the Red Army ranks or at a deputy's desk.

One of the most celebrated books about the civil war was Babel's *Red Cavalry*, an inside story of the painful and never completed transformation of a hiccuping Jewish boy with a swollen blue head into a Cossack hero without fear or mercy. The force that moved him was love—the bitter, ardent, and hopeless first love of a Mercury for an Apollo.

Savitsky, the commander of the Sixth Division, stood up when he saw me, and I was struck by the beauty of his huge body. He stood up, and with the purple of his riding breeches, the crimson of his rakish little cap, and the decorations hammered onto his chest he sliced the hut in two, the way a standard slices the sky. He smelled of perfume and the cloying freshness of soap. His long legs looked like girls sheathed to the neck in shiny riding boots.

He smiled at me, struck the desk with his whip, and drew toward himself an order that the chief of staff had just finished dictating.[129]

The order was to "destroy the enemy," and the punishment for noncompliance was summary execution administered "on the spot" by Savitsky himself.

The commander of the Sixth signed the order with a flourish, tossed it to his orderlies, and turned his gray eyes, dancing with merriment, toward me.

I handed him the paper with my appointment to the divisional staff.

"Put it down in the order of the day!" said the commander. "Put him down for every satisfaction except the front one. Can you read and write?"

"Yes, I can," I replied, envying the iron and flower of his youthfulness. "I am a law graduate from St. Petersburg University . . ."

"So you're one of those little geniuses," he shouted, laughing. "And with a pair of glasses on your nose. A little on the mangy side too. They send you fellows down without asking first . . . People have gotten carved up around here for wearing glasses. So, do you plan to stay with us?"

"Yes, I plan to stay with you," I replied before setting off for the village with the quartermaster, to find a place for the night.[130]

Savitsky was to be the Jewish boy's last tutor. The boy had been taught Hebrew, Russian, French, music, and the law, among many other things. His other teachers had included Pushkin, of course, and Zagursky, and Galina Apollonovna, and Efim Nikitich Smolich, who had taught him the names of the birds and the trees, and the Russian prostitute, Vera, who had "taught him her science" in payment for his first story (in "My First Fee"). The job of Savitsky and his beautiful and terrifying Red Cavalrymen was to teach him "the simplest of skills—the ability to kill a man."[131]

One lesson took place in the town of Berestechko, where he saw Bohdan Khmelnytsky's watchtower and heard an old man singing in a childlike voice about bygone Cossack glory.

Right under my window several Cossacks were preparing to shoot a silver-bearded old Jew for spying. The old man was squealing and

struggling to get away. Then Kudria from the machine-gun detachment took hold of the old man's head and tucked it under his arm. The Jew grew quiet and stood with his legs apart. With his right hand Kudria pulled out his dagger and carefully slit the old man's throat, without splashing any blood on himself. Then he knocked on the closed window.

"If anyone's interested," he said, "They can come and get him. He's free for the taking . . ."[132]

The narrator's name—and Babel's civil war pseudonym as a reporter—was Liutov ("the Ferocious One"). His lessons in killing were numerous, relentless, and multiform. His first prey, soon after Savitsky's welcome, was a goose.

A stern-looking goose was wandering about the yard, serenely preening its feathers. I caught up with it and pressed it to the ground; the goose's head cracked under my boot—cracked and spilled out. The white neck was spread out in the dung, and the wings flapped convulsively over the slaughtered bird.

