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“Произведите нас в жиды!”: *Émigrés'* Debates on Jewish Diasporic Solidarity

Summary: The article examines the evolution of a discourse on Jewish solidarity in Russian émigré communities during the 1920s. It explores the reception of Soviet plans for Jewish colonization in Crimea, the debates triggered by the works of Shul'gin, who systematized this notion, and Amfiteatrov's "Stena Placha." This discourse is crucial to understanding the rise of anti-Jewish sentiment among the Russian intelligentsia in exile, even within the liberal faction. Additionally, a parallel emerges between the Russian and Jewish exilic experience, which prompts a reflection on the very identity of the Russian diaspora. The perception of a supposed "cohesion instinct" of the Jewish people becomes a mirror in which émigrés attempt to define (or redefine) their own sense of belonging and national solidarity, thereby showing how dynamics of self-representation intertwine with the construction of new stereotypes and xenophobic sentiments.

Keywords: Russian émigrés, Jewish solidarity, myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, anti-Jewish discourse, diaspora and identity

“ПРОИЗВЕДИТЕ НАС В ЖИДЫ!”: ЭМИГРАНТСКИЕ ДЕБАТЫ О ЕВРЕЙСКОЙ ДИАСПОРАЛЬНОЙ СОЛИДАРНОСТИ

Резюме: Статья исследует эволюцию дискурса о еврейской солидарности в общинах русской эмиграции в 1920-е годы. В ней рассматривается реакция на советские планы по еврейской колонизации в Крыму, а также дебаты, вызванные работами Шульгина, который систематизировал это понятие, и «Стеной плача» Амфитеатрова. Этот дискурс имеет решающее значение для понимания роста антисемитских настроений среди русской интеллигенции в изгнании, даже внутри либеральной фракции. Кроме того, прослеживается параллель между русским и еврейским опытом изгнания, что побуждает к размышлению о самой идентичности русской diáspory. Восприятие предполагаемого «инстинкта сплоченности» еврейского народа становится зеркалом, в котором эмигранты пытаются определить (или переопределить) свое собственное чувство принадлежности и национальной солидарности, тем самым показывая, как динамика саморепрезентации переплетается с формированием новых стереотипов и ксенофобских настроений.

Ключевые слова: Симон Дубнов, эпиграфы, надгробия, еврейская историография, исследования кладбищ

“Произведите нас в жиды!”: DEBATY EMIGRANTÓW NA TEMAT ŻYDOWSKIEJ SOLIDARNOŚCI DIASPORALNEJ

Streszczenie: W październiku 1892 roku Simon Dubnow, przedstawiciel ruchu Haskali, opublikował na łamach „Wschodu”, liberalnego żydowskiego miesięcznika wydanego w Odessie, gdzie pełnił funkcję dziennikarza i redaktora literackiego, list otwarty. Adresatami listu byli zarówno maskilim (intelektualiści), jak i mitnagdim (tradycjonalicy) ówczesnej społeczności żydowskiej. Dubnow zaapelował do nich o podjęcie wspólnego wysiłku na rzecz opracowania historii Żydów rosyjskich, uznając ją za odrębną i wartościową dziedzinę badań,

niezależną od ogólnej historii światowego żydostwa. Odpowiedzi na list Dubnowa, stanowiące świadectwo procesu kształcania się nowej historiografii, zostały zgromadzone w archiwum „The Simon Dubnow Papers, 1632–1938”, będącym częścią cyfrowych zbiorów Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections. W ramach zespołu akt 87 odnaleziono niedawno dziesięć teczek zawierających korespondencję z żydowskich ośrodków miejskich, rozciągających się na obszarze od Białegostoku po Kiszyniów. Teczki te dokumentują reakcje społeczności z Białegostoku, Homla, Lipowca, Lublina, Łucka, Międzyboża, Mohylewa Podolskiego, Ostroga i Stepana oraz Kiszyniowa. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje inskrypcje zawarte w tych listach, koncentrując się na odpowiedzi na następujące pytania badawcze: Jakie kryteria kierowały osobami dokonującymi transkrypcji epitafów dla Dubnowa przy wyborze konkretnych inskrypcji? Jaką wartość dla żydowskiej historiografii, zarówno ówczesnej, jak i współczesnej, posiadają te dokumenty nagrobne?

Słowa kluczowe: Rosyjscy emigranci, solidarność żydowska, mit judeobolszewizmu, dyskurs antyżydowski, diaspora i tożsamość

Introduction

As shown by the analysis of *émigré* periodicals¹, hostile narratives against Jews were widespread in *Russia Abroad* during the 1920s.²

On the one hand, this was the continuation of a pre-revolutionary line that, modified by the new Russian developments, gave rise to the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism.³ It is known, for instance, that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* became widely known after the October Revolution, as they were brought to Europe by White *émigrés*.⁴ The thesis of the text seemed to be confirmed by Russian revolutionary events to such an extent that the editors of the new *émigré* editions replaced the future tense used to express intentions in the original with the past tense, suggesting that Jews had already completed the first step of their plan to conquer the world.⁵ This openly anti-Semitic narrative was represented in the *émigré* press in a more enduring and systematic way by the newspaper *Novoe Vremya*.

On the other hand, a new phenomenon emerged. Observers of the time noted the rise of semi-anti-Semites [полу-антисемиты], described in 1929 by the Russian-Jewish journalist S. Polyakov-Litovtsev as follows:

¹ The analysis carried out during the author's PhD project was systematic for *Poslednie Novosti*, *Russkaya mysl*, *Vozrozhdenie* and *Novoe Vremya*; “à boule de neige” for many other titles). It identified at least ten major debates on Jewish-related topics between 1921 and 1929.

² See L. Manchester, “Étnicheskaya identichnost’ kak vynuzhdenyy vybor v usloviyakh diaspory: paradoks sokhraneniya i problematizatsii “russkosti” v mirovom masshtabe sredi émigrantov pervoy volny v period kollektivizatsii”, *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 2014, no 3 (127), pp. 216–234.

³ A. Gerrits, *The Myth of Jewish-communism: a Historical Interpretation*, Peter Lang, Brussels 2009.

