YOUTH IN REVOLT

BY SHMARYA LEVIN

TRANSLATED BY

MAURICE SAMUEL

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YOUTH
IN REVOLT

By the same Author

CHILDHOOD IN EXILE

THE ARENA

To my son

SAMUEL BARUCH

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YOUTH
IN REVOLT

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF THE POGROMS

THE YEARS of my childhood and my early boyhood were passed in a narrow but consistent world that was steeped in Jewishness, composed of Jewish interests, and filled with Jewish sorrows and Jewish hopes. A tiny world, which was yet big enough for me: close and confined but, within, organically independent, almost autonomous. And within that world I moved and developed, a stranger still to violent inner conflict and revolution. The non-Jewish half of the little town took up only a fraction of my consciousness, and had no share at all in the processes of my soul. I was unaware of love or hatred toward it; it was only alien to me and I remained indifferent.

It was the Turkish war that first brought about a change in me, and broke a window through the wall that divided my personal ghetto from the great Russian reality. And remarkably enough, it never occurred to me, the child of a village ghetto, brought up on the Talmud and the Bible, and steeped in petty Jewish interests, to ask myself what the Turkish war was to me, and I to the Turkish war. What could it have meant to me whether the Crescent or the Cross floated above the Mosque of San Sofia in Constantinople? What difference could it make to me who held the keys of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles? I knew that suddenly I was somehow involved in these questions. The mere fact that young Jews of Swislowitz, all of them well known to me,

and some of them closely related, had been drawn as soldiers into the war—this fact alone revealed abruptly that we did not live an independent life, that we were not our own inner masters, but that we were bound to the mighty Russian people, at least in the same relationship as that of tenant to landlord. But we were tenants who paid rent not only in money, but, when our landlord was involved in a quarrel with another, in blood too.

Neither I nor any of the older and wiser people in Swislowitz ever dared to dream that the time was coming—and it was close at hand—when we would be paying blood-rent not in war but in peace; not in common with our landlord, in defence of his fatherland, but to him alone, to satisfy the furious appetite of the beast in him. Between the comprehensible and natural catastrophe of a common war and the incomprehensible and unnatural catastrophe of a one-sided pogrom lay a fearful gulf which no imagination could bridge in advance. The first pogrom, in Odessa, was an isolated incident, soon forgotten. The circumstances attending it were such as to give consolation. It was the Greeks, our hereditary enemies since immemorial times, who organized the pogrom; the Russians merely assisted. And so the incident was not to be taken too seriously. We are an extraordinary people, ingenious beyond all others in the art of self-deception. Praise and glory be to God that the pogrom came from the Greeks, not from the Russians! It occurred to no one to look deeper, to pause on the significance of the circumstance that in a city containing more Jews than Greeks, the Greeks, themselves tenants of Russia, had dared to organize a pogrom against the Jews and had escaped almost entirely unpunished. The simple implications of this situation were too much for the Jews; they wanted the solace of fancied se-

curity and they found it; they were afraid to stare the ghastly truth in the face.

I have said that the Turkish war was the first battering-ram to break through the wall of my mental ghetto. The second battering-ram was infinitely more powerful and more effective: I allude to the assassination of Alexander the Second. Here again it never occurred to me to ask what business it was of mine who sat on the Russian throne. I see before me, with the freshness of an immediate event, the petrified faces of the Jews in the Synagogue when the district commissioner had finished reading the terrible telegram from St. Petersburg. Wordless, with bowed heads, the Jews filed from the Synagogue and scattered to their homes. The Purim players had slunk away; the Purim banquet was abandoned. And the mood that was on the Jews of Swislowitz was that of the Black Fast, not that of Purim. The heart of an entire people was contracted with a nameless fear. The skies had sunk down upon them, and black clouds covered it; and many, many days were yet to pass before those clouds would disappear.

The reader must bear in mind that the days of Nicholas the First were still fresh in the memory of the Jews, the days of the modern Haman, with his implacable hatred and his inhuman decrees. Pre-eminent among all others for horror was the memory of the Cantonist schools, the most fearful of all inquisitions, more fearful even than the infamous Spanish Inquisition, for the latter was directed against adults, and the former against children. Only Asmodeus, the Spirit of all Evil, could have inspired this invention. Two of these Cantonists still lived in our town, Lazar the soldier and Mottye the soldier. They had served their full thirty-five years; they had been snatched away at the age of ten, so that when they returned they were men of forty-five.

Mottye was taciturn, but Lazar loved to talk of the torments which he had endured, and I loved to listen, fascinated with and terrified at his stories, crescendos of horror. And as I listened I felt the blood standing still in my veins.

No parents were secure with their sons. In the dead of night, and without any warning, the "snatchers" would break into the house and drag the child out of his bed. The father screamed in terror and begged for mercy on his knees; the mother fainted. In vain. There is no help in heaven or on earth. "Farewell, dearest child, farewell forever! From now on no father's hand will guide you, no mother's lips will kiss you. The place to which they will take you is far, far from us. If your frail body endures the long journey, and if you arrive there still living, they will turn you over to the care of a *diadka*—an uncle, a mentor. He will be your guide and lead you in alien and idolatrous ways. And when you have forgotten us, when you have forgotten the prayers we taught you to say in your earliest childhood, the morning prayer with which you opened your eyes, the evening prayer with which you closed them, then your new teacher will bring you a prayer-shawl of metal"—in this oblique fashion did the Jews allude to the cross. "Child, do not forget. Remember all the days of your life our God who is in heaven, and be constant to our faith."

Scenes like these, fearful and unforgettable, were frequent in the homes of the Jews, and particularly in the homes of the poor. The majority of the young victims did not survive the journey, and their graves were scattered along the remote roads of eastern Russia and even in unknown corners of icy Siberia.

The majority of those who survived did not long endure the tortures of the Cantonist schools; they soon yielded and bore witness to the everlasting glory of the mighty Ortho-

dox Church. But among these stolen Jewish children there were heroes, too, in whose veins ran the blood of the martyrs of old. They did not yield. After a long march that would have broken many a seasoned veteran, they submitted, for thirty years or more, to a regimen of ingenious tortures which could not break their spirit; and at the end of that time they returned to their native villages, still displaying the tiny four-fringed ritual garment and the prayer-book which their mothers had given them as "provision" for the journey. The stories that they told concerning their torments have been confirmed by a thousand recitals and by innumerable documents. It was the custom to separate into a special group the most obstinate of the children. During an entire week they would be fed herring and other salted and spiced foods. They were permitted to drink just enough water to keep them from collapsing. At the end of the week they were led into the hot-chamber of a Turkish bath, and when the victims thrust out their little tongues, tortured by a frightful thirst, the *diadka*, the uncle, would bring forward in one hand a vessel with cold, refreshing water, and in the other hand a cross. There was no bargaining. The price was fixed and unchangeable: A Jewish soul for a drink of water.

What wonder, then, that after Nicholas the First the Jews looked upon Alexander the Second as a saviour? Any ruler that followed Nicholas could only have been an improvement; how much more, then, Alexander the Second, who was known even before his accession as a man of gentle soul and good intentions. Nor did Alexander the Second, during the first half of his reign, betray the hopes that he had awakened. It was not only for the Jews that he was a just and upright king; the first half of his reign was from every point of view a glorious period in Russian history. A series

of great reforms set in; the liberation of the Russian serf, the introduction of a jury system, the reorganization of the municipal administrations. Had these reforms been followed up, there is every likelihood that the half-European, half-Asiatic country that was Russia might have set its feet fifty years ago on the road that leads to enlightenment and progress. But it seems that it was not the destiny of Russia to achieve happiness through normal and natural growth. In the second half of Alexander's reign the nobility of Russia, fearful of losing its ancient privileges, forced the hand of the monarch, and a reaction set in; the government began to withdraw the liberties which it had itself proclaimed. The evil genius of the Russian people again asserted itself and widened the gulf between the intelligentsia and the government, until it became impassable. The first act of the drama ended with the assassination of the "Reformer," Alexander the Second.

The Jews of Russia knew well that there was little to hope for from Alexander the Third. It was widely known that he was a bigot and looked at the Jews through the tinted glasses of the Orthodox Church. It was no secret that while he was still the Crown Prince he had, as a sign of special friendship, presented a ring to the notorious Jew-hater Lutostanski for his book on Jewish ritual use of Christian blood. The Russian press, which had seldom lost an opportunity of attacking the Jews during the second half of the dead monarch's reign, now overflowed with poison. The biggest dailies of St. Petersburg, like those of the chief provincial cities, were subsidized by the government and were therefore properly regarded as semi-official organs representing the views of the powers that were. It became clear that the Jews had been virtually outlawed and that no one would dare to raise a hand in their defence.

The first pogrom broke out in Elizabethgrad on April 16, 1881, exactly six weeks after the death of Alexander the Second. These six weeks must be regarded as the interval of incubation between the time when the virus of the press entered the body of the Russian people and the time when it took effect. Elizabethgrad was followed by Kiev, Kiev by Odessa. These were the scenes of the greatest pogroms. In between these major actions scores of smaller centres were sacked.

It is hard, after this interval of years, to describe the effect produced by the news of the pogroms on the Jewish settlements that lay at a distance from the centre of action. No pogrom occurred in Swislowitz, but the terror of the pogrom was suspended almost visibly above our heads. There were times when we envied the cities that had already suffered the pogrom. "Better an end with terror than a terror without end." The fear that could not be abjured, the uncertainty that haunted us in the home and in the streets, the momentary expectation of the storm that did not break—this is a species of mental torment that cannot be described. The Jews of Swislowitz went around, as I remember, like shadows of themselves. They could not lie down and die; there was their daily bread to earn for themselves and their families, and pitifully small as their needs were, they could not satisfy them without maintaining their usual contact with the gentiles. The contact was traditional, intimate. True, these gentiles were our own village folk; but all that belonged to yesterday. Who could tell what deadly thoughts were theirs today? The volcano, too, is peaceful just one moment before it breaks out.

We read the Jewish, that is, the Hebrew, papers. And if the gentiles could not read, they at least knew what was written in the Russian papers. And how was it possible to

forecast the effect that the stories of the pogroms, always accompanied by hateful and derisive comment, might have on their minds? We felt that we had been bound hand and foot and delivered to the mercy of the Russian people. The most fearful of the punishments enumerated on the Mount of Curses was visited upon us: "In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!" It was the unremitting anguish of constant terror. And then, what of the shame and degradation? It is not easy to say which was the darker suffering, the terror or the shame. A Jew was ashamed to look his gentile neighbour in the face. As far as was possible, he would avoid meeting his look. He feared that look, because he feared to catch in it the first glimpse of the first fires of hatred. And he was afraid to let the gentile catch his own look because of the shame that was in it. He was ashamed of his own shame and humiliated again by his own humiliation.

That time of shame and degradation—the summer of 1881—coincided for me with the time of my personal crystallization. I felt I was ripening quickly, and the intimate question, "What is my life to be?" was becoming earnest and urgent. To the crystallizing effect of my own growth was added also the crystallizing effect of that epoch. And the pogroms had opened my eyes. I understood then that I was bound forever to my people, my persecuted and tormented people. Two dreams ran side by side, the dream of my own liberation and the dream of the liberation of my people. Their courses at first were parallel, and then they drew nearer and mingled with each other.

CHAPTER II

ASSIMILATIONISTS AND NATIONALISTS

Long before the pogroms, and long before the question, "Whither now?" blazed up on the Jewish heavens in letters of fire and blood—a question demanding an immediate and decisive answer—long before we suspected that the problem of our destiny would be bound up with the need of the hour, the Jewish press—exclusively in Hebrew—had begun to debate the general problem of Jewry.

"The Jewish problem," was tacitly, if not explicitly, understood to be the problem of the Jews of eastern Europe, where the overwhelming majority of our people were to be found.

The Jews of western Europe, too, still had a long road to traverse toward the goal of emancipation. For the emancipation was accomplished in stages, and the governments were not in as much hurry as the Jews. The former bargained over every point, and the latter had to struggle bitterly as they advanced from position to position. For all that, the road before the Jews of western Europe was a clear one; it was the road of consistent assimilation. Jewish emancipation in France was the model which the Jews of western Europe kept before their eyes—a plain, simple renunciation of Jewish folk-identity in return for civic rights. This was a bargain made between the government and the Jews. The French government declared definitely that it could not and would not liberate its Jews—who, by the way, made up

then an insignificant total of forty thousand souls—as a national group. At best it could guarantee civic equality only to the individual Jew as a French citizen, and not as a constituent member of the national body to which he belonged. In other words, the Jewish national group had first to be abandoned and disintegrated, so that no organic relation remained between atom and atom. And then, one way or another, room would be found for the individual atoms in the body of the great French people; they would be used, here, there, somewhere else, to fill up empty places.

These terms the Jews accepted. In a number of official declarations that allow of no two interpretations, they proclaimed that not only were they prepared to renounce their national character for the future, but that they already felt themselves completely and utterly voided of every vestige of Jewish nationalism. They were Jews only in the religious sense; beyond that they were Frenchmen, they felt themselves at one with the French nation, bound to it forever. It may be that the French government did not quite believe the Jews in their protestations concerning the present, but it was prepared to accept their promissory note for the future, and the bargain was concluded. From that date on, the pact ran, Jews no longer existed as a closed group, the bearers of a historic past and of a specific individuality. From that date on there were only individual Jews, distinguishable from other Frenchmen by one mark—their religion.

The bargain was concluded. Long ago Esau sold his soul for a mess of pottage; now Jacob sold his soul for civic rights. It is difficult to understand exactly what it was that Jacob acquired with the birthright of Esau, but it is quite certain that the French got nothing for their bargain. True, the Jews sank lower, but France did not rise higher. It was

only the extremest chauvinism that, in a distinguished people like the French, could have dictated a bargain which was so shameful to both sides. It never has been and never will be considered decent to deal in souls, and wherever a bargain of this kind has been concluded, history has punished it. For the bargain cannot be sustained, and in the end both parties to it feel that they have been fooled.