"Mother of God upon my soul!" I said, poking around in the goose with my saber. "I'll have this roasted, landlady."[133]

Liutov was rewarded with a place by the fire, the title "brother," and a bowl of homemade cabbage soup with pork. He did not become one of the Cossacks, though. His job was to read Lenin aloud to them, and his heart, "stained crimson with murder, squeaked and overflowed." He would never master the simplest of skills, never learn how to truly love a horse, and never lose either the glasses on his nose or the autumn in his soul. Even as a Cheka employee, Babel would always remain an interpreter. To paraphrase Osip Mandelstam's epigram, "The horse miaowed, the tomcat neighed. / The Jew was acting like a Cossack."[134]

That was true of Babel, every one of Babel's doubles, countless other Jewish boys with glasses who could not swim, as well as all of Russian literature's "superfluous men" who had never been able to satisfy a Russian woman. But that was not what made Babel "a literary Messiah . . . from the sunny steppes washed by the sea," as Babel himself put it. What made Babel a literary Messiah from the

sunny steppes washed by the sea was his discovery of Jewish Apollonians—Jews who were "jovial, paunchy, and bubbly like cheap wine"; Jews who thought only "of downing a good shot of vodka and punching somebody in the face"; Jews who were kings and "looked like sailors"; Jews who could make a Russian woman named Katiusha "moan, and peal with laughter"; Jews who were taller than the tallest policeman in Odessa; Jews "whose fury contained within it everything that was necessary to rule over others"; Jews who had "murder in their souls"; Jews who could "shuffle their fathers' faces like a fresh deck of cards"; Jews who had well-deserved nicknames like Pogrom and Cossack. Jews who were more like Goliath than David, more like Cyclops and Achilles than Ulysses.[135]

One such Jew—of small stature but "with the soul of an Odessa Jew"—was the blacksmith Jonah Brutman, who had three sons, "three fattened bulls with purple shoulders and feet like spades." The first son followed in his father's trade; the second went off to join the partisans and got killed; and the third, Semen, "went over to Primakov and joined a division of Red Cossacks. He was made commander of a Cossack regiment. He and a few other shtetl boys became the first of an unexpected breed of saber-wielding Jewish horsemen and partisans."[136]

Members of this breed became familiar heroes of Soviet folklore, fiction, and recollection. There are Perets Markish's "Shloime-Ber and Azriel, a shoemaker's sons turned Red Cavalrymen, riding to the front"; there is Izrail Khaikelevich ("Alesha") Ulanovsky, a brawler, sailor, miner, and partisan, who did not like intellectuals and became an NKVD spy; there is the biggest man of the Stalin era, Grigory Novak, the first Soviet champion of the world (in power lifting, in 1946) and the only circus athlete to juggle seventy-pound weights; and there are legendary gangsters, drunkards, and womanizers who, "if there were rings attached to heaven and earth, would grab those rings and pull heaven down to earth." All of them were begotten by Semen Brutman—or possibly Anatoly Rybakov's Uncle Misha, a "recklessly generous and desperately brave" Red army commander, "broad-shouldered and burly, with a chiseled, tanned Mongol face and slanted eyes, a daredevil." Uncle Misha

had also left home to become a cavalryman. "He was a kind, devil-may-care, courageous, just, and selfless man. In the revolution he had found a faith to replace the faith of his ancestors; his straightforward mind could not stand Talmudic hairsplitting; the simple arithmetic of the revolution was more comprehensible to him. The civil war provided an outlet for his burning energy; the simplicity of a soldier's life freed him from the pettiness of human existence."[137]

Such Jews were larger than life, but they were marginal (as most Goliaths are). The Jews who occupied the center stage of early Soviet culture were the unmistakably Mercurian incarnations of Bolshevik Reason, and thus much more familiarly Jewish. All "Party-minded" literature was about the transformation of proletarian spontaneity into revolutionary consciousness, or, in mythic (socialist-realist) terms, the taming of a recklessly generous, desperately brave, devil-may-care Red Cavalryman into a disciplined, scripture-reading holy warrior. All such proletarians had mentors, and many such mentors were Jews—partly because there were many Jews among Bolshevik mentors, but also because this was a role that called for an authentic, believable Mercurian. The iconic commissar was the consciousness to the spontaneity of the proletariat, the head to the body of the revolution, the restless nomad to the inert enormity of the masses. It made sense for the iconic commissar to be a Jew.[138]

In one of the foundational texts of socialist realism, A. Fadeev's *The Rout* (1926), the Red Partisan commander Iosif Abramovich Levinson is "a tiny man in tall boots, with a long, red wedge of a beard," who looks like a "gnome from a children's book," suffers from a pain in his side, embarrasses himself at Russian skittles, and comes from the family of a used-furniture salesman who "spent his life hoping to get rich but was afraid of mice and played his violin very badly." One of the men under Levinson's command is the shepherd Metelitsa.