⁴ On the contamination between Russian and European anti-Semitism see W. Laqueur, *Russia and Germany. A Century of Conflict*, Little-Brown, Boston 1965; M. Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism, 1917–1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005.

⁵ S. Dudakov, *Istoriya odnogo mifa*, Nauka, Moscow 1993.

Русски[е] люди, которым некая робость мешает признаться в своих сомнениях на счёт евреев – иногда тягостных и даже мучительных сомнениях – и были бы рады с чьей-нибудь помощью разобраться в своих чувствах, отвергнуть или оправдать свои предубеждения против евреев и свой страх перед ними. Таких тайных полу-антисемитов или полу-тайных антисемитов в русском обществе гораздо больше, чем мы думаем. Очень часто это люди честные, с умом и сердцем.⁶

For these individuals, rethinking the so called “Jewish question” was typically part of the broader process of “revaluation of values” [переоценка ценностей], triggered by the Revolution, the Civil War, and the exilic condition.⁷ Educated in liberal and often philo-Semitic milieus, these *émigrés* expressed their hostility towards Jews in more “rational” forms, unlike the overtly anti-Semitic rhetoric characteristic of the “Russian anti-Semitic subculture”⁸ *à la Novoe Vremya*. This new type of hostility seemed to stem from the recognition of a *kernel of truth* in the association between Bolshevism and Judaism, an observation that in the exilic and post-traumatic context of *Russia Abroad* blended with reflections on the very identity of the anti-Bolshevik diaspora.

A very useful distinction for navigating the different heteroperceptive narratives about Jews is the one proposed by G.I. Langmuir, who identifies three main types of hostile assertions based on their “degree of reality”: realistic assertions – claims based on observable or verifiable facts, xenophobic assertions – generalizations of real elements attributed to the group as a whole, and chimeric assertions – the most extreme, unfounded ideas, such as the belief in a Jewish international conspiracy aimed at global domination.⁹

⁶ S. Polyakov-Litovtsev, “Что нам не нравится (По поводу книги В.В. Шульгина. Релика еврея)”, *Poslednie Novosti*, 1929, no 2895, (February 24).

⁷ As suggested by O. Budnitskiy, it can be assumed that there was a connection between the “corrosion” of liberal ideology and participation in the Civil War (O. Budnitskiy, *Rossiyskie evrei mezhdu krasnymi i belyimi. 1917–1920*, Rossppen, Moscow 2006, p. 362).

⁸ C. G. De Michelis, *Il manoscritto inesistente: i “Protocolli dei savi di Sion”: un apocrifo del XX secolo*, Marsilio, Venice 1998, p. 16.

⁹ G. I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – Oxford 1990, p. 328: “Realistic assertions about outgroups are propositions that utilize the information available about an outgroup and are based on the same assumptions about the nature of groups and the effect of membership on individuals as those used to understand the ingroup and its reference groups and their members. Xenophobic assertions are propositions that grammatically attribute a socially menacing conduct to an outgroup and all its members but are empirically based only on the conduct of a historical minority of the members; they neglect other, unthreatening, characteristics of the group; and they do not acknowledge that there are great differences between the individuals who compose the outgroup as there are between the individuals who compose the ingroup. Chimerical assertions are propositions that grammatically attribute with certitude to an outgroup and all its members characteristics that have never been empirically observed.”

Langmuir's framework is crucial for understanding the layered nature of *Russia Abroad's* discourses. The hostility towards Jews, which in the 1920s began to affect even parts of the traditionally philo-Semitic liberal intelligentsia, should not be seen merely as the extension of chimerical political convictions (such as traditional right-wing anti-Semitism) to a new audience. Instead, it also seems to reflect a qualitative shift in the anti-Jewish discourse. In addition to the idea of a global Jewish conspiracy, a new discourse emerged – a more immanent version of the Judeo-Masonic theory, which made questioning the existence of a secret Jewish government unnecessary. This discourse theorized a specific Jewish solidarity and suggested the impossibility of making a *true* distinction between Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik Jews, thereby neutralizing Jewish defences against the charge that they, as a "national body", were responsible for the revolution. At the same time, the idea of diasporic solidarity was also framed positively as a characteristic to which Russian emigration should aspire. In *émigré* narratives, a complex interplay of fear and admiration seemed to shape the perception of Jews, creating an ambiguous reflection that both constructed and distorted their image.

Shul'gin's Theory of Solidarity (1929)

The theory of Jewish solidarity was fully articulated by V.V. Shul'gin in his 1929 book *Chto nam v nikh ne nравится*¹⁰, which was inspired by the dispute about anti-Semitism that had taken place in Paris the previous year.¹¹ Shul'gin, a prominent ideologue of the White movement, played a central role in initiating debates around the "Jewish question" among the Russian intelligentsia in exile.¹² His 1929 work presents a thorough analysis of anti-Semitism, which he categorizes into three types: racial – acknowledged as a "branch" of national antagonism but not endorsed by him; mystical – linked to religious opposition; and political – which is further subdivided into pre-revolutionary and post-revolution-

¹⁰ V.V. Shul'gin, *Chto nam v nikh ne nравится*, Russia Minor, Paris 1929.

¹¹ The dispute on anti-Semitism took place in Paris on May 27, 1928, and was attended by several figures from the cultural life of the *émigré* community, including the Socialist-Revolutionary Mark Slonim, the publicist St. Ivanovich (Portugeys), the Zionist V. Grosman, Prince Shirinskiy-Shikhmatov, a representative of National Bolshevism, and Merezhkovskiy. The reports published in various newspapers about the meeting are unfortunately too brief to reliably reconstruct the positions expressed.

¹² See the debates about his works *Dni* (M. Gatti Racah, "Dni by V.V. Shul'gin (1922) and the Role of Witnessing in the Construction of the Anti-Semitic Myth: from History to Self-Writing and Back Again", *Avtobiografija*, 2014, no 3, pp. 307–318) and *Tri stolity* (1927).

ary forms. The latter type formed the central theme of the book, as it reflected Shul'gin's personal position and was characteristic of the new wave of anti-Semites, particularly prominent both in Soviet Russia and abroad. This form of neo-anti-Semitism, compared to its pre-revolutionary counterpart, saw a broad expansion: geographically, it spread from the southern regions of the Empire throughout Russia; ethnographically, it was no longer confined to "Little Russians" but was increasingly associated with the "Great Russian" milieu; politically, it no longer remained the domain of the right wing but had permeated all political factions.