Be this as it may, the Jews of western Europe looked with envy on their co-religionists of France and exerted themselves to imitate their strategy. The technique, the philosophic clichés, had been worked out. The changes, from country to country, were slight. As soon as the Jews of France had declared that they were no longer bound to their historic past, that "France was their Zion and Paris their Jerusalem," the task of the German Jews was easy. For France they substituted Germany, for Paris, Berlin. Thereafter there remained, for the expression of Jewish character and Jewish individuality, but one domain—the religious. The governments which had extended civic equality to the Jews would as a matter of fact have been grateful if their Jewish subjects had adopted the heroic cure and become Frenchmen, Germans, etc., *completely*, that is, down to the detail of baptism. But they were ashamed to make so extreme a demand. And they believed that the religious citadel, the remaining outpost of Jewish identity, would prove too weak to harbour the Jews and that the Jews would in any case abandon it individually and be swallowed up completely in the body of the ruling nation. The leading Jewish spirits of the time, those who found the formulas for Jewish policy, settled down to the work of introducing the assimilatory program into the everyday life of the Jews. And suddenly they became aware that the task was by no means as easy as it seemed to be on the surface. The most obstinate

obstacle lay in the character of the Jewish religion, in its peculiarity and uniqueness. The centre of gravity of the Jewish religion had never lain in abstract faith and specific dogmas. It lay rather in the folk-nature, in the relationship of the individual to his race and in the duties that proceed from such a relationship.

Ninety per cent. of Jewish prayers ignore the longings of the individual. They have to do with the group; they are connected with the fate of the people as a whole. They evoke the memories of the past in order to give hope for the future, and every hope is national in character. They speak the language of spiritual and political independence. How, then, was it possible to reconcile this religion with a policy of assimilation in the everyday relations of Jews? What assurance was there for the success of the program of assimilation as long as the Jews were bound up with their religion in its old forms? Out of that inner conflict between life and religion was born, in western Europe, the Reform movement, which is in essence more political than religious. Religion as such was demoted. It ceased to be the guiding-star of life and became instead its camp-follower, a servant of the wealthy classes, whose only dream was to be permitted to enter non-Jewish society, and who for that privilege were ready to pay any price.

During the sixties and seventies of the last century, a deep-reaching assimilationism had set in among the Jews of Russia. There arose a Jewish intelligentsia, reared and nourished on the culture and literature of Russia, and its views were as radical as those of the assimilatory intelligentsia of western Europe. Its goal, too, was civic equality and entry into non-Jewish society; and like the intelligentsia of western Europe it was prepared to pay the highest price that a people can pay for civic equality: it was prepared to aban-

don its own ego. In one respect the assimilationists of Russia went even further than their west European brethren; they did not even try to accommodate their religion to their new social and political goal: not because they considered their religion too sacred, but because they simply ignored it. They wasted no time on the problem of re-adapting the religious side of their lives. Thus it came about that the struggle between the two Jewish camps took place.

In western Europe it developed in the religious field—the antagonism between the Reform Jews and the so-called conservative elements. But in Russia the struggle took place on the literary field, between the nationalists and the assimilationists. For that reason the struggle in Russia was a more honest one. The opponents called themselves and each other by their right names: nationalists and assimilationists. In western Europe the combatants were masked and gave themselves and each other theological names: Conservative and Reform. Actually the struggle was identical with the one that was taking place in Russia.

It was much more difficult to deny or ignore the question of Jewish nationalism in eastern Europe, and particularly in Russia, where a great mass of Jews were at hand. In the matter of national character the masses are much more forthright than groups: they do not grant concessions so easily, nor do they abandon their strongholds so lightly. For the masses the question of civic equality presents itself largely under its economic aspect; they are not interested in the social implications. And they are even remoter from its cultural interests, for they have creative resources enough of their own to satisfy the inner needs of their spiritual ego. They insist on retaining their own character, and attempts to break into the recesses of their spiritual being are violently resented.

There was still another distinction between the assimilationist movement in western Europe and the parallel movement in Russia—not a distinction in principle but in technical conditions. In western Europe the two contending parties largely used the same language, usually German. In Russia the camps were divided by language too: the assimilationist camp adopted Russian, and in the nationalist camp Hebrew was the published medium of expression.

In the Hebrew press the standard was set by the *Hamagid* of David Gordon, the *Hashachar* of Perez Smolenskin, the *Hamelitz* of Alexander Zederbaum, and the *Hazephira* of Slonimsky and Sokolow. Of these the first two were explicitly nationalist. The *Hamelitz* and the *Hazephira* were not so definite in their views. Yet the *Hamelitz* stood closer to the national idea than did the *Hazephira*, which tried to maintain an attitude of neutrality even on the most burning questions. The three Russian Jewish weeklies, the *Russkie Yevrei*, the *Voschod*, and the *Rasviet*, represented the assimilationist point of view. The last-named, however, changed its colour in 1881 and turned to the nationalist cause. This was the distribution of the Jewish press in the epoch preceding the pogroms. The struggle between them was bitter, the debates passionate. The nationalists brought to the fight the accumulation of centuries of Jewish history; the assimilationists were armed with the weapons of a new era, imported from western Europe and made mostly in Germany.

As long as the times were peaceful I continued my studies under the Rav of our village. For me the press was simply an addition to my curriculum. But with the first pogrom my peace of mind disappeared. The balance of forces that had made me what I was then had been permanently upset. Questions that I studied became questions that I had to an-

swer on a personal basis. They pressed heavily and urgently upon me; the atmosphere grew stifling and the ground under my feet grew hot. My academic studies shifted into the background, and my attention was now fixed vividly on the press, the mirror of life in motion. It was there that I looked now for an answer to all questions.

It is a historic mistake to associate, as cause and effect, the first pogroms in Russia with the rise of the nationalist movement. The truth is that the Chibath Zion movement was born not in Russia, but in western Europe, and not in the time of the pogroms, but some decades before. And it is well to note that the birthplace of the Chibath Zion movement was the land of classic assimilationism—Germany. The truth is, again, that the practical work in and for Palestine began—even if on the tiniest of scales—principally in Germany, and to some extent in France and England, some time before the Jewish world was shaken to its foundations by the events in Russia. And once again let us note that the idea of a Jewish settlement in Palestine, autonomous and even with sovereign rights, was frequently urged long before the pogroms took place, and more often by non-Jews than by Jews. It would not be amiss to draw attention to this error even if it were only a question of pure chronology, but the error was broadcast by the enemies of Jewish nationalism with a distinct purpose—that of compromising the very character of the movement.

In this matter I bring the testimony of an individual; I can state without hesitation that, as one brought up in an entirely Jewish atmosphere, remote from the currents of Russian life, I found nothing new or revolutionary in the Chibath Zion movement, which began to take concrete form immediately after the first pogroms. It was neither a revela-

tion nor a surprise. On the contrary, I found the movement so natural, so logical, in such complete harmony with everything that I had learned and drawn into myself since my earliest childhood, that I believed myself to have been born —like every other Jew—a Chovev Zion. I therefore looked upon this movement as our historic heritage, carried down from generation to generation, from age to age, the cure provided by God, as the proverb says, before he sent the disease. And this belief was my solace in the darkest hours of my life. My soul was shaken by the first news of the pogroms; the reports that men and women had actually been killed came somewhat later, for the censorship did not permit the whole truth to be printed. And the victims stood forever before me and gave me no peace. In these moments of terror and despair I fled to that ancient world which I carried within me—and it was clear to me that this was the model according to which we were to build our new world, where we might live in independence and freedom. And it was equally clear to me that the new world which we were setting out to create could be in no other earthly place than the old one.

In the Hebrew press I found enough food for thought. My guides were such writers as Smolenskin and Ben Yehuda, and, later, Lilienblum and Yehalel. Smolenskin had been my prophet from of old; and later, when my logical faculties were more awake, Lilienblum became my teacher.

It was thus that the Hebrew press inducted me into all the complicated ramifications of the Jewish problem. I now began to find the logical elements in that Jewish nationalism which till then I had only felt. I took cognizance of all the arguments of our opponents, as they were put forth in the press, and found satisfactory answers to them. The only trouble was that in Swislowitz there was not a single enemy

of Jewish nationalism. My schoolmates were very backward in their development. They were average *cheder* boys, and I found no one among them with whom I cared to discuss the questions which filled my mind. The only ones with whom I talked freely were the Rav and my old teacher, Judah Artzer. But we were too much of one mind on all points. There was no room for passion, for ingenious argument. So I suffered a great deal. I sought an opponent on whose devoted head I might pour out all my rage and scorn, whom I might assault with all the weapons I had sharpened. I could not find him.

I think that my passion for writing came from my loneliness. I found no company to suit me, and I had no friends. I felt in myself a longing for a larger world. With all the natural cheerfulness of my character I was doomed to live in loneliness. It was thus that, in my childhood, I had been compelled to create a world of my own, and that was the ancient world of the Bible. Now, in my boyhood, when I felt myself caught up by the events of the living world, I wanted to leap into the arena and become part of the reality. But there was no hope of fulfilling my wish in Swislowitz. And so once again I had to create a world of my own, and this time it was the world of the press. I was quite sure that I was completely equipped to play a part in the great struggle. I was weary of being a spectator: I wanted to be part of the event. All that was left to me, to create the illusion of participation, was to write. I wrote—but it never occurred to me to get my work printed. Paradoxically, I did not believe that I could yet achieve such high distinction. In years to come it might happen, but not now. So I wrote *pour l'art*, to satisfy myself and no one else.

The spring passed, and the summer came, a summer, if I remember rightly, exceptionally hot and dry. The last po-

grom of that spring took place in Odessa, a city with a Jewish population of one hundred thousand. The papers brought the news that here, for the first time, the Jews had dared to defend themselves, and that the self-defence had been organized and led by the Jewish students of the University of Odessa. The report brought the first cheerful note into the monotonous chronicle of the times. I remember that even my mother thanked God. It was true that the defence helped but little, and the wound was deep and painful; but the reproach of our shame was in part removed, and we could again look our gentile neighbours in the face. And in this report was incorporated something new and significant: the police and the soldiery had stepped in and prevented the pogrom from assuming unmanageable proportions, a sign that a hint had come from some one higher up to put a check on the pogroms. At that time no one suspected that the government had itself instigated and assisted in the pogroms. But it was clear enough to every one that had the government so desired, it could have crushed every pogrom at its very beginning, or even have taken measures to prevent a beginning. When a government remains passive during a pogrom it clearly indicates its satisfaction. This was the view taken by Jews and non-Jews alike. The news that the government had suppressed the pogrom in Odessa brought a note of comfort into the Jewish camp; we had not been abandoned utterly.

And now, when several weeks followed and not a single new pogrom was reported, the Jewish population breathed freely again, and life began to run its normal course. It is thus that a people living in the shadow of a volcano forgets its disasters; the flames have died down, the lava has ceased to flow—the old life is quickly resumed. The love of life is strong, and it easily creates the illusion that the same dis-

aster cannot again occur so soon. They *refuse* to believe.

The interval was of short duration; before long dreadful reports reached us of a new epidemic of pogroms, again in southern Russia. The descriptions of the pogroms as they followed one another were so similar that it began to look as if there were now a pogrom technique; an unknown power had set up the model and the instructions, and the execution followed the given lines. For the time being Lithuania and White Russia were delivered from the pogroms. The Governor General of Vilna, Totleben, had stated clearly that he would permit no pogroms, and he kept his word. It was told of him that he had issued his decree in the form of a German pun. "Any man who destroys the second half of my name, *leben* (life), will be visited with the first half, *Tot* (death)." The Jews were delighted almost as much by the wit of the General as by his humanity, and prayers were offered up for the welfare of this extraordinary benefactor of mankind. The marvel of it! A governor general who has the courage to say that he will tolerate no pogroms, and does not even wait for the pogroms to break out!

There were no pogroms in Lithuania and White Russia, but it would be wrong to imagine that the Jews escaped unscathed. There began a fearful epidemic of fires. It was widely known that this was the revenge of the *pogromtchikes* for the order of the Governor General. The large Jewish city of Minsk was set on fire at several points, and three-quarters of it was reduced to ashes. The same fate overtook many other towns and villages, and thousands of Jewish families found themselves starving and homeless.

The Jewish papers were filled with lamentations; the Russian papers, almost without exception, became even more maniacal in their attacks on the Jews. Some of them, papers of high standing and influence, like the *Novoye Vremya*, the

Graszdanin, and others, openly encouraged the pogrom-makers. It was known that these papers were in the confidence of the very highest governmental circles, and it is not difficult to appreciate the agony of fear in which these cities lived which had not yet been visited by the pogroms.

A single scene epitomizes for me the experience of that time. The High Holidays of the year 1881 drew near. The Jewish dwellers in the surrounding villages were perplexed. They were afraid to leave their village homes and come up to Swislowitz for prayers. Some of them came to the Rav for counsel. The Rav advised them to put their faith in God and come up for the High Holidays. Rosh Hashannah passed in peace. The villagers returned and found everything as they had left it. On the eve of the Day of Atonement they came up to town once more; they reported that peace still reigned, as hitherto, but that there was something curious in the behaviour of the peasants—nothing definite: looks, indications, gestures, which hinted of hidden thoughts and intentions. And it so happened that on the same evening there came to Swislowitz an unusually large number of gentile carts, which drew up in the centre of the market-place. Nothing more was needed to give birth to the rumour that the peasants of the surrounding villages were assembling for a pogrom on the Jews of Swislowitz. No one dared to speak loudly and openly. There were whispers; the reports passed closely from mouth to ear. The secret was carried from house to house by adults and children. And all day long the Jews of Swislowitz went about as on tiptoe, hinting at things which they dared not say openly, as if they had seen, in the market-place of the town, the Angel of Death with his thousand eyes and his drawn sword.