> He had always felt vaguely attracted to that man and had noticed on many occasions that it gave him pleasure to ride next to him, talk to him, or simply look at him. He admired Metelitsa not for any outstanding socially useful qualities, of which Metelitsa did not have very many and which Levinson possessed to a much greater degree, but for the extraordinary physical agility, the animal vitality with which he overflowed and which Levinson himself so sorely lacked. Whenever he saw Metelitsa's nimble figure, ever ready for action, or simply knew that Metelitsa was not far away, he would forget about his own physical weakness and come to believe that he was as tough and tireless as Metelitsa. He was even secretly proud that a man like that was under his command.[139]

The reason a man like that is under his command is that Levinson belongs to the chosen. It was not always clear whether conscious Communists received true knowledge because they were naturally endowed with special qualities (such as an innate sense of justice or an iron will), or whether they developed special qualities as a consequence of receiving true knowledge (through sudden illumination, mortification of the flesh, or formal apprenticeship). Either way, their election as interpreters of the gospel and leaders of the masses was revealed through visible bodily signs, usually the combination of physical corruption and the penetrating gaze so typical of iconic Jews (as well as Christian saints and intelligentsia martyrs). Levinson, for one, had renounced all falsehood when he was a "feeble Jewish boy" with "big naive eyes" staring with "peculiar, unchildlike intentness" from an old family photograph. He never lost that gift: Levinson's "unblinking eyes" could pull a man from the crowd "the way pincers could pull out a nail." "Perfectly clear," "deep as lakes," and "otherwordly," they "took in Morozka [the proletarian daredevil], boots and all, and saw in him many things that Morozka himself was probably unaware of."[140]

Levinson's clairvoyance, however acquired, allows him to "conquer his frailty and his weak flesh" as he leads the often reluctant people to their salvation. Ideologically, he did not have to be Jewish (most of the elect were not), but there is little doubt that for reasons of both aesthetic and sociological verisimilitude, canonical Jewishness seemed an appropriate expression of the Bolshevik vision of disembodied consciousness triumphing over "Oblomov's" inertia.

> "Only here, in our country," thought Levinson, quickening his pace and puffing even more ferociously at his cigarette, "where millions of

people have lived for centuries under the same slow, lazy sun, languishing in filth and poverty, plowing with antediluvian wooden plows, believing in an angry and stupid god—only in a country like this can such lazy and weak-willed, such good-for-nothing people be born. . . ."

Levinson grew very agitated because these were his deepest, most intimate thoughts; because the defeat of all that poverty and misery constituted the only meaning of his life; because there would have been no Levinson at all, but somebody else, had he not been moved by an overwhelming, irresistible desire to see the birth of the new man—beautiful, strong, and kind.[141]

It is for the sake of creating a perfect human being—Apollonian in body and Mercurian in mind—that Levinson steels himself for doing what is "necessary," including the requisitioning of a weeping farmer's last pig and the killing of a wounded comrade too weak to be evacuated. The price he has to pay is as terrible as it is mysterious: "personal responsibility." Clearly analogous to Christian sin, it was both inescapable and ennobling; the greater the personal responsibility for acts ordinarily considered evil, the more visible the signs of election and the inner strength they bespoke. Demonic as well as Promethean, Bolshevik commissars "carried within them" the pain of historical necessity.[142]