Shul'gin expressed the following grievances against Jews:

Не нравится нам в вас то, что вы приняли слишком выдающееся участие в революции, которая оказалась величайшим обманом и подлогом. Не нравится нам то, что вы явились спинным хребтом и костяком коммунистической партии. Не нравится нам то, что своей организованностью и сцепкой, своей настойчивостью и волей, вы консолидировали и укрепили на долгие годы самое безумное и самое кровавое предприятие, которое человечество знало от сотворения мира.¹³

Considering the idea of a secret Jewish government *merely* a "working hypothesis"¹⁴, Shul'gin focused instead on distinguishing between two types of national solidarity:

Солидарность бессознательную, или непосредственную, и солидарность — «через фокус». В первом случае люди стремятся к одной цели без видимого приказа кого-нибудь — это, скажем, случай пчелиный или еврейский; во втором случае люди делают общее дело только по приказу своего видимого вожака или владыки — это, скажем, случай бычий или русский.¹⁵

In the struggle between the two peoples, defined by the desire to assert national identities, the ability to act cohesively and "spontaneously" made the Jews stronger. The additional consequence was the assumption that all Jews were politically unreliable, regardless of their political positions:

Поэтому-то надо ожидать, что даже те евреи, которые искренне в своих мыслях прониклись интересами России, будут хронически, и при всяких комбинациях, разрушать организацию, пока что для русских самую выгодную, а именно организацию вожаческую. Они будут всеми способами твердить при этом, что они действуют единственно в интересах самих рус-

¹³ V. Shul'gin, *Chto nam v nikh ne nравится. Ob antisemitizme v Rossii*, Russkaya Kniga, Moscow 1994, p. 56.

¹⁴ "Когда я говорю о солидарности еврейства, то я оставляю просто в стороне этот пресловутый вопрос о тайном еврейском всемирном правительстве. Это, по-моему, только 'рабочая гипотеза', которая пытается объяснить несомненный факт, то есть сию еврейскую солидарность" (ibidem, p. 139).

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 140.

ских, и многие, действительно, так и будут думать. Но на самом деле хаос, который водворяется в русском народе, когда у него отнимают вожаков, выгоден только тем, кто в этом хаосе остается организованным. Такой за-бронированной организованностью обладают именно евреи.¹⁶

Within this framework, Jewish loyalty to the “Russian cause”, both in homeland and in emigration, was deemed impossible: the Jewish component always, even *unconsciously*, responded to its own national interests, much like the bees.

Shul’gin’s book sparked a lively and divisive debate within the *émigré* press. *Poslednie Novosti* had published excerpts from the book even before its official release, commenting on them extensively. The article argued that solidarity was not an intrinsic trait of the Jewish people but rather a product of historical (i.e. diasporic) circumstances. The newspaper viewed Shul’gin’s theory as a functional equivalent to conspiracy theories, which allowed for collective demands to be made to all Jews who, instead, should have been considered full members of the anti-Bolshevik front. The editorial concluded: “Это, конечно, не всемирный заговор, но нечто весьма к нему близкое.”¹⁷

A demonstration of how the theory of solidarity could work was immediately provided on the pages of *Vozrozhdenie*, which illustrated the ambivalence of the liberal-conservative front when it came to Jewish responsibility for the revolution. The editorial supported the idea that Jewish solidarity was not merely a result of diasporic conditions but inherent to the Jewish people themselves (and to any people) and concluded with an appeal to the “solidary Jewish public opinion”: “Принимая все вышеизложенное во внимание, мы не можем не признать законным обращение к еврейскому солидарному общественному мнению со следующим вопросом: не пришло ли время для еврейского народа [...] – объявить войну коминтерну и советской власти?”¹⁸ In short, the active role of many Russian Jews in the fight against Bolshevism was ignored, and it was insinuated that Jewish double identity could only conflict with loyalty to the anti-Bolshevik front. As a result, Yu. Semenov, the editor of the newspaper, in a subsequent article proposed as the only “solution” to the inter-national conflict the assimilation of Jews as the descendants of French Huguenots in Prussia.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 165–166.

¹⁷ “Antisemitizm Shul’gina”, *Poslednie Novosti*, 1929, no 2887, (February 16).

¹⁸ “Evreyskaya solidarnost”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1929, no 1356, (February 17).

¹⁹ Yu. Semenov, “Chernye almazy i kroliki. Po povodu knigi V.V. Shul’gina”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1929, no 1388 (March 21): “Существует иное решение вопроса. Потомки французских гугенотов, эмигрировавших

However, still on the pages of *Vozrozhdenie*, the writer Pavel Muratov focused on the imperial identity and culture, which was made up of multiple and intersecting alliances that also determined its universalist drive:

«Киевлянину» [i.e. Shul'gin] культура эта, по-видимому, мало известна и мало понята. Ибо, если бы была понята и известна, то он иначе бы понял и ту могучую волну русского воздействия на еврейство, которое делает еврейство совсем уж не той «грозной» монолитной массой, какой рисуется оно только напуганному «местечковому сознанию». Еврейство, всегда и всюду вообще весьма чувствительное к культурным влияниям, охвачено целиком и насквозь пронизано русской культурой высокого, столичного, имперского, мирового типа. Пусть расовые и национальные солидарности еврейского народа велики. Но велики и действенны иные солидарности, во-первых экономические солидарности общимперских интересов, во-вторых – солидарности, рожденные в еврействе русской культурой. Не понимать этого, не видит этого, не ценить той огромной и весьма реальной «империализм русской культуры», может только тот, кто вообще не силен по части культуры.²⁰

Muratov's commentary, by emphasizing the deep cultural integration of Jews within Russian imperial society, challenged Shul'gin's perception of a monolithic Jewish identity that would take precedence over any other alliance, highlighting the complex nature of belonging in a (post)imperial and diasporic context.²¹

Novoe Vremya, which held openly anti-Semitic views²², was naturally enthusiastic about Shul'gin's theory.²³ Among other comments, which we set aside here, Glukhovtsova²⁴ – one of the leading writers of the newspaper – emphasized in her review that Shulgin's book was not only about the Jewish ques-

в Пруссии, не переживали никакой Бунаковской драмы во время франко-пруссской войны. Они спокойно сражались в рядах германских войск, ибо они давно признали себя безоговорочно прусскими гражданами. И никто никогда не слыхал о французских погромах в Пруссии. Всем известны и этот и другие аналогичные примеры в истории народов. Это единственное правильное, спокойное решение вопроса, исключающее необходимость погромных статей Полякова-Литовцева в "Последних Новостях", и книги Шульгина со своей её знатарской наукой".