Evening came, and the sun went down on a hot day, a ball of fire in a heaven of blood. Without arrangement or

even consultation, it was agreed—instinctively—to leave no one at home during the hours of prayer. Not a child was left at play, not an infant was left in the cradle. And grandfathers walking by the side of their sons led their tiny grandsons by the hand. They came silently from all the streets, grandmothers and mothers, carrying sucklings in their arms. They did not hasten, for who can run from his destiny? The entire Jewish population of Swislowitz was assembled that evening in the Synagogue. The place was too small for them, and the last comers could scarcely squeeze their way in. The tall white candles guttered in their sockets: the men stood silent in their white kirtles, and the children clung to them for protection. The Rav went up the steps to the Ark, drew forth the Scroll with its silver crown, turned to face the congregation, and said, in a low, trembling voice: "Jews, we are in the hands of God. Pray to Him." And with these words there broke out a lamentation the like of which I have never again heard in my life. The old wept, the young, the children; and the cry was taken up by the tiny ones in the arms of their parents and grandparents. In this bitter plaint there was felt a protest that was directed not against the makers of the pogroms, not against the government, but against our own God.

"Art Thou not He Who is called the Guardian of Israel? And is it not written, Behold, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. We have left our possessions, all that is ours, in our homes; with empty hands we have assembled here, in Thy House. Do with us according to Thy will."

And the Day of Atonement too passed in peace. That something curious in the eyes of the gentiles had been the reflection of the terror of the Jews.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW ERA

IT WAS later on, when the pogroms had passed into the third stage, that the Jews realized the truth: the government was instigating the pogroms and using them as a safety-valve. It hoped to divert the attention of the population of Russia from the dissatisfactions born of the reactionary policy. When the first Duma met, years later, Prince Urussoff revealed the truth to the whole world. The police Department, which was under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, was the organizing centre for the pogroms; from that office exact instructions were issued as to the method of attack and the objectives; here the limits were set, and the extent of the pogrom was fixed. During the first cycle of pogroms no one dared to believe, let alone hint, that this might be the situation; and when, from time to time, the government issued statements that thenceforth it would suppress all pogroms with a heavy hand, it was believed. But there is not the slightest doubt that the government issued these circulars regularly only for the purpose of soothing public opinion abroad. Its object was to prove that the pogroms were elemental outbursts of national fury against the Jews—outbursts which the government was utterly unable to control.

Side by side with these public circulars, the government printed private circulars, of a highly provocative character, and these were sent out secretly to all the higher officials

in the Empire. New restrictions and discriminations were carefully worked out and swiftly put into effect. The best historian of our time, the foremost authority on Jewish events in Russia, has come to the conclusion, based on incontrovertible documentary evidence, that even the first pogroms that occurred in Russia were part of the far-sighted plan of the government to suppress the incipient movement toward freedom.

In his *History of the Jews of Russia* Dubnow reports the following fact: In March, 1882, the *Pravitelstveni Vestnik*, the governmental organ, stated that from that date on, it would print regular and exact reports of pogroms that were going to occur, based on the reports of local governors. This tiny slip of the pen should have sufficed to open the eyes of the blind. And even so conservative an organ as the *Moscow News* wrote sarcastically: "The Governmental Organ has been kind enough to promise the public that from now on it will furnish detailed and exact reports of all pogroms on Jews. It appears that pogroms have become a regular and natural phenomenon, on which one reports—and does nothing more. Is there no means by which this infamous state of affairs can be brought to an end?"

The only ones who pretended to understand nothing, who toadied to the government more than ever and tried to induce the Jewish population to adopt the same ignominious tactics, were the wealthiest Jews, those who claimed to speak in the name of their people and did actually play the leading rôle as our unelected representatives: in a word, the *Shtadlanim*. They trembled lest any word or action of theirs should cast suspicion on the quality of their patriotism; and when the tenderest interests of the Jewish people were in the scale against their own reputation for patriotism, it was their patriotism that turned the scale.

The Jewish masses, possessed of a healthy instinct, followed the only path open: Let every man save himself who can. But this was not merely flight from economic ruin. Thousands among those who took up the staff of the wanderer, who determined, without means and without preparation—and almost always without any experience—to begin life anew beyond the ocean, thousands of these belonged to the strongest element in our people. Their flight was not a blind panic. It was the policy of despair, and in effect they played, for the Jewish people, a historic rôle of the first importance. The paths that they opened, in the Near East and in the West, were those which had to be opened at the time. They represented the instinct of readjustment in a wounded and threatened organism. A generation had to pass before it was understood that the flight of these thousands and tens of thousands meant the creation of new points of support. Had the flight been the scattering panic of the weakest elements in Jewry, no new positions would ever have been built up.

When the Jews of Russia petitioned the government that they might be permitted to resettle in masses in the large eastern territories of the Empire, the government returned an answer that was the extreme of offhand cynicism: "The western frontiers of Russia are open!" But many Jews had not waited for the reply. They pressed, in thousands, through the open frontier. This was not enough for the Jewish notables. They held secret meetings—secret, that is, to the Jews: the government knew all about them—in which they resolved against the organization of emigration. Emigration was to be neither encouraged nor regulated, for it contradicted the principles of patriotism!

It is not easy to imagine what would be the position of the Jews today if the Jewish notables of Russia had been

successful in the eighties, if they had been able to suspend, by one means or another, the wave of Jewish emigration. But that the position would be decidedly worse than it is, must be clear to every one. It was our good luck that the Jewish notables could only play at history: they could not make it. Their philanthropies, conducted without consulting either the recipients of them or the historic need of the moment, were impotent: the iron course of history has passed over them. They refused to reckon with the soul of the people, and with its innermost impulses: the future does not reckon with them, and even their names are forgotten.

The year 1881 opens a new epoch in Jewish history. The foundation was laid then not only for a new Jewish geography, but for a new Jewish economic order. More surely still, the foundations were laid for a new spiritual self-evaluation. The pogroms destroyed the physical structure of Jewish life; their psychological effect was even deeper. They were the last thrust toward an awakening folk and national consciousness. The influences which had come over from western Jewry, and had involved the Jews of eastern Europe in the same intellectual and spiritual slavery, were suddenly destroyed. There followed a period of independent creativeness. To the extent permitted by a life of exile, the Jews of eastern Europe took their destiny in their own hands.

I have given much space to the pogroms, and withdrawn myself from the picture, because I, like thousands of others among the growing youth, was completely swallowed up in these events. The truth is that I cannot remember how I passed those memorable High Holidays, nor what was going on in the immediate circle of my family. The village, the lakes, the fields and forests, passed out of the theatre of my consciousness. Had some one come, years later, and told

me that I had passed the summer of 1881 in some other place than Swislowitz, I should not have been astonished. All I remember is that the summer was hot and dry, and everybody around me was like myself steeped in fear. My memory resumes its course only with the fearful scene in the Synagogue, on the Eve of Yom Kippur, when the congregation assembled under the immanent terror of a pogrom.

Now came the long and mournful evenings of the autumn. During that autumn of 1881 a strange phenomenon arose; almost every day, between afternoon and evening prayer, a wandering preacher, a Magid—those troubadours of the Jewish exile—appeared in the Synagogue. We were of course familiar with these figures; during this season, however, they followed one another almost without an interval. It was their hour. The spirit of the Jews was almost broken—they were ready to listen as they had never listened before, and now was the time to find a way into their souls. And the majority of the Magidim, following their ancient tradition, continued to preach in the purely moral vein. But there were some among them who undertook a new function. They became teachers, and tried to explain to the simple masses the significance of the events that had come upon them with such shattering effect. They poured out the unexpressed rage of the Jews upon their implacable enemies, and brought a ray of hope and comfort into the lives of their hearers. They were "comforters of the people" in the fullest sense of that phrase, and their task was to prevent the spirit of the Jews from sinking so deep that it might never rise again.

The Magidim spoke, as was their wont, obliquely: they gave new meanings to old phrases; they implied, they hinted. They used parables. For to speak openly was more than they dared, even in Swislowitz and even in the Syna-

gogue. So that during this period the parable acquired an importance unknown before. And they could rely on their audience to understand them; Jews like a parable in and for itself; they like it even better than the application. And after all, what sense was there in mentioning, in terror and trembling, the name of Alexander the Third, Emperor of Russia, when it was just as easy to speak fearlessly of Pharaoh, Emperor of Egypt? What would be the point of uttering the dangerous word "emigration," and daring such lions as the Jewish notables, the Ginsburgs and the Poliakovs of St. Petersburg, who had forbidden all mention of the word? Was it not simpler to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt? Was it not safer and more effective to pour scorn and contempt on such Jews as Dathan and Abiram, rich Jews, notables, who made a league afterwards with the rebellious Korah and who, while in Egypt, opposed tooth and nail the plans of Moses? What else should they have done? What had *they* to fear? They stood close to the court, they were intimate with the ministers of Pharaoh—what reason had *they* to encourage the Exodus? And in the same way the Magidim spoke of others, the Russian Ministers, whose names might be uttered only in a whisper. What need to say "Ignatiev" or "Pobedonostzev" (the two bitterest persecutors of the time) when the Bible had so thoughtfully given us a Haman as a symbol, and the sages had so thoughtfully provided us with countless legends about him?

And so the Magidim travelled from village to village, and taught the Bible. They dragged from their graves the ancient enemies of Israel. They reminded the Jews of the fate of Pharaoh; they recalled that Haman had finished on the gallows, and Nebuchadnezzar had eaten the grass of the fields for seven years. And the Jews understood. Pa-

tience, patience. There are still seas enough for all the Pharaohs, trees enough for all the Hamans, and more than grass enough for all the Nebuchadnezzars.

Little or no change had come over our house in the time when my memories resume their thread—the fall and winter of 1881. My father had been absent for some time in Ekaterinoslav and Krementchug, the pogrom districts, and did not return till the High Holidays. But he said little about conditions there. Our employés carried on as heretofore; they went through the villages and hired peasants just as if nothing had occurred in between. And again during the long winter evenings the peasants would gather in our house. The samovar stood on the table, and the assembly drank tea and told and listened to stories.

But one change, a deep change, had taken place—in my mother. She became, if that were possible, even more pious than before. She remained longer in the Synagogue, and added to her prayers. But it was not in prayer alone that she expressed her intensified piety. She also added greatly to the number of her fast-days. Fasts had, in fact, become a widespread custom or fashion in those days. To almost every new pogrom the Jews retorted with a general decree for a fast. In these fasts children of twelve years and over also participated. It was an altogether peculiar sort of hunger-strike, a protest against the cruelties of the Russian people and government: but primarily it was one against God, who had closed the gates of heaven and abandoned his people to destruction. On one occasion the fast was decreed for three days in succession. But such decrees were of course not local affairs. They came from headquarters, in Vilna and Kovno. And the authority with most influence was the Rav of Kovno, Rabbi Isaac Elchanaan Spektor.

As a man of saintliness Rabbi Israel Salanter perhaps took precedence over Rabbi Isaac Elchanaan Spektor. But the latter was regarded not only as a mighty scholar and saint, but also as a Jewish statesman, whom the Russian government had more than once invited to serve on commissions for the study of Jewish affairs. The authority of Isaac Elchanaan Spektor was universal and unchallenged; and a decree issued by him was obeyed without a murmur—particularly when it related to fasts, in which Jews have been the greatest adepts from earliest times.

And so a war was conducted between the two headquarters. The pogrom headquarters were probably in St. Petersburg; the fast headquarters were in Kovno. No sooner did the pogrom headquarters launch an attack than the fast headquarters counterattacked. True, the war was conducted with unequal weapons. But the Jews had one advantage: their ammunition was cheaper, and they were never afraid of a shortage. A curious economist might go into this question, and discover that during the pogrom years the Jews of Russia saved a vast sum of money through their fasts—a new instrument of competition with the gentile population.

But for my mother these communal fasts were insufficient. They did not satisfy her hunger: and so she added private and supernumerary fasts of her own—sometimes one and sometimes two a week. Her practice led to arguments between her and my father. "Elke, is it your business to provide the entire world with piety?" And my mother used to reply: "Let me fast, Samuel Chaim: let me get some sort of pleasure out of life."

In those days my mother talked a great deal about Palestine and the Messiah. She averred that the Messianic days had begun—hence these tribulations. She knew that before

the Messiah could appear in person the Jews would have to pass through a purification; first the Messiah, son of Joseph, who would be slain: then the true Messiah, son of David. He would lead the Jews back to Palestine. Was it not clear that the Messianic days were upon us? Were there not reports from every corner of the exile that young Jews were even now organizing to migrate to Palestine? Was it not reported in the papers that a great Englishman—Sir Laurence Oliphant—was negotiating with the Sultan himself for the purchase of Palestine? True, Sir Laurence Oliphant was not a Jew, but was it not written in our books, black on white, that in the days of the Messiah the peoples of the world would come bearing the Jews on their cloaks, an offering to the Almighty? Were other signs needed that the ancient prophecies were beginning their fulfilment?

It was not my mother alone who spoke about the Messiah and the Messianic days. For on the one hand was the strange and mystical emergence of the Englishman Oliphant, with his vast, nebulous plans: on the other hand were the perfectly accurate reports of thousands and thousands of young Jews—many of them assimilated students, who were experiencing a change of heart and reverting passionately to their people—organizing for settlement in Palestine. These circumstances created, even in the remotest corners of the Empire, an altogether marvellous mood. Scholars began once more to study the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel, and mystics resorted to the deep, ingenious speculations of the Kaballah on the end of all things. Even in our little town the old men would sit for hours in the Study House of the Synagogue, speaking of the approaching End, and of the Messiah, in connection with the prophecies of Daniel. Is it not written: "There shall stand up in his place one that removeth the oppressor, the glory of the Kingdom: but

within a few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle. And in his place shall stand up a vile person." What could be clearer? The glory of the Kingdom, he that removed the oppressor, could be none other than Alexander the Second, for he had removed the serf-owner and had liberated the slave. And now he had been destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle. It could not have been in anger, for he was a just king: and we know that he did not fall in battle. And now it follows of itself that the vile person in the prophecy could be none other than the monarch who succeeded him. . . . It was therefore as clear as day that the prophecies of Daniel were meant for our time, and the End of all things was nigh. . . .