In *The Commissars* by Yuri Libedinsky (Fadeev's fellow "proletarian writer" and himself a Jew and a commissar), civil war daredevils are brought together for a special course on military discipline and political education. The man in charge of military training is a former tsarist officer ("military expert"); the chief ideologists are the frail but unbending Jews Efim Rozov and Iosif Mindlov. Both are sickly, stooped, pale-lipped, and bespectacled; both "give up hours of sleep to reading Marx"; both know what is necessary; and both have the inner strength to get it done. Rozov, the head of the district's political department, had been a watchmaker's apprentice when, in March 1917, he saw those "bent, immobile figures" for the last time. "Still, the watchmaker's patient and careful dexterity had become a part of his being and proved useful for his work and

struggle." He had become the craftsman of the revolution, the Stolz to its many Oblomovs. "He was different from the unhurried local people. Skinny and short, Rozov moved quickly, abruptly, but without scurrying around, like a knife in the hands of an experienced carver." His mission is "to look over the commissars as if they had been weapons after a battle, make sure they were not dented, cracked, or rusted, and then sharpen and temper them for the next battle."[143]

All revolutionary detachments needed someone like that. In A. Tarasov-Rodionov's *Chocolate* (1922), the martyred Chekist Abram Katzman is stooped, sallow, bespectacled, and hook-nosed; and in Vasily Grossman's "Four Days," the grim Commissar Faktorovich

> despised his feeble body covered with curly black fur. He did not pity or love it—he would not hesitate for a second to ascend a gallows or turn his narrow chest toward a firing squad. Since childhood, his weak flesh had given him nothing but trouble: whooping cough, swollen adenoids, colds, constipation alternating with sudden storms of colitis and bloody dysentery, influenza, and heartburn. He had learned to ignore his flesh—to work with a fever, to read Marx while holding his cheek swollen from an infected tooth, to make speeches while suffering from acute stomach pains. And no, he had never been embraced by tender arms.

It is Faktorovich, however, who, through sheer courage, hatred, and faith, saves his comrades from captivity and uncertainty. For "although his child-sized long underwear kept sliding down ridiculously and his camel-like Hebrew head trembled on its tender neck . . . , there was no doubt that strength was on the side of this true believer."[144]

Nor was there any doubt about the source of true strength in one of the most celebrated poems about the civil war, Eduard Bagritsky's "The Tale of Opanas" (1926). An imitation of Shevchenko's "tales" and Ukrainian folk epics, the poem rethinks and finally resolves the traditional Cossack-Jewish confrontation by translating it into the language of social revolution. The commissar

and head of the "requisitioning detachment" Iosif Kogan does what is necessary by confiscating peasant food and executing those who resist. The confused Ukrainian lad Opanas deserts the detachment and ends up joining the army of the peasant anarchist Nestor Makhno.

> O Ukraine! Our native land!
> Autumn's golden harvests!
> In the past, we joined the Cossacks,
> Now we join the bandits!

Opanas kills, robs, loots, and drinks ("Beating Communists and Yids— / What an easy job!") until he is ordered to shoot the captured commissar. Torn by doubt, Opanas suggests to Kogan that he try to escape, but Kogan only smiles, straightens his glasses, and offers Opanas his clothes. The shot rings, and Kogan falls down into the dust, "nose first." Tormented by remorse, Opanas confesses his guilt to a Bolshevik interrogator and is sentenced to be shot. The night before the execution, he is visited in his cell by Kogan's ghost, who smiles sternly and says, "Your life's road, Opanas, / Ends beyond this threshold. . . ."[145]

All these commissars were perfect heroes both because they were Jewish and because they had left their Jewishness behind. Or rather, it was their Jewishness that had allowed them to break with the past. Levinson had "ruthlessly suppressed within himself the passive, languid yearning" for a promise of future happiness—"all those things he had inherited from the humble generations brought up on mendacious fables." Mindlov's wife Leah Sorkina (who died of consumption and revolutionary exhaustion) "had easily abandoned her ancestors' religion—relentless, incomprehensible, and overburdened with tiresome ritual." Some went further. According to M. D. Baitalsky's memoir, the Cheka agent Khaim Polisar "confiscated his father's hardware store for the needs of the revolution." While Grossman's Faktorovich was a Cheka agent, he arrested his uncle, who later died in a concentration camp. "Faktorovich remembered how his aunt had come to the Cheka office to see him and he had told her of her husband's death. She had covered her face with her hands and said: 'Oh my God, oh my God.' "