²⁰ P.P. Muratov, "Nashi dostizheniya", *Vozrozhdenie*, 1929, no 1358, (February 19).

²¹ Another later comment went in the same direction: S. Tavrogin (the pseudonym of S.E. Evgen'ev) emphasized the profound specificity of the Soviet context and sought to dismantle the Manichean approach to the dispute (S. Tavrogin, "Sovetskiy antisemitizm", *Vozrozhdenie*, 1929, no 1452, May 24).

²² Articles dedicated to the "Jewish question" amount to more than a thousand entries: with a total of about 3.600 issues published throughout the life of the periodical. This means an intervention on the topic every three or four days.

²³ See "Prichiny antisemitizma", *Novoe Vremya*, 1929, n. 2341, (February 21); "Evreyskiy okrik", *Novoe Vremya*, 1929, no 2350, (March 3); Glukhovtsova, "Po povodu", *Novoe Vremya*, 1929, no 2353, (March 7); V. Davats, "Shul'gin ob antisemitizme", *Novoe vremya*, 1929, nn. 2384–85–86, (March 12–13–14).

²⁴ Elisaveta Vladimirovna Glukhovtsova (? – 1942), see Ilić V., Blagojević N., "Contribution of Russian Emigration to the Work of Printing House 'Saint Emperor Constantine' in the City of Niš (Kingdom of Yugoslavia)", *Russian Journal of Multilingualism and Education*, 2019, vol. 11, pp. 22–29.

tion but also about Russian affairs. She stated: "В Белграде книга Шульгина читается всеми, но её мало раз прочитать, её надо перечитывая, продумать до конца, она должна стать настольной, особенно русской молодёжи, ибо в ней Шульгин, попутно, со собственной ему глубиной вскрывает и решает наши русские вопросы."²⁵ The quarrels and lack of national unity within the *émigré* community were attributed to the mixed blood of an imperial diaspora, where not everyone was of Russian descent: "Значит, чувствующие эти корни должны сплотиться если хотят, чтобы Россия была 'Россией'.²⁶

Shul'gin's idea of Jewish solidarity intertwined with broader discussions about the Russian diaspora's identity. As the *émigré* community struggled to define its position in the aftermath of the revolution, these reflections were marked by the growing crisis of the (post)imperial identity in the face of political upheaval and exile.

An Antecedent: the Affair of the Jewish Colonization of Russia (1924–1925)

During the discussion sparked by Shul'gin's book, commentators referred²⁷ to a previous event that apparently played a pivotal role in shaping the discourse surrounding Jewish cohesion and political unreliability: the 1924 Soviet initiative to establish a Jewish autonomous republic in Crimea – a Bolshevik project embedded within the broader framework of *korenizatsiya*. Additionally, they meant to address the dire poverty in which the predominant-

²⁵ Glukhovtsova, "Tot, kto osmelilysya", *Novoe Vremya*, 1929, no 2397, (April 27).

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ See, for example, this passage from the editorial of *Vozrozhdenie*: "Когда организация «Джойнта» и «Орта» собирали десятки миллионов долларов на учреждение земледельческих колоний в России, они пользовались для этого солидарным общественным мнением евреев. И если, как говорят «Последние Новости», «отдельные русские граждане – евреи объявляли войну советской власти весьма решительным и героическим образом», то те десятки миллионов долларов, которые направлялись «Джойнтом» и «Ортом» советской власти для устройства еврейских земледельческих колоний, свидетельствуют, что организованное еврейское общественное мнение было не на стороне объявивших войну" ("Eshche o solidarnosti", *Vozrozhdenie*, 1929, no 1361, (February 22)). See the reply from Polyakov-Litovtsev to Shul'gin: "Когда вы посыпали в Россию посылки АРА, чтобы спасти от голода близких, это не было изменой России и поддержкой советской власти; когда это делаем мы, когда мы посыпаем нашим умирающим и совершенно беспомощным в «пролетарском» государстве деклассированным братом рабочую машину и иголку для шитья, мы поддерживаем большевиков!... Когда вы бессильны свергнуть советскую власть – это трагедия, когда мы не можем этого сделать, это – измена" (*Chто нам не нравится*, cit.).

ly urban Jewish population lived as a result of the “silent pogrom” caused by Soviet economic policies.²⁸

P. Struve’s comment on the *affaire* of the Jewish colonization in Crimea succinctly captures the profound impact it had on émi-gré public opinion: “Ни одно известие, идущее из Советской России, не произвело и там, и здесь, зарубежьем, такого сильного впечатления, как это.”²⁹ At first glance, amid the turmoil of those years, this reaction may seem surprising. Yet, as he explained in his *Dnevnik politika*, what was at stake was the *definitive* association of Jews with Bolshevism:

[...] вся эта затея грозит демонстративно связать еврейство, и русское и международное, с коммунистической властью, жгуче ненавистной для всего, что есть живого, национального и уважающего себя в России и явно враждебно вековому укладу еврейской цивилизации вообще. Этот безумный план грозит окончательно наложить на коммунистическую власть еврейское, а на еврейство – коммунистическое клеймо.³⁰

The project, for which Soviet Jews were seeking the support of Western Jews, was framed not simply as “Jewish colonization in Russia” but as “Jewish colonization of Russia.”