Even my former teacher, Judah Artzer, was drawn into the feverish occupation of calculating the time of the End, and he too paid special attention to the last chapters of Daniel, which have always been a rich source of speculation for our mystics and eschatologists. When, in later years, I became acquainted with the history of the false Messiahs, and particularly with the history of Sabbathai Zevi, I understood without difficulty how such things could come to pass. When a people is plunged into deep despair, and when there seems to be no hope of normal rescue, there is born a belief in miracles. When all the earth has been searched for help, and has yielded none, the eyes of men turn to the clouds for the rescuer.

There were two among our old men who were convinced, above all others, that we were living in the days of the Messiah. They were Old Meyer, and Zelig the prayer-reader. Meyer was well over eighty and Zelig well over ninety. And yet the title of Old was bestowed upon Meyer, because Zelig had too long been known as Zelig the prayer-reader to change his name. Zelig had an only son, also a prayer-reader,

some eighteen years younger than himself; so that, about the time that I am writing of, the son too was no fledgling, being between seventy and seventy-five. But his father still persisted in treating him like a boy, and refused to let him speak in the presence of the sages. Zelig read the late morning prayers on the High Holidays, Hirschel, his son, the early morning prayers. Joseph Bear Schatz, the cantor, was more ritual chicken-slaughterer than cantor, and he got only fragments of the services on the night of Yom Kippur and the day of the Black Fast.

Hirschel was famous for his observance of the sixth commandment: "Honour thy father . . ." He was universally admired, and considered a model son. When Zelig entered upon the nineties, and his strength began to fail, he changed rôles with his son: Hirschel took the later morning prayers, and Zelig the early morning prayers. Hirschel wept like a little child, for he saw in this change a sign that his father was growing old. He now became tenderer and more attentive to his father than ever before. And on Friday afternoons the following extraordinary scene was to be witnessed in the streets of Swislowitz: one grey-beard carrying another pick-a-back. It was Hirschel carrying his father Zelig to the bath, in honour of the Sabbath. The baths stood behind the hill, close to the Swisla. On a certain winter's day, when Hirschel was carrying his father downhill to the baths, he slipped, and nearly threw his load to the ground. Zelig flew into a rage with his son, and exclaimed: "You'll grow up a disgrace to the family!" It was quite impossible for Zelig to admit that Hirschel was an adult. And for that reason he would discuss the deeper matters of life with his crony Meyer, but not with his son. He loved above all to gather a group round himself and tell stories of his own incredibly remote childhood, of Alexander the First, of the

war with the French, and of Nicholas the First, "may his name and his memory be wiped out!" Old Meyer would help him from time to time. Sometimes they told a story in partnership, a sentence each in alternation, and neither would interrupt the other. They told how in Swislowitz the Jews had been entirely on the side of the Russians, and how they had prayed every Sabbath for the victory of Alexander the First and the defeat of Napoleon: and they prayed so long, and so fervently, that Napoleon was finally defeated. And so, story by story, they would creep up toward modern times; and Zelig the prayer-reader would wind up: "Children, have no fear. We have lived through greater tribulations. We survived a Haman like Nicholas the First: we shall also survive the Vile Person. . . ." It was unnecessary to mention him by name. "And I tell you that before the Vile One shall close his eyes, the Messiah will be among us, and it may be granted even to me to look upon him."

I loved to listen to the stories of our ancients. For these were stories not to be found in books: they were the living thread, incorporated in living persons, binding us to the past. Once, when Zelig told us what Swislowitz had looked like nearly a century before, how there had been no bridge across the Swisla, and no post, I dared to ask him a question. "If there was neither bridge nor post," I asked, "how was it possible to send a letter?" And this was the answer I received: "You are a child and do not understand anything. If the letter was really an urgent and important one, they sent it by special messenger. And if the letter was not so important, they just waited a couple of weeks, and then there was no need to send it at all."

CHAPTER IV

RESTLESSNESS

THE days crept slowly, coldly, like the waters of our two rivers under their covering of ice. The snows and frosts of the winter removed for a time the terror of pogroms; but there was no abiding peace in our hearts. Life resumed its ordinary course. The shopkeepers opened their stores punctually every day, the peasants felled the trees in the forests, the Jewish pedlars loaded their heavy packs and, bowed under the burden, left for the neighbouring villages, the Rebbis went on teaching the sacred Torah to their young charges, and the boys in the House of Study sat swaying over the huge volumes of the Talmud and filled the room with their mournful, monotonous chant. But to every man and woman and child it was clear that the catastrophe had not run its full course; they knew that the Russian bear was only lying in his winter sleep, sucking his own paws, like his brother in the dense forests: and that the wild instincts before which we trembled were only suspended, like the motion of the waters. Soon the spring would come, the rivers would melt, and the bear would come out of his sleep.

We were the more certain of this because the official and semi-official press did not suspend for an instant its fierce attacks on the Jews: accusation after accusation, plot after plot, threat after threat. And what were the accusations? That the Jew was responsible for the poverty of the drunken

peasants: he encouraged them to drink. The Jew had ruined the magnates: he lent them money and encouraged them to lead dissolute lives. The Jew was undermining the Russian army: as official purveyor he delivered the rottenest goods. The Jew, through his secret international organizations, robbed Russia of the fruits of her military victories—as in the case of the Russo-Turkish war. And, finally, the Jews were the revolutionary power. True, they did not venture into the front line themselves, but they were the organizers and the inspirers. And the proof was: Hessie Helfman. It was in her house that the assassination of Alexander the Second had been planned. In a word: Were it not for the Jews, Russia would be the happiest and merriest country under God's blue sky.

This was the general tone of the press. A constant stream of abuse, rage, and slander descended on the heads of the Jews. Argument was out of the question. The Hebrew press had no point of contact with the Russian public. And the Russian Jewish press was too weak to influence public opinion—or even the intelligent sections of it. The Russian intelligentsia was, with few exceptions, infected by the general enmity to the Jews: for it also the statements of the Jews were inadmissible evidence.

It was impossible for the Jews to believe the official statements of the Russian government, that no more pogroms would be permitted. They believed the cold weather, the winter, and not the government. Even the devil would not make pogroms in the depth of the Russian winter. And the Jews felt a temporary relief, like a debtor whose note is renewed.

But the event quickly undeceived them. In December 1881 a pogrom broke out in a district where every one believed pogroms to be impossible, namely, in Warsaw, the capital

of Poland. Within her own traditional territory, Russia reckoned with no one; but she did have some regard for foreign public opinion. The pogroms were purely "internal affairs," and no one was going to tell Russia how she was to treat her own Jews. Still, the government was afraid that, through their secret international organizations, the Jews might stir up the opinion of the world. It was therefore necessary to prove to the world that not the Russian peasant alone, but the non-Russian people as such, was prepared to perpetrate pogroms. The experiment was first tried out in Warsaw. Poland was the most western province of Russia, almost foreign territory. The population was non-Russian. What better proof could there be that the Jews were hated everywhere?

The effect was excellently calculated. The Russian government killed two birds with one stone. Poland, an oppressed country, stood badly in need of the good opinion of the world, and could not permit herself to descend to the level of pogroms. But the rabble of Warsaw had not the moral strength to resist the blandishments of the Russian *pogromtchikes* who were imported for the occasion. The Russian government succeeded in proving that not only the Russian barbarian, but also the "noble Pole," could commit pogroms against the Jew: the best demonstration of the fact that the Jews had earned their fate.

The pogrom of Warsaw shattered our morale more effectively than even the first pogroms of southern Russia. This was not on account of the geographic proximity of Warsaw, but because of the fact that we were more closely connected with the Polish capital, and, to an even greater degree, with the Polish aristocracy, who were the owners of nine-tenths of the land and forests in our neighbourhood. As long as the pogroms were being perpetrated only by the *katzaps*,

we had hoped that they could not penetrate to our region. Our peasants were, after all, of a different type. But the distance between Warsaw and Vilna is small: and Vilna is Lithuania. And if pogroms were possible in Poland, we too were no longer certain of our lives.

On the day when the news of the Warsaw pogrom arrived, my father received a visit from the commissar of the local estate. For two hours they were closeted together, and all of us knew that this was no business visit. My father stated afterwards that the commissar had come to offer apologies and excuses! He explained first that the pogrom had been an imported one, organized by the Russian government. He then did his best to calm my father's fears, and to assure him that the relationship between him and the nobleman who owned the local estate would remain unchanged: if there was any change at all, it would be in the direction of greater friendliness, as compensation for the terror suffered by the Jews through pogroms in which—he was convinced—the Polish people had had no share at all.

And thus, by degrees, we lost our faith in the government, in individuals—and even in the winter. Man was our enemy, and even nature would not protect us. The four seasons of the year were in equal conspiracy against us. The earth was not ours, we had no portion in it. So we lifted our eyes to the heavens: perhaps they would vouchsafe a reply. Every other week the congregation fasted: we kept vigils and wept at midnight prayers. There are some who assert that in such times a deep religious instinct awakens in a people. And they point to the fasts, the vigils, and the prayers: they say that men think oftener of God and are gentler toward their fellow men. But as far as I remember, such a statement is unfounded. Fasts and prayers are only externals, and they are not always evidence of a deep re-

ligious mood. Very often they are the evidence of a complete collapse and complete despair: they represent a challenge rather than faith: "Come! Let us see if there will be any answer to our fasts and prayers." I know that for my own part the result of the pogroms was not a religious reaction: I fasted with the others, said midnight prayers with them. But with every new pogrom I felt the heavens closing, I felt myself remoter from them: and in me the conviction grew that if there was any salvation it would have to come from ourselves.

All winter I continued my studies, but without special joy. In the morning I studied some hours with the Rav—Talmud and legalistic ritualistic literature. Two hours a day I gave to Russian. My evenings were free. And these I spent in writing. I need hardly say that I wrote exclusively in Hebrew. As soon as a new article appeared from the pen of Smolenskin, Lilienblum, or Yehalel, I sat down to imitate it. This was the prose side of my writing. In my songs I was completely under the influence of Jehudah Leib Gordon, who, both in content and in form, really was the greatest Hebrew poet of his time. I imitated him slavishly in form: but I was deeply wounded by the fact that our greatest poet, he who had been appointed to express the deepest longings of our people, stood now at the parting of the ways and stretched out his hands not to the East, but to the West. Even the Yiddish Russian poet, Simon Frug, had looked to the Jordan, to Carmel and Lebanon, as the expression of our Jewish hopes. Why then did Gordon take away this glory from Palestine and give it to alien America?

Tormented by a thousand questions, unable to disentangle myself, I would go out late in the night and visit the other Talmud students in the House of Study. To them I would sometimes pour out my heart, formulate my demands, and

seek an answer. Not all the Talmud students of Swislowitz had reacted in my fashion to the events of the times. The majority of them had been carried away by the same enthusiasm as my own. But there were some among them who barricaded themselves behind the gigantic folios of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud and of the later Rabbinic literature, sundered themselves, behind a vast wall, from the tumult and rage of life, and, hermetically sealed from the world, gave themselves up with vehement and exclusive faithfulness to their studies—just as if nothing had happened in the world around them, and nothing had changed. And I used to stare at their lean, hungry bodies, at their white, withered faces with their burning eyes, and I was bewildered: what secret was locked in them? Were *they*, perhaps, the real heroes, the true descendants of the stiff-necked people, who make mock of all trials, ignore all catastrophes, and keep on obdurately weaving the thread of our continuity?

My relationship to my Russian studies was a formal one. I was by now able to read, with the assistance of my teacher and of a dictionary, a Russian book or a Russian newspaper, but I had not even crossed the threshold of the gigantic and inspiring temple of Russian literature. I felt no inner urge to the language; if anything, I felt a certain repulsion, for Russian was the language of the *pogromtchikes*. I did not dream at that time that my later entry into the great world of modern culture would lead first through the literature of Russia.

The winter drew wearily to a close and spring returned: and with every awakening throb of nature there throbbed in the Jews an awakening terror. The Easter days have always been, in unquiet times, the most critical of the year. The legends of peoples always seek a point of concentra-

tion: all year round, it was averred, the Jew sucked the blood of his neighbours. But at Easter time, when his Passover came, he drank it. I cannot remember clearly the ceremonies of that Passover. But I do remember that when the moment came for us to fling open the door and welcome in Elijah the Prophet, none of us would stir. We were only too grateful that no one opened it from the outside!

An old folk-saying has it that when a man is drunk he thinks the ocean comes only up to his knees. I felt it only up to my ankles. There were two great problems before me. The Jewish people had to be saved once for all from their exile, and I had to be saved from Swislowitz, in order that I might prepare myself for the great day. I must confess that the first problem looked to me the easier one. The Jews had only to decide that they wanted to be done with the exile, and the rest would follow of itself. I was not concerned with the incidental difficulties. The Russian government had declared that the gates stood open for the Jews. The trouble we had suffered under Pharaoh, who had released us one day and brought us back the next, would not recur in this case. We were free to go, "with our young and our old, our sons and our daughters." The sacred verse continues, it is true: "With our sheep and our cattle": but of these we had little. So much the better—the march would be easier. Nor was there, this time, a wilderness to traverse. The Jews had only to go on board their ships, and disembark in Palestine. As to the Sultan, we should undoubtedly come to some arrangement with him; it was a matter of a million more or a million less. We would not bargain long: and the *Hamagid* had stated in an article that it was only a matter of price. It was thus I envisaged the liberation

of the Jewish people: a simple, primitive, and smooth process.