After Stalin's death, Grossman would return to the character of a Jewish true believer in *Forever Flowing*. Faktorovich would not change (except for the name), but Grossman's language would:

> Was it the age-old chain of abuses, the anguish of the Babylonian captivity, the humiliations of the ghetto, or the misery of the Pale of Settlement that had produced and forged that unquenchable thirst that was scorching the soul of the Bolshevik Lev Mekler?. . .
>
> He served the cause of good and the revolution in blood and without mercy. In his revolutionary incorruptibility, he threw his father into prison and testified against him at a Cheka Collegium meeting. Grimly and cruelly, he turned his back on his sister who begged him to help her husband who had been arrested as a saboteur.
>
> In all his meekness, he was merciless to the heretics. The revolution seemed to him to be helpless, childishly trusting, surrounded by treachery, the cruelty of villains, and the filth of lechers.
>
> And so he was merciless to the enemies of the revolution.[146]

This was a view from the disillusioned future. In the first decade of the revolution, the Bolshevik scorching of the soul was a matter of strength, pride, duty, and "personal responsibility." The soul was being scorched because it had to be—because it was necessary.

In 1922, another proletarian writer, A. Arosev (a childhood friend of V. Molotov and future head of the Soviet Committee for Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries), published a novel entitled *The Notes of Terenty the Forgotten*. One of the characters is the Cheka agent Kleiner, who does not wash very often, always wears the same leather jacket, sleeps on an old trunk, and has the smooth face of a eunuch.

> Kleiner belongs to a special breed. He is a "Chekist" from head to foot.
>
> Perhaps he is the best specimen of that breed. Future generations may not remember his name. His monument may never be built. And yet he is a very loyal man. He is full of a hidden inner enthusiasm. He may seem dry. His conversation is also dry, yet he inspires you when he talks. The sound of his voice seems childish, yet strangely alluring. They say that he has smiled only once in his whole life, and even then

to bad effect: while informing an old lady about the execution of her son, he smiled accidentally out of nervousness. The old lady fainted. Kleiner has never smiled again.[147]

One of Kleiner's ideas is to project executions onto a large screen outside the Cheka building. "It would be a kind of cinema for everyone," he says.

> "You mean like in America?"
>
> "Yes, yes, exactly. To teach the people a lesson. So that they'd be scared. The more scared they are, the fewer people we kill . . . I mean . . . execute."
>
> . . . "But such spectacles would only corrupt the people," I said to Kleiner.
>
> "What? What did you say? Corrupt? You are full of prejudices. Peter the Great sent Russian students to the Stockholm anatomical theater and ordered them to tear the corpses' muscles apart with their teeth, so they'd learn how to operate. I bet that didn't corrupt them. What is necessary does not corrupt. Try to understand. What is necessary does not corrupt."[148]

Kleiner himself is incorruptible because he is necessary. "They will probably never build a monument to Kleiner, but they really should: he spent his whole soul on the revolution."[149]

They did build many monuments to Kleiner's commander, Feliks Dzerzhinsky. One used to stand outside the Cheka building in Moscow. Another is Eduard Bagritsky's poem "TBC," in which the pale knight of the revolution appears before a feverish Young Communist poet. "Sharp-angled face, sharp-angled beard," Dzerzhinsky sits down on the edge of the bed and talks to the young man about the heavy burden of the "three-edged frankness of the bayonet," about the need to cut through the "crusty gut of the earth's routine," about the moats closing in over the heads of the executed, and about the "signature on the death sentence spilling out of the hole in the head." And then he intones some of the age's most famous lines:

> Our age is awaiting you out in the yard,
> Alarmed and alert as a well-armed guard.
> Go, stand by its side, don't hesitate.
> Its solitude is at least as great.
> Your enemy's everyone you meet,
> You stand alone and the age stands still,
> And if it tells you to cheat—then cheat.
> And if it tells you to kill—then kill.[150]

The culmination of the story of Jewish commissars in Soviet literature was the famous history of the construction of the White Sea Canal, 1931–34. The book was produced by thirty-six writers (including Gorky, M. Zoshchenko, Vs. Ivanov, Vera Inber, V. Kataev, A. Tolstoy, and V. Shklovsky). The canal was built by labor camp inmates ("reforged" thereby into socially useful citizens). The construction was run by the secret police (the OGPU, the successor to the Cheka). All the top leadership positions were held by Jews: G. G. Yagoda, the OGPU official in charge of the project; L. I. Kogan, the head of construction, M. D. Berman, the head of the Labor Camp Administration (Gulag); S. G. Firin, the head of the White Sea Canal Labor Camp; Ya. D. Rappoport, the deputy head of construction and of the Gulag; and N. A. Frenkel, the head of work organization on the canal.[151]

As portrayed in the *History*, these people were in much better health than their civil war predecessors, but they had lost none of their essential attributes: consciousness, restlessness, ruthlessness, promptness, precision, prodigious powers of penetration, and the optional Jewishness as a confirmation and possibly explanation of all the other attributes. They were the last representatives of the Heroic Age of the Russian Revolution: the age that preferred mobility to stability, boundlessness to borders, proteanism to permanence, consciousness to spontaneity, exile to domesticity, artifice to nature, necessity to beauty, mind to matter, Stolz to Oblomov, those who could not swim to those who could. It was the Mercurian phase of the revolution, in other words; the German Stage without the Germans; the Jewish Age.[152]

No icon better expresses the essence of that age (Kultura 1, in Vladimir Paperny's terminology) than El Lissitzky's *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*. The "three-edged frankness of the bayonet"

and the "sharp-angled face" of Feliks Dzerzhinsky were aimed at the "crusty gut of the earth's routine" and indeed everything dull, round, or predictably rectangular. According to one of the prophets of the revolutionary avant-garde, Vassily Kandinsky, the triangle was more "sharp-witted" than the square and less philistine than the circle. It was also much more Mercurian than Apollonian, and therefore—stylistically—much more Jewish than Russian. Jewishness was not the only way of representing the triangle, but it was one of the more familiar and aesthetically convincing. Levinson's "red wedge of a beard," Mindlov's angular movements, Rozov's knifelike figure were all references to the traditional and pervasive iconography of Mercurianism. According to one of Ilya Ehrenburg's characters (a Chekist), Lenin might be a sphere; Bukharin was a straight line; but Trotsky, "the chess player and the chief of the steppe hordes, disciplined and lined up under the banner of the twenty-one theses of some resolution—that one is a triangle." And according to Arosev's Terenty the Forgotten, "if I were a futurist artist, I would represent Trotsky as two downward-pointing triangles: a small triangle—the face—on top of a large triangle—the body."[153]

One obvious reading of the wedge-over-circle imagery is violence ("beat the whites"); the other is sex (love). Eduard Bagritsky portrayed both. His poem "February," written in 1933–34 and published posthumously, is about "a little Hebrew boy" who loves books about birds (the same birds, presumably, that adorned Galina Apollonovna's robe and inhabited Efim Nikitich Smolich's realm of "nature"):

> Birds that appeared like weird letters,
> Sabers and trumpets, spheres and diamonds.
>
> The Archer must have been detained
> Above the darkness of our dwelling,
> Above the proverbial Jewish odor
> Of goosefat, above the continuous droning
> Of tedious prayers, above the beards
> In family albums . . .