When the first reports about the project began circulating from Soviet Russia in 1924, *Novoe Vremya* closely followed the unfolding events. The project was quickly portrayed as a prominent example of Jewish influence within the Soviet regime, stating: “проект образования еврейской автономной республики на Чёрноморском побережье является наиболее ярким примером современного еврейского засилья в России.” This framing was further reinforced by Professor Lokot’s³¹ argument that the true aim of the revolution was not equality for Jews, but the seizure of fertile land around the Black Sea. Lokot’ suggested that the creation of “Jewish settlement cells” across Russia represented an internal conquest: “советская власть знает, что делает, вкрапливая всюду еврейские гнезда в русское население. Это уже – более прочное, внутреннее завоевание русского народа еврейством.”³² This portrayal of the Jewish colonization project shifted into a conspiratorial narrative, suggesting that Jewish Bol-

²⁸ See K.Yu. Mogarichev, *Nash novyy sovetskiy Sion: proekty i popytki sozdaniya evreyskoy natsional’no-territorial’noy edinitsy v Krymu (1920–1940–e gg.)*, 000 Antikva, Simferopol 2021; F. Kandel, *Kniga vremen i sobytiy 3. Istoryya evreev Sovetskogo Soyuza (1917–1939)*, Mosty kul’tury, Jerusalem – Moscow 2002, p. 212 et seq.

²⁹ P. Struve, “Dnevnik politika. Proekt evreyskoy kolonizatsii Rossii”, *Vozrazhdenie*, 1925, no 145, (October 25).

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ T. V. Lokot’ (1869–1942) – an agronomist, politician and publicist, one of the leading authors of the monarchist newspaper.

³² T. Lokot’, “Evreyskaya kolonizatsiya Rossii”, *Novoe Vremya*, 1925, no 1257, (July 10).

sheviks were using communism as a cover to advance a global Jewish conquest. *Novoe Vremya* provocatively asked, “Where does the Jewish Bolshevik end, and where does the Jewish anti-Bolshevik begin?”³³

By the autumn of 1925, the debate surrounding the colonization project had expanded beyond both Jewish and anti-Semitic factions. A key moment came on September 13, 1925, when the Joint Distribution Committee held a conference in Philadelphia to discuss, among other things, the fundraising efforts for the Jewish agricultural colonies in Soviet Russia. The news caused a stir among Russian émigré communities in Europe, prompting two letters to the board of *Vozrozhdenie*³⁴ which were discussed in a subsequent editorial. The latter argued that the settlement of people from different cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds in a context of land shortages was utter folly and posed serious dangers to the colonists. It acknowledged the distinction between Bolshevik Jews (whom it referred to as “de-Judaized”, обезъевреенные) and non-Bolshevik Jews, and interpreted the project as a Soviet attempt to regain the support of world Jewry at the expense of Russian Jews.

The next day, Kirill Zaytsev, a future archimandrite close to Struve, expanded on the previous arguments. While rejecting the idea of a Jewish-Masonic-Germanic conspiracy, Zaytsev acknowledged the growing influence of Jews after the collapse of the Russian Empire, referring to it as “overpower” or “dominance” (засилье). He distanced himself from the term, often used in anti-Semitic rhetoric, but nonetheless acknowledged the phenomenon, while rejecting it as a valid basis for Russo-Jewish relations. Until then, he claimed, Jews had maintained a *neutral* stance towards Bolshevism. However, the proposed colonization marked a decisive shift in the political landscape, and non-communist Jewry’s failure to distance itself from communism would blur the lines between “good” and “bad” Jews, undermining Russo-Jewish relations:

Это подлинно роковой вопрос для судеб еврейства, в его взаимоотношении с национальной Россией. Над ним должен задуматься каждый еврей-некоммунист. Над ним должен особенно задуматься всякий еврей, который считает себя русским. Национальная Россия вправе ждать от еврейства решительной реакции в его собственной среде против подобной решительной ставки на русских большевиков.³⁵

³³ “Evreyskaya respublika”, *Novoe Vremya*, 1924, no 858, (March 6).

³⁴ “Pis’ma i otkliki chitateley. Evreyskaya kolonizatsiya v Rossii”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1925, no 141, (October 21).

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

While strongly affirming the right of Jews to land, even *Poslednie Novosti* – which had dismissed each of the opposing arguments – ultimately condemned the project because it was fuelling interethnic hostilities.³⁶

The last major intervention on the issue came from A. Amfiteatrov, a typical example of the “repentant liberal”³⁷, who dedicated two articles to the matter under his “Listki” column in *Vozrozhdenie*. In these writings, he recast the colonization project as “Jewish immigration from America”, thereby distorting the nature of the issue: it now appeared to be an immigration from abroad, which was at best a marginal consequence of a project primarily involving Soviet Jews and, if not entirely non-existent, played only a minor role. Because of this reframing, Amfiteatrov did not even address the issue of land rights, presenting it instead as an outright act of usurpation. He compared it to the conquest of the Promised Land. The use of biblical imagery reinforced the idea of a continuity in the Jewish character over time, while the involvement of American Jews emphasized spatial continuity, and consequently, the assimilation of Bolshevik Jews to anti-Bolshevik Jews. The discussion thus was reduced to the sole issue of anti-Semitism: “Ибо, совершенно ясно, что иного результата, кроме волны погромов, еврейская иммиграция в южно-русские области иметь не может.”³⁸ The affair brought to Amfiteatrov’s mind the statement of the anti-Semite Glinka-Yanchevskiy who, during the Beilis trial, had claimed that “Jews long for pogroms.” Even though the writer had initially dismissed the theory as absurd and senseless, by 1925 it appeared far more plausible, prompting him to wonder whether the anti-Semite might have been right: “Неужели же Глинка-Янчевский был менее дик и неправ, чем нам казалось, и, действительно, водится в еврействе такой странный еврей, который «любит, чтобы его громили»?!”³⁹

Despite Amfiteatrov’s rejection of anti-Semitism, his arguments subtly embraced xenophobic rhetoric, portraying Jews as a monolithic and alien presence. Even if some Jewish representatives recognized the danger, Amfiteatrov argued that the actions of the Bolsheviks (among which he cited only Jewish names) had made the Jewish people “suspect of Bolshevism.”