The big task, it seemed to me, was to liberate myself. I had made up my mind that Swislowitz was from now on impossible. I could of course have enrolled as a student in one of the great Yeshivoth (academies); my mother would have welcomed the idea, and my father could have been won over easily. But I myself was unwilling. I had been discouraged by the Yeshivah boys whom I already knew; not one of them even approached my ideal. Had I been a few years older, I would have run away to Odessa and waited for a ship going to Constantinople. Then one evening I opened my heart to my parents. I told them I wanted to go out into the world, begin my studies. I wanted to become an engineer. And in my imagination I was already at work somewhere among the mountains of Carmel and of Lebanon, between Shnir and Hermon. I knew the geography of Palestine only through the medium of the Bible: the Mount of Shnir I knew from the Song of Songs: and when in later years I discovered that neither Hermon nor Lebanon had ever belonged to us, I was bitterly disillusioned. I saw myself throwing bridges across the Jordan, which I imagined to be broader and more majestic than the Dnieper.

My parents reacted so coldly to my proposal that I saw the folly of pressing it. I realized that with their permission I would not get very far. So I dropped all talk of study and of engineering. I put forward the most modest of demands. I only wanted to go to some place where I might continue my Jewish studies—Talmud and ritual—and where I could also get better instruction in Russian and perhaps German. I also hinted that I wanted to see something of the larger world. My arguments sounded so reasonable, and

my attitude seemed so sensible, that my parents could hardly refuse me. My father promised me that soon after the Passover he would take me over to Beresin. There he would install me for a term or two, as an experiment.

The reasons that lay behind my parents' reluctance to let me study (that is to say, acquire a western worldly education) are instructive. There was in our family no tradition of worldly study. We were a good, middle-class Jewish family, with a high tradition of Jewish education: but no relative of ours had ever ventured into the western schools. And it was not easy to overcome the inertia of generations. Furthermore, it was a well-established fact that children who left Jewish homes and threw themselves into secular studies, at the high schools and universities, almost invariably became alienated. A deep gulf opened between them and their parents—a gulf that was never bridged. In no western country did the education of the Jewish youth create so hopeless a break between the two generations. The explanation lies in the fact that in all western countries the Jews acquired their taste for secular education by degrees. In Russia they threw themselves upon it like starved wolves, for the opportunity came suddenly, abruptly. A professional man—a doctor, lawyer, or engineer—who still retained a sort of relationship with Jewish religious tradition was, in the Russia of the sixties and seventies, a very rare phenomenon. Almost as rare was the interest of such men even in our purely social and secular problems. Their social relationships sundered them from the common people, and the division between them was clear and sharp. The result was a sad one. On one side of this division lay a façade without a structure: an intelligentsia without a folk behind it. On the other side, a folk without an intelligentsia. Little wonder, then, that parents of decent families were

afraid to send their children out into the world of western culture and learning. For such families were the principal carriers of the Jewish folk-way and folk-culture, and the instinct of self-preservation in their people as a whole warned them against the abandonment of their children.

In the eighties of that century, however, there came a radical change. Under the pressure of the persecutions, which did not distinguish between the classes, between degrees of westernization, the intelligentsia started to turn back to the people. But when the persecutions began, the process of assimilation was in full swing. And there were well-authenticated cases where the children of assimilated Jewish parents who had suffered in the pogroms asked, in bewilderment: "Haven't they made a mistake? Are *we* Jews, too?" The shame of such parents cannot easily be described; for a single though terrible incident revealed that they had brought up their children in a living lie.

I described in my first volume the family of the Getzovs who, because of their financial misfortunes, had been compelled to leave their original home in Minsk and begin life again in the townlet of Swislowitz. Bendet, the youngest boy in the family, had been my rival for the leadership of the youth of Swislowitz. In his Jewish studies, he was a long way behind me; but his mother, Hannah Neche, who had lived all her life in metropolitan and enlightened Minsk, had resolved to "make a man of my youngest boy"—as she put it. Her oldest son, Beinish, lived in Homel, and in Homel there was a gymnasium (preparatory school); and Hannah Neche sent her youngest son Bendet to Homel. With the Passover Bendet returned to Swislowitz, to visit his parents. He came in his royal robes, that is, in the smart uniform of the Russian student: a blue jacket with silver buttons, the high coat-collar set with silver stripes,

and a silver badge on his cap. I cannot describe the profound impression that the brilliant uniform of my old friend and rival made on me. He was the first Jewish student who had ever appeared on the streets of Swislowitz. On Passover he came to Synagogue. I went up to him and greeted him: "*Shalom aleichem,* Bendet." He answered me in Russian: "*Sdravstvui!*" I thought I perceived something haughty in his bearing—and on a sudden I was filled with fury. "Ah!" I thought. "The change has set in so soon. He thinks it beneath him to answer me '*Shalom aleichem.*' *Sdravstvui!*" But I believe that my fury had little to do with my *Shalom aleichem* and his *Sdravstvui.* This was only an excuse for myself. The truth was that I was consumed to the marrow with envy. The whole of that Passover—and Passover is one of the jolly festivals—was spoiled for me. The silver buttons and the silver badge haunted me.

In the old days, my friendship with Bendet had not been too intimate—our rivalry had been keen. But now I sought him out as often as I could, and gave him all my free time. I devoured him with my eyes: or rather, I devoured his silver buttons and his badge. For their sake, he achieved a new importance for me. I told him that I, too, would be leaving Swislowitz: I was going to Beresin after Passover. Of my further hopes and plans I said nothing, fearing they might reach my parents' ears. But I hoped he would understand that Beresin was only the beginning. In this I tried to assuage the agony of my envy. But Bendet's brother Leivik had overheard me. Leivik was an ignorant man, a drayman: his job was to drive the mails to and from Swislowitz and Osipowitz. And he was prouder of Bendet's uniform than if he had been wearing it himself. "Beresin!" he exclaimed contemptuously. "And what kind of a place is Beresin? Have they got a gymnasium?" This was too much

for me. I bit my lips, and said nothing more. But I took an oath silently: "Wait! My turn will come!"

Thus, side by side, there struggled within me my unfolding spirit and my childish instincts, a ripe and earnest will to dedicate myself to my people and a wild enthusiasm for a uniform—a confusion of Talmud, ritualistic casuistries, biblical glories, and silver buttons. It is no better with adults, I think: the outward lustre is stronger than the inner impulse. But the silver buttons of Bendet Getzov put the last touch on my determination: I was going to be a student.

On the eve of the last day of Passover we assembled in the Synagogue and sang the Song of Moses, which glorified the God of Israel: "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. . . . The people shall hear and be afraid." And on that same evening there took place in Balta the most horrible of the pogroms of that time: a forewarning of the type of pogrom which began again with Kishineff twenty-two years later, a pogrom in which the lowest and most bestial of human instincts were suddenly let loose, and abominations without name were committed against fellow human beings.

And I must confess that even in the midst of the tumult and horror of that time, the silver buttons of Bendet still swam before me. I was ashamed of myself. How could a son of the Jewish people think, at such a time, of the uniform of the gentiles? But again I found consolation: "My eyes are fixed on the idols and vanities of the gentiles, but I seek in them only weapons for the defence of my people. My dream lies beyond the uniform and the silver buttons; my purposes are high and pure."

A week later I got into the wagon, and with my father at my side set out for Beresin.

CHAPTER V

BERESIN

My entry into Beresin was like the prologue to my entry into the great world. On either side of the street was a long row of lofty, thickly leaved trees: and through the trees peeped the magnificent houses—some of them actually with two stories—built of the finest wood, with magnificent windows that were set in cut-out frames and richly ornamented with brasswork. I had seen fine houses in Bobrusk; but a streetful of them was more than I had expected in Beresin, which, compared with Bobrusk, was only a village. I saw for the first time in my life a harmonious complex of trees and houses, and felt for the first time a genuine aesthetic thrill. My father noted my joy and astonishment, and he told me that this whole street was occupied by the Zeldovitches of the younger generation. The older Zeldovitches also had a street of their own, called the Golden Street. But their houses were not so fine. The older people were richer than the younger, but they were more modest, and did not delight in "making people stare." That phrase, "making people stare," was very popular during the pogrom days. The entire Jewish press was filled with denunciations of those who made a show of wealth, and warned all Jews against the dangers of "making non-Jews stare."

Our first stop was Uncle Michael's: we went to him not out of family reasons, but because he had a hotel for the higher class of travellers. Uncle Michael was a brother of

Grandfather Mendel, and like him was an employé of the Zeldovitches. His large house was divided into two parts, one for himself, the other for the family of his son Chaim Eli Astrakhan. But Chaim Eli was seldom at home. He passed the entire year, with two or three breaks at the important holidays, in the city of Riga, where he was a timber-broker.

The family of Chaim Eli consisted of his wife Bassya, an older son, Isaac, who was married and kept house apart, two other sons, Bereh and Nissan, and the "baby," Zire Braine, a girl a year or two younger than myself. The house of Chaim Eli belonged to the more educated circles, for his three younger children had received a more modern training than was the rule with the Jewish middle classes. Riga was the centre of the German culture of the Baltic provinces. Chaim Eli Astrakhan came in frequent business contact with the Germans of the city, and he had therefore determined to give his children as nearly German an education as could be commanded in Beresin.

I was left, by my father, under the protection of my uncle's family, and from the first moment that I made my home there they treated me as one of themselves. I was at once provided with a teacher of German and Russian, Joseph Mazeh, who was house-teacher for the family, and with a teacher of Talmud, Mottel the ascetic. Mazeh was considered one of the best Russian instructors and by far the best German instructor in Beresin.

Mottel the ascetic, who became a widower and married one of my cousins, was deeply versed in Talmudic and Rabbinic literature, and was, in addition, a man of keen intelligence and wit. He kept no *cheder*, but confined himself to private instruction in the richest houses of Beresin. He never had more than two or three in a group. To be a pupil of

Mottel the ascetic was a distinction, for he accepted only those who were already well advanced in Talmudic knowledge. I received no teacher for Hebrew. My elders were of the belief—which I shared—that in Hebrew my education was complete. The young Astrakhans, who became my new friends, were also good Hebraists; and they kept me well provided with the Hebrew literature of the Haskallah period, as well as with the latest publications.

The ramifications of my mother's family in Beresin were no less broad and no less complicated than those of my father's family in Swislowitz. A great number of houses were thus open to me, and I was received everywhere with the utmost friendliness: uncles, aunts, cousins, second cousins, relatives by marriage, and relatives of indeterminate status. I was embarrassed by the multiplicity of invitations. The homes into which I was invited all belonged to the decent middle class. They were not particularly interesting. The one house where I felt perfectly at home was the house I lived in: that of Chaim Eli.

The influence which the town of Beresin exerted on me was immediate and powerful. Compared with Swislowitz this was a city. The streets were livelier, the people quicker. For the first time I was in a place where I did not know everybody. In Swislowitz my position had been unique. I had permitted myself to behave as I liked, speak as I liked, and utter whatever came to the tip of my tongue. In Beresin I had to create a position for myself. I was unknown to many, and many were unknown to me. I became more thoughtful, more cautious. I hesitated before I spoke, and ordered my thoughts in advance. The break in the tempo of my being was difficult. But I was blessed with a deep feeling of responsibility. I became older very quickly, and

learned to put a restraint on my hitherto ungoverned temperament.

The strongest effect in this direction was produced upon me by my new friends, the young folk of the wealthy Zeldovitches. They were boys of my own age, or a year older at most. But from their earliest childhood they had been taught never to forget—not for a moment—who they were: Zeldovitches. They were taught to bear themselves with a certain pride, to walk slowly and measure their steps, to speak slowly and measure their words: for this was the sign of distinction and of noble birth. I speak of new "friends." Actually there was no real friendship. The refusal came from their side: they could not accept me as a full friend because of the difference in the social status of our respective parents. It was, in fact, a distinct concession on their part if they let me come near them and bathe in the glory of their presence. This concession was made because, before long, my teacher Mottel the ascetic had spread the rumour that I was an extraordinarily gifted village youth, with a rich education in all branches of Jewish study, and particularly in Hebrew. And so the Zeldovitches let me come near them: but they never admitted me into the intimacy of their circle. They could not bring themselves to treat me as an equal: the pride of their caste was too deep.

I grew older, therefore, in another respect. In Beresin I knew for the first time the bitter taste of class distinction, and learned the rôle that money played in Jewish life. I suffered. I marked that the friendliness of these young people was external; it was rather courtesy than friendship, rather manners than feeling. They spoke to me from a distance. I did not feel any special respect for them. The great majority of them were mediocrities; some of them were, in

their Jewish studies, downright ignoramuses. True, they knew Russian much better than I, and some of them even had a smattering of German. But this could not compensate for ignorance in Jewish studies. The distinction was therefore one of money: their parents were richer than mine. But what did that have to do with us? Was I asking favours of them? Did money questions ever rise between us? It was the presence of money, the association with it, which created the inexpugnable distinction. It was an attitude of real idolatry: and the true measure of social distinction was the amount of gold with which each man was associated. I now felt that there were two exiles for poor Jews. All Jews were in exile among the nations, and poor Jews were in exile among their own people: an exile within an exile.

And, as I learned to look closer into the ways of the new city, I saw that the pressure of the Zeldovitch family, with its huge ramifications, was not only economic, but intellectual and moral. I perceived that its rule was universal and complete, and against that pressure no one dared to lift his head. The self-abasement of the Jews of Beresin was complete. The middle classes lay as prostrate as the poorest Jews, and in the presence of a Zeldovitch no individual was of account. There began to awake in me a deep contempt for the oppressed, and a hatred of the oppressor. And when, unable to restrain myself, I spoke freely to my friends Bereh and Nissan, they smiled. They did not laugh—they only smiled. They did not, or would not, admit that I was in the right. And their smile said: "A village boy like you comes to live among us for a few months, and breaks out into bitter criticism. We were born here and have always lived here, and we are silent. Neither we nor you will change the order of things, which scores of generations have set firmly."