As a young man, he falls in love with a girl with golden hair, a green dress, and "a nightingale quiver" in her eyes, "all of her as if flung wide open to the coolness of the sea, the sun, and the birds." Every day, as she walks home from school, he follows her "like a murderer, stumbling over benches and bumping into people and trees," thinking of her "as a fabulous bird who had fluttered off the pages of a picture book" and wondering how he, "born of a Hebrew and circumcised on the seventh [*sic*] day," has become a bird catcher. Finally, he gathers up his courage and runs toward her.

> All those books I'd read in the evenings—
> Hungry and sick, my shirt unbuttoned—
> About birds from exotic places,
> About people from distant planets,
> About worlds where rich men play tennis,
> Drink lemonade, and kiss languid women,—
> All those things were moving before me,
> Wearing a dress and swinging a satchel. . . .

He runs beside her "like a beggar, bowing deferentially" and "mumbling some nonsense." She stops and tells him to leave her alone, pointing toward the intersection. And there,

> Fat-bellied and greasy with perspiration,
> Stands the policeman,
> Squeezed into high boots,
> Pumped up with vodka and stuffed full of bacon. . . .

Then comes the February Revolution, and he becomes a deputy commissar, a catcher of horse thieves and burglars, "an angel of death with a flashlight and a revolver, surrounded by four sailors from a battleship."

> My Hebrew pride sang out as clearly,
> As a tight string stretched out to its limit.
> I would have given much for my forefather
> In his long caftan, his hat with a fox tail
> From under which, like a silvery spiral,
> His earlock crawled out, and a thick cloud of dandruff

Floated over the square of his beard,—
For him to be able to spot his descendant
In this strapping fellow who loomed like a tower
Over the bristling guns and the headlights,
Over the truck that had shattered midnight. . . .

One night, he is sent to arrest some gangsters, and there, in a suffocating brothel reeking of face powder, semen, and sweet liqueur, he finds her—"the one who had tormented me with her nightingale gaze." She is bare-shouldered and bare-legged, half asleep and smoking a cigarette. He asks her if she recognizes him, and offers her money.

Without opening her mouth, she whispered softly,
"Please have some pity! I don't need the money!"

Throwing her the money,
I barged into—
Without pulling off my high boots, or my holster,
Without taking off my regulation trench coat—
The abysmal softness of the blanket
Under which so many men had sighed,
Flung about, and throbbed, into the darkness
Of the swirling stream of fuzzy visions,
Sudden screams and unencumbered movements,
Blackness, and ferocious, blinding light . . .

I am taking you because so timid
Have I always been, and to take vengeance
For the shame of my exiled forefathers
And the twitter of an unknown fledgling!

I am taking you to wreak my vengeance
On the world I could not get away from!

Welcome me into your barren vastness,
In which grass cannot take root and sprout,
And perhaps my night seed may succeed in
Fertilizing your forbidding desert.

There'll be rainfalls, southern winds will bluster,
Swans will make their calls of tender passion.[154]

According to Stanislav Kuniaev, this is the rape of Russia celebrated by "the poet of the openly Romantic ideal Zionism who does not distinguish between messianic ideas and pragmatic cruelty." According to Maxim D. Shrayer, this is "a dream of creating harmony between the Russian and Jewish currents in Jewish history, . . . a dream, if you wish, of a harmonious synthesis, which would lead to the blurring of all boundaries, i.e., to the formation of a Russian-Jewish identity. . . . Sexual intercourse with his former Russian beloved is the modicum of the protagonist's revenge upon and liberation from the prerevolutionary world of legal Jewish inequality and popular anti-Semitic prejudice." And according to the protagonist himself, this is his revenge on the world he "could not get away from"—the world of "goosefat," "tedious prayers," and "cloud[s] of dandruff." The Jewish Revolution within the Russian Revolution was waged against "the shame of exiled forefathers" and for the "Hebrew pride" singing like a string; against the Russia of fat cheeks and for the Russia of Galina Apollonovna. It was a violent attempt to conceive a world of Mercurian Apollonians, a Russia that would encompass the world.[155]