³⁶ “Evreyskaya zemledel’cheskaya kolonizatsiya v Rossii”, *Poslednie Novosti*, 1925, no 1699, (November 6).

³⁷ For an explanation from the author himself regarding his political evolution, which led him to become a supporter of Prince Nikolay Nikolaevich, see the article “Koe-что кое-кому”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1925, no 122, (October 2).

³⁸ A. Amfiteatrov, “Listki”, *Vozrozhdenie*, no 176, 1925, (November 25).

³⁹ Ibidem.

In fact, the numerous interventions by Russian Jews⁴⁰ (which we have set aside here) almost unanimously condemned the project. In particular, Zionists were fiercely opposed⁴¹, with one of them even coining the phrase: “Ce n'est pas la Crimée, c'est le crime!”⁴² Nevertheless, this affair had sown doubt in many (if not definitively confirmed) about the impossibility of drawing a clear line between Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik Jews, a differentiation that was crucial to “include” this minority in *Russia Abroad*.⁴³

In any case, with no influence over events back home, the discussion gradually faded, and the press noted a slow abandonment of the idea by the Soviet authorities.⁴⁴

An Analogy Between Two Diasporas?

The emergence of a perceived parallelism between the Russian and Jewish diasporas offers a revealing insight into how reflections on Jewish solidarity were deeply intertwined with processes of Russian self-definition. As noted, “руssкие эмигранты охотно (и не совсем корректно) сравнивают себя с детьми Израиля, сохранившими родину в самих себе.”⁴⁵ The diasporic condition

⁴⁰ See I. Fisher, “Evreyskaya natsional'naya problema v Sov. Rossii”, *Evreyskaya tribuna*, 1924, no 182, (March 17); B. Brutskus, “Sovetskoe protektorstvo i evrei”, *Rul'*, 1924, no 1199, (November 11); G. Sliozberg, “K voprosu o t.n. ‘evreyskoy kolonizatsii’. Pis'mo v redaktsiyu”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1925, no 150, (October 30); D. Pasmanik, “Bol'noy vopros”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1925, no 168, (November 17); S. Polyakov-Litovtsev, “Evr. Kolonizatsiya i russkie natsionalisty. Otvet ‘Vozrozhdeniyu’”, *Poslednie Novosti*, 1925, no 1699, (November 6); M. Benediktov, “Evreyskaya kolonizatsiya v SSR”, *Poslednie Novosti*, 1925, no 1699, (November 6); *Otechestvennoe ob'edinenie russkikh evreev zagraniçey*, *Zapiska o proektakh kolonizatsii evreyami zemel' v Rossii*, Berlin, 1926.

⁴¹ As noted by J. Dekel-Chen, the concern of Western Zionists was primarily triggered by the incomparably larger scale of land that the Soviet Union could allocate to the Jews: “Между 1924 и началом 1930-х гг. советское правительство только в Причерноморье выделило под еврейскую колонизацию площади, почти в четыре раза превышавшие те, которыми располагал Еврейский национальный фонд для сельскохозяйственных нужд на момент провозглашения государства Израиль в 1948 г. Даже без учёта разговоров о еврейской республике в Крыму, которые циркулировали среди еврейских элит в России и Палестине, размеры пригодной земли и других ресурсов для колонизации в советской России давали достаточно оснований для беспокойства сионистским лидерам на Западе” (J. Dekel-Chen, “Agrarnaya kolonizatsiya: na pereschenii vnutrenney revolutsionnosti i vneshey preemstvennosti”, in O. Budnitskiy, ed., *Mirovoy krisis 1914–1920 godov i sud'ba vostochnoevreyskogo evreystva*, Rossppen, Moscow 2005, pp. 410–425: 413).

⁴² Usyshkin, president of the Jewish National Fund Keren Kayemet, in “Evreyskaya kolonizatsiya Rossii. An-keta sredi evreev”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1926, no 250, (February 7).

⁴³ The 1921 *S'ezd natsional'nogo ob'edineniya* had already exposed a major contradiction: defining émigrés belonging through loyalty to the White Army excluded the Jewish population from the national discourse of the diaspora, in light of the anti-Jewish violence committed by White forces during the Civil War.

⁴⁴ V.I.T. [S.O. Portugejs], “Kom zemli”, *Poslednie Novosti*, 1929, no 2883, (February 12).

⁴⁵ G. Nivat, “Trinadtsatoe koleno”, in G. Nivat, *Vozvrashchenie v Evropu. Stat'i o russkoy literature*, E. È. Lyamina, trans., Vysshaya shkola, Moscow 1999, p. 174.

had triggered a perceived analogy between the Russian diaspora and the 'archetypal' Jewish diaspora.

Struve's biographer, Richard Pipes, concurs with the existence of this analogy in Struve's perception, though he considers it fundamentally inaccurate (as does Nivat), due to the absence of universalism in Russian culture that had allowed the Jewish diaspora to maintain distinct cultural traits over the centuries. Regarding Struve, however, Pipes states: "although he himself did not use the analogy, it is difficult to escape the impression that he viewed the Bolshevik power seizure as the Russian equivalent of the destruction of the Temple, and the dispersal abroad of Russians as a counterpart of the Jewish exile."⁴⁶

This parallelism can be found in various interventions throughout the decade. In 1924, after watching a propaganda film about colonization in Palestine, Osorgin observed:

Ведь я никогда не могу забыть, что нас, русских, постигла судьба еврейства: как оно, мы рассеяны по всей земле, как оно – гонимы и приравнены к "низшей расе", если не прямо ненавистной, то во всяком случае крайне надоевшей, намозолившей всем глаза расе. [...] Как некогда евреям, так и нам теперь отведены черты оседлости, за пределами которых начинается унизительный разговор о паспортах, безподданстве, визах и правах жительства. Как и у них – у нас есть свой мечтаемый Сион – Россия.⁴⁷

The future Russia, envisioned by the *émigrés*, was even more chimerical than a Jewish state. Hence the author's envy towards the Jews: "зависть к людям, имеющим будущее или верующим в него и, конечно, ради чего трудящимся."⁴⁸

The Russian-Jewish poet Dovid Knut, in an essay on the Russian Montparnasse, underscoring the unreal nature of the exilic world for *émigrés*, revived this analogy and quoted a line from the famous writer Leonid Andreev: "Русские сделались евреями Европы."⁴⁹

According to the Jewish publicist I. Vasilevskiy, who wrote for *Evreyskaya tribuna* under the pseudonym Ne-Bukva, this parallelism – which he himself considered entirely valid – also prompted Professor A. Pilenko to propose the establishment of a "Russian Zionism" for the *émigrés*.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that there was even

⁴⁶ R. Pipes, *Struve, Liberal on the Right, 1905–1944*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge – Massachusetts and London 1980, p. 337.