But it must be borne in mind that I found this order of

things existing at a time which should have created a new feeling of solidarity among Jews: for all Jews, without distinction of class or rank, were living—even at a distance from the scene of the pogroms—through a common terror and under a common threat. But the consolidation did not take place. The rich, snobbish Jews could not bring themselves to admit that, in any respect whatsoever, they could be classed with their poorer co-religionists. Even in the hour of terror they insisted on trembling apart.

It was by observing the life of this tiny provincial town that I obtained an insight into the attitude of the Ginsburgs and the Poliakovs, and the other wealthy Jewish notables of the capital, who pretended to direct the affairs of the Jewish people. I began to understand why it was that all the best Jewish writers of the time were engaged universally in deriding the politics and actions of the wealthy Jews. In that miniature world I learned how deep the gulf was between the wealthy Jew and the masses. And it is proper to cite here one illuminating fact. At the time of the pogroms the Chibath Zion movement began to take form. At first individuals, then entire groups, ranged themselves in the ranks of the movement. In Beresin, as elsewhere, the movement made a stir, and the same phenomenon was repeated. *Not a single member of the wealthy classes was among the recruits.* Later I was to learn that this phenomenon was common in all the cities. The wealthy Jew, even when he remained true to what is called traditional Judaism, stood off from the masses, and away from the interests of his people. Whatever happened, he always felt more secure; the government would deal differently with *him.* And from this feeling of security arose a special attitude toward the Jewish problem.

I do not know whether anything was added to my educa-

tion as the result of my stay in Beresin. But much was added to my understanding and my power of observation. In Swislowitz I had lived in a unified community. Sharp distinctions did not exist. In Beresin I learned something of the structure of the Jewish people, of its divisions and classes with their individual interests. And this helped me a great deal in orientating myself in the details of our problems.

My new teacher, Mottel the ascetic, a middle-aged man, was no ordinary person. By his brilliant gifts and learning he had obtained, in his adolescence, the certificate of the Rabbinate. And such was his learning that he might reasonably have aspired to one of the most distinguished places of the profession. But he turned resolutely from the Rabbinate and remained a poor *melamed*, a teacher, a calling which could not satisfy any man either from the social or the economic point of view. Mottel was in great demand. All day long he went from one rich house to another, giving lessons: and yet he lived in dire poverty, and occupied a tiny apartment in one of the outhouses of Grandfather Mendel's home. I began to wonder why it was that Mottel had chosen the miserable profession of a *melamed* and would not even try to become a Rav.

When I was more intimate with him, I put the question to him point-blank. He could not blush, for he was so dark-skinned that he might have passed for a mulatto. But I was aware that the question had shamed him, and his answer was evasive. But the question was to me of more than passing interest. My early decision not to follow the paths that lead to the Rabbinate had been founded largely on one consideration: I did not feel myself to be pious enough for a Rav. For the Rav is expected to be not only religious inwardly, but pious and observant outwardly; and I wanted

to know whether Rabbis were observant because they were pious, or because they were Rabbis. If the first was the case, I could not be a Rabbi even if I wanted to. If the second was the case, it was almost as impossible, for it was not in my nature to put up with restraints.

My heart told me that Mottel the ascetic could not be a Rabbi because he was not pious enough. I learned it in the course of our studies. On those passages in the Talmud that deal with the Jewish outlook on life, the Jewish life-philosophy, the passages that deal with the logic and justice of the Jewish religion, Mottel exhausted all his energies and all his ingenuity. He went closely into all the arguments, quoted all the commentaries, and was not satisfied with less than a complete examination of the problem. But when he came to those passages that deal with purely theological laws, the laws of the Sabbath, of the Holy Days, of the prayers, he ran through them swiftly and indifferently. In short, he was interested in the laws that regulate the attitude of "man to his fellow man," and not in those which deal with the relation between "man and his God." He was more the jurist than the theologian. But the Rabbi must be both. And I was the more interested in the question because I had observed the same distinction in the two Rabbis who had been my teachers in earlier years. They too had been more jurists than theologians: they were jurists by inclination, and theologians by economic necessity.

I confirmed this observation in later years too. The greater the jurist, the smaller the theologian, and vice versa. The most violent fanatics in regard to external piety happened to be the German Rabbis, with their spiritual centre in Frankfort on the Main. The explanation is simple: with the Emancipation the juridical side of the Rabbinic training lost all its living importance. The Din Torah, or settlement

of disputes by Jewish law, passed out of the fashion. There remained, therefore, only the theological side. And the freer spirits among the Rabbis made every attempt to fit the Jewish theology, in its turn, to modern conditions: thence was born the Reform movement. The conservative element barricaded itself more than ever, in a compensatory reaction, behind the theological content of Judaism. But in Russia the time was not yet ripe for Reform, and therefore not for a reaction toward extreme orthodoxy of the Frankfort school. Russia produced free-thinking scholars, and Germany produced pious ignoramuses.

Like my two former teachers, Mottel the ascetic belonged to the type of free-thinking scholar, and he, together with them, fixed for ever my attitude toward Jewish learning. To be more exact, they helped along that development which had first been set in motion by the best of all my teachers, Judah Artzer. In this respect I was exceptionally fortunate: there was not, in my development, a spiritual break such as often occurred with others who passed from teacher to teacher.

My Russian and German teacher, Joseph Mazeh, was a well-educated and intelligent man, more inclined toward the German than the Russian culture. He used to translate German into Russian for me, and Russian into German, and I limped badly in both languages. More precisely, I limped in Russian, and crawled in German. But of course like every Jew who knows no German I thought I knew a great deal. Is not German so very much like Yiddish? The circumstance which confirmed me in my early belief that I knew German, was the following: Among the workers in the forests round Swislowitz there were large numbers of Germans. Once a week they would come from the woods, where they lived with their families, and lay in provisions. Most of all they

frequented the shop of my sister Hannah Braine, and she spoke with them in German. At least, so she thought. On more than one occasion I was present, and I understood nearly everything that the Germans said, and everything that my sister said to them. Years later, when I was a student in a German university, and came home for a visit, I went to see my forest Germans. I was astounded to learn the truth. Neither my sister nor the other shopkeepers of Swislowitz had learned to speak German, but the Germans had learned to speak Yiddish.

I had hardly learned the German alphabet when I came to my teacher with a request for German books. Not beginners' books, made up of scraps and shreds, but real books, the body of German literature. My argument was simple and just: since I knew the language, and had now learned its alphabet, I was ready for the best. Whether my teacher believed me or not, I do not know. But either in jest or in earnest he read out to me the first few lines of Goethe's *Leiden des Jungen Werther*, and asked me if I had understood. Of course I had not understood a single word. But I was ashamed, and answered that our Germans back home had a quite different pronunciation. And now for the second time I had to sit down before a book that began: "The cat is in the garden. The pen is on the desk. The pupil sits and learns." And the pupil sat and learned like a five-year-old, a child.

It became evident to the teacher, at about the same time, that my Russian was not much in advance of my German. My vocabulary was small, my pronunciation grotesque. My teacher had to stop me at every word, to correct me. At last I could stand it no longer, and I burst out impudently: "In Swislowitz we have a different pronunciation." My teacher shouted with laughter, so that my friends, Bereh

and Nissan and Zire Braine Astrakhan, came running in from the next room. My teacher told them the great joke, and they laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks. My poor friends! How were they to know that years later I would have to sweat long to eradicate the traces of my Beresin pronunciation of Russian?

My teacher did not succeed in wakening any strong desire in me toward the Russian and German languages. It appeared that the purpose that had really brought me to Beresin had fallen by the way. My teacher began to read with me Gogol's *Taras Bulba*—the most extraordinary picture in all Russian literature of the old Cossack life. But the description did not grip me. The pictures were too alien, too characteristically Russian, to appeal to me. From Gogol he passed to Pushkin, and this time he was more successful. We read *Eugene Onegin*, and though I did not always understand the details, and could not achieve any sort of enthusiasm, there was some appeal in the totality, in the general human effect.

After *Eugene Onegin* we read Shakespeare in Russian, and here, for the first time, I awoke to new pleasures. This was remarkable enough: the life that was pictured in *Hamlet* was even remoter from me than the Russian life pictured in *Taras Bulba;* the heroes of the piece were more alien. And yet from the beginning I felt that I had before me something of elemental greatness, which fired my enthusiasm. In *Hamlet* I seemed to hear an echo of the Bible, in which all thought is so clearly crystallized, and every word is sharp and polished like a well-kept sword. I did not know that many years later I would read in Heine that in all world-literature he had found but two productions that might stand the slightest comparison, in power of expression, with the sacred books: Shakespeare and Homer. For

the first time a book in the Russian language filled me with joy and satisfaction—and it was a translation of Shakespeare. Later I read, in the Hebrew translations of J. A. Salkindson, the apostate and Christian missionary, two more plays of Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*. My happiness and enthusiasm knew no bounds. I was captured by the marvellous harmony between word and thought. I understood now why Smolenskin had written with such joy in the *Hashachar*, when these translations appeared: "Today we revenge ourselves on the English. They took our Bible and wove it into the structure of their literature. We have taken their Shakespeare and given him a place in the front rank of ours. A genius for a genius." I read *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* with the same passion with which I read the Bible, until I knew both plays by heart.

The fragmentary and accidental character of my education may be seen in the fact that it never occurred to my teacher to approach any other subject than Russian and German—such as arithmetic, geography, and history. In this too could be traced the influence of the rich Zeldovitches. These magnates had no intention of sending their children to the universities. They did not need it. They had wealth enough, and honours enough: studies were therefore superfluous. But languages were needed, because of their regular annual trips abroad.

When I left my native Swislowitz, the whole town was still talking of pogroms: of those that had been and those that were yet to come. The town was steeped in a pogrom atmosphere. In Beresin they talked little about pogroms. First, the times had become quieter. Second, however, and more important, was the psychology of the town. Such was the belief of the Jews of Beresin in the might of the Zeldovitches that they considered a pogrom in their city out of the ques-

tion. The Zeldovitches would put their foot down and that would be the end of it. . . .

The lukewarm atmosphere of Beresin was not without its effect on me; my dreams of the liberation of my people, of the purchase of Palestine, of a new exodus from Egypt, shifted into the background. I reverted more to myself and to my personal problems. Beresin failed to satisfy me. After the first few months the old discontent awoke again: Beresin was a larger town than Swislowitz, but it was far from being the great world to which I was drawn. And I determined to leave Beresin.

There were no very strong bonds between my new friends and me, but I was drawn closer to my young cousin Zire Braine than to the others. She was a pleasant, charming, and sensible little friend. I liked to jest with her, and to shock her with my advanced views on life. And perhaps a deep friendship might have developed between us. But she was an only daughter, and she never failed to tell her mother everything I said. I came in for some severe lectures. My feeling toward Zire Braine was not so deep that I would bear with the daily discipline of a mother-in-law. And before long I cooled toward her.

Two weeks before the Jewish New Year my father came to take me home. My cousins saw me go with regret: they told my father that they liked me for my happy temperament. And Zire Braine turned a fiery red when her turn came to bid me farewell. We travelled the whole night in a rustic cart, and early in the morning arrived in Swislowitz. I did not go to sleep. As soon as I had breakfasted I went out into the street. Nothing had changed. There was our house, opposite the Orthodox Church: in the centre of the square was the old communal well: to one side was the broad street, toward the other was Castle Hill with its four proud

old birch-trees. But at the well stood a little girl, of the same age as myself: she who had never used to call me Shmerel, but Shmerele. She too turned red, and told me she had been waiting for me. Very naïvely I asked her: "How long have you been waiting?" She answered: "All the time."

CHAPTER VI

FLIGHT

I WAS welcomed back joyously to Swislowitz not only by the members of my family, but by all my friends in the townlet. My brother Meyer had just returned—also for the High Holidays—from Ekaterinoslav, where he was by now established independently, selling the rafts for my father. It had been a good year, and the mood at home was a happy one. My two younger brothers, Mordecai and Joshua, were now in the *cheder* of my old teacher, Judah Artzer. But the latter confided to me that no one had taken my place. He did not complain: he was satisfied with his pupils; but I had been both friend and pupil to him. Besides these two younger brothers, there was the baby, Leizer, the darling of the family.

For the first few weeks I avoided the question of the future. I knew that my parents and I were disagreed on that subject, and I did not want to spoil the holiday atmosphere by arguments and debates. I suggested nothing, asked for nothing. I told stories about Beresin, about the magnificent homes of that city, and about the insolent haughtiness of my "friends." Here I could utter my bitter criticisms freely. But my contentment was only a mask. The old, impatient longing to continue my education did not die down; and I was afraid my father might persuade me to tread in my brother's footsteps, and become like him a timber-merchant, under my father's direction. I was all the more afraid

because my brother's position was by no means without its attractiveness. He journeyed now to distant cities and acted for himself, like a man. Openings like this one were rare for younger people: and they were made possible only by entry into a father's business. But the pull toward education was stronger, and my ambitions went further than the ideal of a timber-merchant. Smolenskin and Lilienblum were my heroes, and it was from them that I took the directives for my life.

The High Holidays passed, and my patience gave out. My mother began to plead with me to go to the famous Yeshivah or Academy of Volozhin. My father, per contra, advised me to make some journeys through the forests with my older brother Meyer. My demand was to be sent to Minsk, where I might prepare myself to enter the Realschule, or secondary school. There was, in Minsk, also a gymnasium, but I knew by now that languages came to me with difficulty: the gymnasium was a more classic institution, whereas the Realschule specialized in mathematics and demanded only German in addition to Russian. I was certain that I would find mathematics an easy subject: as for German, I was still convinced that I knew it. I had anticipated a real storm of opposition from my parents. To my astonishment it did not come. This I probably owed to the intercession of my old teacher and of the Rav, both of whom were on my side. My father imposed one condition. He had to leave for Bobrusk, on business, and would be absent for two weeks. I was to wait for his return. I could not believe my ears: "You mean, then," I exclaimed, "that as soon as you get back from Bobrusk I shall go to Minsk?" "I didn't say that," my father answered. "I only meant that when I get back from Bobrusk we'll take the matter up again." In that instant was born my plan to run away from home.