⁴⁷ M. Osorgin, "Dva Siona", *Evreyskaya tribuna*, 1924, no 188, (June 26), pp. 1–2:1.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ D. Knut, *Russkiy Monparnass vo Frantsii*, in Id., *Sobranie sochineniy v 2-kh tomakh*, V. Khazan, ed., Evreyskiy Universitet, Jerusalem 1997–1998, t. 1, pp. 259–262: 261.

⁵⁰ I.M. Vasilevskiy (Ne-Bukva), *Istoricheskiy opyt*, *Evreyskaya Tribuna*, 1921, n. 55, pp. 1–2.

a concrete project to create a “Russian national home” in Paraguay, although it was ultimately doomed to failure.⁵¹ The project was mentioned in an article in *Novoe vremya* by A. Rennikov, who dreamed of creating a “state of our own.”⁵² On the other hand, he dedicated a feuilleton to refuting the analogy, where he emphasized the stark contrast between the two cases. Jewish dispersion, he argued, was a “poison” that had entered the veins of nations, whereas the Russian diaspora, by contrast, was an antidote – an essential force in the struggle between material and spiritual values.⁵³

The most explicit comparison between Russian and Jewish exile was made by A. Amfiteatrov. As noted earlier, he was among those who, following the 1917 revolutions, radically revised their political positions, embarking on a path of “repentance” and rejection of previous socialist beliefs, as demonstrated by his support for the *Bratstvo Russkoj Pravdy*.⁵⁴ His collaboration with *Novoe vremya*, dating back to 1928 with the publication of a short essay entitled *Tserkov’ i emigratsiya*⁵⁵, is in itself significant for the writer’s evolution and is further clarified in an introductory note included in the brochure reprint of the same text which reads: “Искупая свои грехи перед дореволюционной Россией, А. Амфитеатров высказался по церковному вопросу, изобличая приспешников Союза Советских Социалистических Республик.”⁵⁶

In his 1929 appeal *Stena placha, stena nerushimaya*⁵⁷, Amfiteatrov compared the impotent silence of *Russia Abroad*, following the destruction of the Iverskaya chapel in Moscow, to the Jewish mobilization to defend access to the Western Wall. In his plea, he asked: “Отчего мы такая дрянь?” and invoked the transformation of Russian émigrés into Jews: “Произведите нас в жиды!”

This provocative invocation was framed within the broader discourse on Jewish solidarity. In fact, what Amfiteatrov claimed (along with many others) was the necessity of an active and united – solid – political centre for emigration, without which it could not aspire to political relevance:

⁵¹ See N. Gladysheva, *General Beljaev i proekt “Russkiy otechestvo” v Paragvay*, (<https://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=10113>).

⁵² A. Rennikov, “Malen’kiy fel’eton. Svoe gosudarstvo”, *Novoe Vremya*, 1924, no 923, (May 24).

⁵³ A. Rennikov, “Malen’kiy fel’eton. Dva Rasseyaniya”, *Novoe Vremya*, 1923, no 622, (May 25).

⁵⁴ See W. Coudenys, *Activisme politique et militaire dans l’émigration russe: réalité ou sujet littéraire? À propos du “Bratstvo Russkoj Pravdy” après sa disparition*, (<http://russie-europe.ens-lyon.fr/IMG/pdf/coudenys.pdf>).

⁵⁵ A. Amfiteatrov, “Tserkov’ i emigratsiya”, *Novoe Vremya*, 1928, nn. 2202–03, (September 6–7).

⁵⁶ A. Amfiteatrov, “Tserkov’ i emigratsiya”, n.p., n.d., p. 2.

⁵⁷ Initially published on the pages of *Novoe Vremya* in 1929, between September 20 and October 9, it was later released as an independent publication in two different editions.

Без [политического деятельного центра] нельзя. Пока этого нет эмиграция [...] никуда не годится. Когда я привожу в примере успешные политические достижения евреев, слышу наивно упрямые возражения: еще бы! У евреев солидарность, жидовский кагал, слыхали? Это штука!

According to the author, the conspiracy theories about the Great Kahal were merely projections triggered by the awareness that a diaspora needed strong leadership to achieve its goals. As Shul'gin showed, in fact: “[...] великого кагала нет, но каждое еврейское предприятие представляет собой маленький кагал (Это очень хорошо, верно и образно выявил в своей известной книге Шульгин) [...]”⁵⁸ This capacity for coordinated mobilization provoked Amfiteatrov's envy, leading him to exclaim:

[...] В драме “Стены Плача” завидны мне евреи, как таковые, сами по себе. Не в том, что им

сочувствуют, а в том, как они заставляют себе сочувствовать.

Этакие же молодцы! Едва пролетела первая радио-телеграмма: “наших обижают!” – весь еврейский народ насторожился и пришёл в смятение. Пролетела радио-телеграмма: “наших бьют!” и вся еврейская диаспора ощетинилась, как миллион рассерженных дикобразов, и потребовала от Европы удовлетворения. Не просила, а именно требовала, – и Европа, оробев, извинительно шаркнула ножкой.⁵⁹

It is evident that some elements of anti-Semitic ideology took root in Amfiteatrov's narrative. The use of the term “Yids” (жиды) was the first clear indication in this regard, as Amfiteatrov himself had argued a year earlier.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the concept of “Jewish capital” emerged. However, it is difficult to label *Stena placha* – and, by extension, Amfiteatrov – as definitively anti-Semitic. The exposition lacked an explicit identification between Bolshevism and Judaism, and while the idea of the unity and strength of the latter provoked envy, as we have seen, it seemingly did not incite hatred or calls for discrimination. D. Filosofov, one of the few to publicly respond to Amfiteatrov's writing, referred to the author as “almost anti-Semitic” (чуть ли не антисемитом).⁶¹ As the very concept behind this pamphlet shows, the central element was the Jewish solidarity dis-

⁵⁸ A. Amfiteatrov, “Stena placha, stena nerushimaya”, *Novoe Vremya*, 1929, no 2527 (October 2), then continued: “Ясная договоренность общей линии вручает уполномоченной группе безоговорочное движение в данном направлении на известный срок. И тот, кто пытается вставлять палки в колеса уполномоченной группы, рассматривается, как враг [...] и как разрушитель солидарности”.

⁵⁹ A. Amfiteatrov, “Stena placha, stena nerushimaya”, *Novoe Vremya*, 1929, no 2527, (October 2).

⁶⁰ A. Amfiteatrov, “Ellenizm i iudaizm”, *Vozrozhdenie*, 1928, no 1049, (April 16): “[...] Термин «жидовства» [...] в русском языке сделался ругательным и, следовательно, невозможным к употреблению иначе, как в откровенно антисемитском памфлете или диспуте.”

⁶¹ D. Filosofov, “Ston”, *Za Slobodu*, 1929, no 255, (2888), (September 26).

cussed earlier, which fulfilled the role usually associated with conspiracy theories, portraying a unified and cohesive Jewish people.

Amfiteatrov's writing, partly because of the platform on which it was published and partly because of its "sensitive" subject matter, was largely ignored in the press, yet, it still resonated significantly, as the author himself recounts:

Молчание печати не помешало изданию быстро разойтись и найти широкий и громкий отклик в эмиграции, не прекращающейся и посейчас. Сто семьдесят восемь писем принесла мне "Стена Плача и Стена нерушимая". В том числе лишь тринадцать отрицают основательность моего невесёлого взгляда на бестолковое наше зарубежное житье-бытье.⁶²

The comparison with the Jewish diaspora, which in the 1920s seemed to provoke mostly envy, could raise more troubling questions as the exile continued. Struve, regarding the Jewish diaspora, wrote that as the integration into host societies increased, a new phase began, which he called "enspora."⁶³ This phase was marked by the emergence of new allegiances with the outgroup that were at the core of what he termed the *разлагающий характер* (the corrosive character) of a significant part of the Jewish people. What, then, would happen to the Russian diaspora as the exilic condition endured?

In the mid-1930s, in a changed context marked by the rise of Nazi racism, Nikolay Trubetskoy, taking up Struve's reflection in the text "About racism", would articulate too the idea that the "corrosive" nature of a part of Judaism was a result of the diasporic condition itself, and that it also manifested in the new generations of Russian émigrés. The Russian diaspora, unlike the Jewish one, however, did not experience the external pressure that kept Jews (for the most part) separated from host societies and would, therefore, more easily dissolve within them.⁶⁴ The opposition seemed to be between solidarity and dissolution.

⁶² A. Amfiteatrov, "Ot avtora", in *Stena placha, stena nerushimaya*, Soyuz russkikh patriotov, Bruxelles, 1931 (page numbers are not indicated).

⁶³ P. Struve, "Iznutri. Zamechatel'naya kniga ob evreyskom voprose", *Russkaya Mysl*, 1923–24, n. IX–XII, pp. 456–467.

⁶⁴ N. Trubetskoy, "O rasizme", in *N.S. Trubetskoy's Letters and Notes*, R. Jakobson, ed., Mouton, Berlin – New York, Amsterdam 1985, pp. 467–474: 469 et seq.

Conclusion

The picture emerging from the debates in the *émigré* press during the 1920s reveals growing difficulties in integrating the Jewish component into the anti-Bolshevik Russian diaspora. Alongside the explicit narrative asserting a link between Judaism and Bolshevism, a subtler view takes shape, which envisions a deep internal cohesion of the Jewish people. The idea of a specific solidarity undermines the distinction between Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik Jews, thus calling into question their loyalty to the cause of *Russia Abroad*.

This idea is received fragmentarily by the *émigrés*, but it seems to gain ground even within the liberal front which, troubled by its own internal reflections, questions who should be part of the diaspora and of the future Russia. The multiple identities of Jews become increasingly problematic against the backdrop of the crisis of the imperial multi-ethnic approach.

Complicating the picture further, the parallel that emerges between the condition of Jews and that of the Russians – now also “on the rivers of Babylon” – could raise new questions. Is Jewish solidarity intrinsic to the people itself, or is it a characteristic tied to the exilic condition? How are diasporic multiple identities manageable? It is difficult to say to what extent the *émigrés* were aware of the implications of this comparison. At first, it may have expressed an aspiration to “their own Zionism” and to a united anti-Bolshevik front, but over time it could lead to more troubling reflections on the future of *Russia Abroad* itself.

The growing hostility towards Jews in the *émigré* community appears to be the result of an interplay between suspicion and envy, between the idea that Jews are a corrosive element – both to themselves and to others – and the aspiration “to be transformed into Yids.” A possible key to understanding this nuanced complexity of needs and sentiments could come from Langmuir’s perspective. As his analysis of xenophobia suggests, such hostility is often linked to identity struggles:

[Xenophobic assertions and action], of much greater importance for the maintenance of social identity and cohesion, [...] can function to inhibit awareness of those elements of the menace whose recognition would weaken belief in the values and unity of the ingroup and undermine the self-esteem of its members [...]. Obsessive focusing on very partial, but manipulable and external, components of the menace distracts attention from more intimately threatening aspects, from weakness of ingroup organization and similarly menacing conduct of its own members.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Langmuir, *op. cit.*, p. 332–333.

When viewed in light of his analysis, the growing suspicion towards Jews appears as a reflection of a deeper identity conflict and as the outcome of a complex interplay of projections and anxieties about émigrés' own identities. Their struggles to forge a cohesive national identity, weakened by exile and defeat, fueled distorted perceptions of Jews.

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