I laid my plans carefully. I would not go to Minsk. It was too close to Swislowitz and my father would find it too easy to come and fetch me home. I would go instead to Dinaburg, to Meyer Wendrov, the uncle who had befriended me in my childhood, and had rescued me from the wretched *cheder* system of Swislowitz. My father's only sister, Liube Henye, who had been the wife of Uncle Meyer, had been dead for some years now. My uncle did not wait long before he remarried. His second wife, Esther, was the daughter of my other Uncle Meyer. Now my uncle had transferred his entire family to Dinaburg. His oldest son, Gershon, who had been my schoolmate in the little private *cheder* of Judah Artzer, was now preparing for the Realschule in Dinaburg. It was a marvellous opportunity, I thought. First of all, Dinaburg was so far from home: and second, I would have the moral support of my Uncle Meyer, whom even my father regarded as an authority.

For the next few days I covered my intentions carefully, preserved a calm exterior, and gave no cause for suspicion. The day my father left for Bobrusk I went over to my sister Hannah Braine, in her store, and told her that Father had sent me for twenty-five roubles which he needed for immediate payment of a debt in Beresin. My sister was a good-natured woman, and I was a great favourite with her. It was impossible for her to suspect anything, and she gave me the money without a word. And the money burned my pocket: I had fooled it out of my good sister. It was not, God forbid, actual theft: nor was it all quite above-board, either. There was no turning back now. From my sister I went to Reuben the drayman and told him to have a cart ready early next morning: not too early, but about the time when my mother would be at morning services, and my younger brothers would still be sleeping. My brother Meyer

was away in the woods. My plan was perfect and worked like a dream.

I did not close my eyes that night. I was afraid that I might not wake up at the right moment. I was afraid that something might happen to bring my plan tumbling about my ears. And then there was the general excitement of the situation. To the first pangs of conscience succeeded others. I was running away from home. In this wise, probably, Jacob planned his flight from Esau, and his flight from Laban the Syrian: he stole away from them. But I was stealing away neither from an Esau nor from a Laban, but from my own parents, who loved me heart and soul. I comforted myself: true, I was going away rather precipitately, but not *stealing* away. For did they not know that my heart was set on an education that I could not get in Swislowitz? I had told them often enough, had I not? And since they opposed my wishes so obstinately, I was going away, surreptitiously, perhaps. But not *stealing* away. The word stuck in my throat. I knew that events would justify me: I would play the man, my parents would some day be proud of me, and even rejoice that I had decided to go away before I got their consent.

I put some things together, in the dark, and packed them in a travel-basket. I sat through the night open-eyed. I heard my mother get up and go to Synagogue. A few minutes later, as if he had been a conscious conspirator, Reuben the drayman came driving his cart to the house. I took a last look at my younger brothers, wrapped in sleep. I went down into the yard, mounted the cart, and told Reuben to drive me to Osipowitz, the nearest railroad station on the line which led to Minsk and Vilna.

During the entire morning it occurred to no one to look for me. Even during the afternoon, though I was missed,

nothing serious was suspected. And in the evening Reuben the drayman got back from Osipowitz and, on my instruction, told my mother that I had gone to Minsk. I said nothing about Dinaburg. I do not believe that there was any great excitement at home. My mother and my relatives were not afraid for me: they believed me quite capable of looking after myself. They were angry, of course, at the trick I had played. But they took no steps to bring me back, and decided to wait for the return of my father from Bobrusk.

My flight from home was the occasion for the first railroad journey of my life. I had seen the railroad station of Bobrusk; I had seen the train come speeding into the station; I had seen the great wheels turning, and had heard the whistle shrilling fiercely. I had envied the happy, happy passengers who sat in the cars. And now I was one of them myself. The train went at a furious speed—reaching sometimes a velocity of twenty miles an hour (I know this because I traversed the same path in the same train in later years). I thought we were not rolling on the ground, but sweeping through the air. We went so fast that I was afraid some one would recognize the fact that I was running away. I did my best to look like an old traveller, whom nothing can amaze. I looked out of the window. I yawned like a much-bored man. And then the sleepless night I had passed came to my rescue. I sought out a corner seat and tried to get some sleep.

The same evening we arrived in Minsk. I decided to visit some of our relatives there, so that my parents would know of my safe arrival. The vastness and the tumult of the Minsk station dazed me. I knew that the place was infested with rogues and swindlers, who waited for innocent country passengers, and lured them to their destruction. This was common talk in Swislowitz. When I stepped out of the station

there stood two rows of men (the employés of the various Minsk hotels), and as the passengers passed between them, they handed out cards. I was quite certain that these were the famous swindlers of Minsk waiting for their victims. I ran at top speed between the two lines, refused the cards offered me, and saved myself from certain ruin. The first thing I did then was to hail a droshky and drive over to the house of my cousin, Abraham Levin, my Uncle Meyer Levin's son, who was married and lived permanently in Minsk. Though married, my cousin was still, after the old custom, a free boarder with his in-laws. I landed in the evening in a houseful of people, and created an immediate sensation: a wild-looking country boy, with a clumsy and hastily packed basket. My cousin greeted me as if I had fallen down from the skies. I explained: My parents were sending me to Dinaburg, to my Uncle Meyer Wendrov, the husband of Abraham's sister. I was calling on my way through, so that they might let my parents know of my safe arrival in Minsk. I also told them how I had evaded the bandits who were ranged outside the notorious railroad station, and was rewarded, for this exhibition of my worldly wisdom, with long and uproarious laughter.

At midnight I returned to the station, and took the train to Vilna, and in Vilna I changed for Dinaburg. On this last stretch of my journey I met with some acquaintances from Beresin.

Eshke Pines was the wife of Leib Pines, who was the son-in-law of the richest Jew of Beresin, Wolf Zeldovitch. She was now on her way to Dinaburg, together with her oldest son, on a visit to her son's bride. Leib Pines had been famous in years gone by as an *ilui*, a near-genius—they called him "the *ilui* of Rosinoi." And he had grown into a great scholar: a man of both immense reading and extraordinary acute-

ness of mind. His occupation was that of timber-merchant. In reality he spent all his days in study of the Talmud, but he lent out his money at high interest to the smaller timber-merchants, and took their rafts as collateral. He was virtual owner of these rafts until the debt was paid, and decided when, how, and to whom they should be sold. The system then in vogue was known as "the rider system." A man who lent money to a timber-merchant on his rafts would attach a "rider" to the merchant. The "rider" directed the business. Without the rider's consent not a kopeck could be spent by the merchant. And when the rider sold the raft he first deducted the amount of the loan, together with the exact amount of interest, and turned over the difference to the merchant. The riders were a special class of hard-faced men, who rode their victims without mercy. Leib Pines had in his employ as many as five or six riders. His wife Eshke was a pretty woman, but altogether too fat. She would go every summer to Marienbad, in Austria, to take the cure and lose weight. It did not seem to do her much good. In the summer she lost weight; in the winter she regained it. The popular phrase was not "to lose weight," but "to pump off fat"—the bitter expression of the envious. There was a story current in Beresin that on one occasion she was seen in Marienbad by the Emperor, Francis Joseph, who fell in love with her straightway, and became very importunate. She saved herself by telling him that she was the wife of the great scholar, "the *ilui* of Rosinoi"—whereupon the Emperor ceased, in confusion. But he gave her, as a remembrance of his disappointed affection, a silken shawl, which was so fine that it could be drawn through a ring.

This was the Eshke whom I met on the train, on the way to Dinaburg. She recognized me, and turned red. And my revenge was sweet to me: I had met the beloved of the Em-

peror in a third-class compartment, among the rabble! At the station before Dinaburg the illustrious lady and her son transferred to second: not for my sake, but for the sake of the prospective in-laws. Such are the devious ways of the upper classes!

In Dinaburg I told my Uncle Meyer that my father had sent me to him. My uncle, an exact and methodical man, could not understand why he had not been advised in advance, but I told him my father had been too busy to write. But my uncle was also phlegmatic and easy-going. He suspected something, and held his peace. He would wait calmly until things explained themselves.

Dinaburg was the first great city that I ever saw. I had passed through Minsk in the evening, without an opportunity of gathering even a fleeting impression. The only standards of comparison that I had were therefore Beresin and Bobrusk; but both of these latter cities were built of wood, without a single structure of stone. Beresin was really half village and half town; it had not reached the stage of stone houses. Bobrusk was a larger town, and much older, but because of its proximity to an important fortress, the government would not permit the building of stone or even of brick houses. In the event of war Bobrusk might be taken by the enemy, and stone houses make an excellent defence. It was true that the fortress of Bobrusk had long since lost its ancient importance, but the old laws remained in force: the phenomenon is common—old laws always survive old fortresses. It is commonest among reactionary governments; they find it so hard to part with ancient prohibitions. And who knows, even the most ancient prohibition may come in handy some day! Dinaburg too had a fortress, and one of first-class importance, for it guarded the road from the west

to St. Petersburg. But the fortress was some miles from the town, and the city was therefore permitted to build stone walls.

The impression of that first city with stone walls was deep and abiding. I had seen one or two houses of stone. Even the ancient windmill in my native Swislowitz had been built partly of stone. But rows of houses, streets of them, all built of stone, massive, permanent, unshakable, made me breathless with wonder. I walked the streets for hours, without any other purpose than that of looking at the stone houses, and drinking in the atmosphere of power and permanence. This was a revolution indeed. The old world had been weaker, softer, more yielding. Axes, hammers, and saws could not prevail against this new world: nothing short of bombs and heavy guns could make an impression on it. And the stone walls were a human symbol, too: in such a city the people were doubtless harder and firmer; their wills were surely as unshakable as their walls.

My uncle's house was a large one, and I received a room for myself. But something in the order of the house touched me with a new sense of the power of the stone city. At home, in Swislowitz, household order was a loose thing. My mother was too busy with public affairs to pay much attention to outer details. We came and went irregularly, we ate irregularly. Here, in the house of my uncle, everything went by clockwork. We rose at a given hour, the rooms were cleaned at once, the meals were fixed, and there was no deviation from the programme. Uncle Meyer was orderly by instinct, and his young wife, my cousin Esther, was exact and even severe. I suffered at first. This outer exactitude and discipline was not to my liking, nor had I ever submitted to it before. And I longed for the old "freedom." But before long I was not only well broken-in, but had conceived an affection for the

economies of this régime. And I fell in line, together with the other four children in the house.

My cousin Esther did everything she could to replace the dead mother. She treated the children not as a stepmother, but as a true mother. She wanted the children to call her Mamma, and not "Muma" (Auntie), as was usually done in such cases. She succeeded easily with the younger children, the girls. The two sons, my old schoolmates of Swislowitz, offered obstinate resistance. Gershon told me he would have liked to please Esther. He tried to say Mamma, but always halfway his tongue twisted, and what came out was Muma. Gershon was not honest. His tongue would not have twisted if he had really wanted to say Mamma. But Gershon was hard and obstinate by nature, and he carried in his heart a hatred against the second wife of his father. He was jealous, and could not bear to witness the love which his father bore to his second wife—a love which he considered had been stolen from himself and his brother and sisters. Gershon had inherited his father's ways: he was slow, deliberate, and courteous. But his courtesy covered a deep antagonism to his stepmother. It irritated Esther, and more than once she tried to provoke him to reveal the hateful thoughts that took refuge behind his quiet manner. But she very rarely succeeded. Gershon barricaded himself behind his careful, phlegmatic, and meaningless politeness, and seldom, if ever, gave her the satisfaction of uncovering his baser thoughts. His younger brother, Lazar, was softer than he. His nature was tender and affectionate, and he would undoubtedly have yielded to Esther, and called her Mamma. But he was not strong enough to throw off his brother's authority. Now I too should have called Esther Muma, or Aunt, for she was now the wife of my uncle. But my tongue really refused to obey me. For so many years I had called

the only daughter of my father's older brother by the plain name of Esther. And now, all of a sudden, I was to call her Auntie. One day Esther took me aside into her room, and gave me a little lecture. "It isn't a question of honour with me," she said. "You will always be Shmerel to me, and I shall always be Esther to you. But for the sake of the children I want you to call me Auntie, and to treat me with respect. It's hard enough for me to break in Gershon, without a bad example from you." I was genuinely sorry for her. It is hard to be a second-hand mother. But I still could not call her Auntie. I adopted a compromise: I called her neither Esther nor Auntie.

My uncle, too, did his best to make the children feel that no change had taken place in his attitude toward them. He was the same faithful, loving, and thoughtful father. But he wanted his children to show his new wife the respect which they had formerly showed their mother. He made this request, as he made all his requests, quietly, carefully, tactfully. I never knew my uncle to lose his temper, to raise his voice, or to show any sort of displeasure. He spoke gently, easily, with a sort of cold, uncomfortable logic. When one of the children did something wrong, he did not approach the circumstance directly. He waited awhile, and then took up the subject as it were philosophically—just as if nothing had occurred, or as if he had no personal interest in it, or as if he knew nothing about it. But his "philosophizing" was clear enough to the children; and they knew that he was acquainted with all the details of the incident. No one ever dared to argue with him. He occupied, in that house, a position of such remote loftiness that to contradict him or to question him was unthinkable.

I knew, before long, that I had delivered myself into a sort of prison. In my home, it is true, my father had been the

absolute authority, and I had recognized it freely. But I had never been compelled to ignore my own moral existence. I had always permitted myself to question my father, and argue with him. I had felt free even in the presence of my teacher and of the Rav of the town. It was different with Uncle Meyer. It was precisely his quiet voice, his dispassionate expressions, his careful and faultlessly balanced sentences, which oppressed me. There was no way of answering because he did not speak to us as equals, but as a high tribunal delivering an unalterable verdict. On one occasion he took me aside for a personal conversation. He told me that he understood in what manner I had come to Dinaburg, but he promised to stand by me, and to obtain my father's acquiescence in the new situation. He would prepare me, together with his sons, for the Realschule. I was grateful to my uncle for his sympathy and understanding, but it was quite impossible to express my gratitude in words. There is a certain intimacy in gratitude, and there was no possibility of intimacy between myself and my uncle. I listened to him in silence, and in silence returned to my room.

Two weeks later my father arrived in Dinaburg, and put up at a hotel. It was a principle with him never to stay with relatives—not even with his children. He had a number of strict principles of behaviour, which he tried to inculcate in us. Another of them was: "Never bargain with a workingman. If you go into a store, you may bargain as much as you like with the merchant. He is a merchant and did not make the goods. He only deals in them. But a workingman has put his own body into the thing. Therefore go, when you need, to an honest workingman, and do not argue the price with him." And I do not remember a single occasion on which my father, who bargained frequently enough on the sale and purchase of timber, ever argued with a working-

man. He told us further: "Never buy second-hand things, even if they look whole. All old things must sooner or later get holes in them: it may be that the thing you are buying is just ripe for the first hole, but doesn't show it yet. Don't look for bargains and you will never be fooled."

There was no scene between my father and me. He did not even reproach me. On the contrary, he treated me with great kindliness. This, I do not doubt, I owed to Uncle Meyer, who had persuaded him to let me study for the Realschule. Nor do I doubt that the turn of events had not displeased my father. True, it had been his wish that I become, like him, a merchant. But at the back of his mind there had always been a doubt. He already had four sons who would follow in his footsteps: he was therefore well enough provided with merchants. Was it not perhaps better that I, the most gifted of his sons, should tread a new path? He was himself too conservative to make the change. But now the thing had happened: I had run away from home, against his will: perhaps, who knows, it had all been for the best. I was amazed and delighted by the smoothness with which everything went off. My father only told me that my mother was unhappy, and I promised to write her often.

My cousin Gershon was far in advance of me in his studies. He had now been receiving systematic instruction in Russian and other subjects for an entire year. He was not a particularly brilliant boy, but he had the precious gift of industry, and knew how to study after the old style—that is, from early in the morning till late at night. My uncle put me under the guidance of Gershon's teacher, a young student in the upper classes of the Realschule. The name of my teacher was Friedland, and he was remotely related to the great Friedlands who ruled Jewish Dinaburg as the Zeldovitches ruled Jewish Beresin. My teacher soon dis-

covered that I was raw material. It was his opinion that I would need fully two years before I could enter the third class in the Realschule. And by then I would be too old for the third class. Of course, like all other Swislowitz Jews, I had no birth-certificate, and could get myself one to order. But I was large for my years, and it would be impossible to disguise my age.

Fortunately my teacher had miscalculated. I was raw material, it is true, as far as secular studies were concerned. But I already had the mind of a man, ripened by a complete Jewish education, and sharpened in the best of schools. Nor did my teacher know that this sharpened mind was seconded by an iron will, and the habits and discipline of a Jewish student. One incident will illustrate to what extent he had miscalculated. In the fourth month of my studies I took up the subject of geography. I argued rightly that surely geography could not be more difficult than the Talmud. I made up my mind to sit down to the subject as I had once sat down to my Talmud. I studied solidly through three nights. On the fourth day I came to my teacher and told him that I had completed the year's work in geography. He looked at me incredulously, and picked up the book. He examined me page by page, and discovered that I had simply learned the book by heart. He was dumbfounded. He had never been a Talmud student, and had never been a witness of these feats. This was my first victory in the course of my secular education, a victory of will and memory. My intelligence was meanwhile at rest.

During these first three months I caught up with my cousin Gershon. In the fourth month I was ahead of him. In mathematics my progress was real and substantial. My feat in geography had been a mere *tour de force.* I had crammed into myself in three days and nights the material

of a year's study. But the stuff did not keep. Cramming is good for geese immediately before slaughter and for students immediately before examinations. By the time my examination came round, I had to learn my geography all over again. Such was not the case with my mathematics. I knew I had a good memory, but I also knew that the best memories are in time of pressure treacherous friends. They slip away too easily. My mathematics I learned not by memorizing the laws and principles, but by analyzing them: every rule was bound to the preceding rule by an unbreakable logical link. It rose before me not as a detached law, but as the living part of a living organism. My teacher, who was weak in mathematics, and had acquired the little he knew by the sweat of his brow, called me an acrobat. In four months I had finished with arithmetic, and passed on to algebra. My teacher informed my uncle that he needed only one year to prepare me, in mathematics, for the fifth class in the Realschule. He believed that with additional pressure he would not need more to bring my German, history, and geography to the same standard in the same period of time. There remained the vexed question of Russian.

Here was the great obstacle to my education. I was backward in knowledge of the language and backward in my pronunciation. Here neither hard work nor swift logic could help me. A language is an organism. To digest it one must be, paradoxically, swallowed up by it. And one cannot be swallowed by one language when one lives continuously in the atmosphere of another. The time I gave to the study of Russian was insufficient. Neither by reading nor by writing could I enter into the spirit of the language, its peculiar structure, its intimacies. The language in the house was Yiddish. The subjects of our conversation had no contact with the material which through centuries had built up the

Russian language, and filled Russian literature. The world which was worked into the Russian language, that is, the Russian world, surrounded us on every side—but we were sundered from it.

My teacher worked hard with me. We read the best books, and he exerted himself to make me feel the beauty of their style and content. It was all of no avail. There was but one solution to the problem, a radical solution: to place me in a home where Russian was the natural language. But this solution was unthinkable. Never would I have been put into a world where I might become alienated from a full Jewish life.

And thus I, as an individual, went through the long torment that millions of Jews have suffered, through the generations, when hunger and destiny drove them from one land to another and compelled them to adapt themselves, in various parts of the world, to new languages and new cultures. Much has been written of the sufferings of the Jews in their long exile. Every Jewish history is filled with the stories of persecution, oppression, and massacre. But little has been written of the inner sufferings, the spiritual torments, that accompanied the passage of a people from one language to another. These torments have not been put into the account-book because they are silent torments; the bystander does not mark them, for no bystander can see the soul of a people bleeding from invisible wounds. In every transplantation there are two operations: the uprooting, and the replanting. A people cannot be planted in a new language before it has been uprooted from the old. It is easy, with clever and shallow arguments, to minimize these sufferings. Every necessity creates its own consoling philosophy, and turns itself into a virtue. But he who understands the intimate relation that exists between the life of a people and its language

must also understand the pains that accompany the change. If the mental energies that the Jews have exerted in forgetting old languages and learning new ones could have been harnessed to some more useful end, they might have sufficed to build up worlds.

That same agonizing process is imposed upon the individual who wishes to learn a new language completely; or rather, not who wishes, but who must. For I had no inner compulsion toward the Russian language. I had never felt that Hebrew, the language with which every fibre of me was organically bound up, was too narrow, too oppressive, for my spiritual needs. It was broad enough, deep enough, for the utmost efforts of my will and imagination. How easily I could have imagined that I was the child of a normal people, living in a land of its own, speaking normally its own language! Could I not then have learned everything in my own tongue? Perhaps even then I would have wanted, too, to learn Russian, or German, or French. But I would have learned them as foreign languages. I would not have felt that the perfect knowledge of them was a matter of life and death, and that I had to transfer myself completely to them, bend my soul to their will, empty myself of my old way of thinking and fill myself with *their* inherited turns of mind. I knew that I could not come to these languages as the conqueror. I had to yield to them.

And so I yielded. I abandoned, for the year that I stayed in Dinaburg, my Hebrew studies. I kept a teacher for the Talmud, but he came for an hour a day, and even that hour was little more than a sop to my conscience. Such was the decree of necessity, and I obeyed. I knew that I was committing a crime against my old "I." I abandoned it, and pleaded for its forgiveness, promising that the separation, made inevitable by the pressure of necessity, would not last

long. And I promised, further, that I would return to it with all the old love, and with more. I promised my older and more beloved self that I would never, never abandon my Hebrew studies. "For I have betrothed thee unto me for ever: I have betrothed thee unto me in lovingkindness and in mercy."

And so I plunged into my Russian studies. I gave up not only my Hebrew, but also my interest in the Jewish problem and in the fate of my people. I made no friends, and spent little time with those I already had. And yet my progress was slow and difficult. My teacher decided that I was gifted only in mathematics. For languages I had no talent at all. But he consoled me. He had had other pupils as slow as myself, but they had managed, by sheer effort, to break through in the end.

I lived the life of a hermit, fastened to my books. The Sabbath was my one day of rest. Early every morning Uncle Meyer would leave for the fortress, where he was busy with the erection of new buildings. And only on the Sabbath would he accompany us to the Synagogue. The Synagogue stood in the courtyard of the Friedlands, the great building-contractors who employed my uncle. The Friedlands were a widely ramified family. The heads of the firm, Meyer and Leib Friedland—or, as we called them, Friedlansky—lived in St. Petersburg. Some of their children lived in Dinaburg, where they were regarded as the richest and most influential Jews of the community. I have called the Friedlands the Zeldovitches of Dinaburg, but the parallel is not exact. Dinaburg was a large city, with a large Jewish community, which was divided into Chassidim and Misnagdim. There were several Rabbis in the town. It was therefore impossible for any one family to dominate completely. There were, moreover, other rich families, who had their say in communal

affairs. But the Friedlands towered above all others in their wealth and influence. They set the tone of Jewish social life. The Synagogue which they had built for themselves and their employés was also visited by others—particularly by the Maskilim, or Hebrew modernists, who liked the severity with which the services were conducted. This severity consisted in sitting quietly and respectfully during the services. No one was allowed to talk during prayer, or to run about the place, as was the custom in the old type of Synagogue. The ordinary Jew looked askance at this severity. It smacked—God shield us!—of the Church. The ordinary Jew likes to be familiar with his God, and behaves in His presence with considerable freedom. Order of this type was in his opinion only a beginning: it was bound to lead sooner or later to Reform Judaism, of the German type. Years later I used to attend services in a similar Synagogue in Minsk. The severest order prevailed. The Synagogue had been founded and was attended by Maskilim only, enemies of Reform Judaism. It was of no avail that in every detail the services were those of the most orthodox Synagogue, with all the twists and curlicues of the best tradition. The Jewish public at large still regarded the Synagogue as a halfway house to Reform. No right-thinking Jew could fulfil his religious duties merely by attending these services.

In the Friedland Synagogue I became acquainted with part of the modernist Hebrew student youth, as well as with older Maskilim. The boys were about of my age, and most of them had developed through all the stages with which I was so familiar. Like myself they had studied much Hebrew and Talmud, and had not yet decided what they were going to do with themselves. Although Dinaburg was a big city, with a distinct European atmosphere, it was not yet a prevailing fashion among Jews to make modern students of their

sons. Those that did it were really pioneers. And so the average boy, unless he was sent away to a Yeshivah or harnessed in business, was condemned to idleness in the most productive years of his life. These young idlers went under the general name of "children of good family." Which meant that they did nothing but wait until they were ripe for marriage: and then, after marriage, they would have to find some sort of occupation. With some of these boys I became more intimately acquainted. They were a strange lot—completely devoid of the happiness of youth. Almost every one of them complained bitterly that he did not know what to do with his free time—a mournful, monotonous complaint, which rose out of the depths of a miserable life of exile.

Among the older Maskilim with whom I became acquainted was one Reuben Weller. In his early manhood he had been a private teacher in the Freidland family. Later he was promoted, and became cashier in one of the offices of his employers. I was particularly interested in him because I had read a long poem of his in the *Hashachar:* the man was therefore more than a Maskil—he was a poet, and his poetry was accepted by none other than Perez Smolenskin, the editor of the *Hashachar.* This was, in my view, about the highest honour that a man could attain. The title of the poem was, as I remember, "The Garden of Nuts"—an epithalamium twenty pages in length, on the occasion of the marriage of a young Friedland. I was not greatly touched by the matter of the poem, but my attitude toward the poet was one of deepest reverence. I could not permit myself to examine the poem critically. If Smolenskin had accepted it for the *Hashachar,* that was evidence enough of the poet's greatness. Some time later I learned, accidentally, what had happened. The song had been printed as a supplement to the regular issue of the *Hashachar.* The tutor had sung the glories of

the employer, and the employer had paid at regular advertising rates for the printing of the song. I was startled and depressed. I blamed the *Hashachar* more than the author. To permit a poem to be printed as an advertisement was, for me, blasphemy.

CHAPTER VII

VILNA

My LABOURS were in vain. The month of August drew near, the time for the entrance examinations, and my teacher declared himself against taking any risks. He feared that neither Gershon nor I would pass, and he advised strongly that we wait another year, and try to make a higher class. Gershon was short on mathematics, I on Russian.

The teacher's declaration was a heavy blow. Another year seemed too much to bear. I had not the endurance. Besides which, my stay in my uncle's home had become unpleasant. My "Aunt" Esther had gradually developed into a *grande dame*, and with it had grown her desire for rule. She imposed her will more obstinately now on the children of my Uncle Meyer, and finally she had the impudence to correct our Russian. This was really more than I could bear. How did this little Swislowitz girl come to be an authority on Russian pronunciation? True, she was now the wife of Uncle Meyer, and Uncle Meyer was in the habit of conversing with real Russian generals, but how did that serve to qualify my aunt as an expert? She even began to cast aspersions on the Russian of my uncle: and though my knowledge of the language was weak, I had enough feeling for it to distinguish between the genuine, natural pronunciation and the affected imitations of a parvenue.

As soon as I learned that there was no hope of entering the Realschule of Dinaburg that year, I decided to look for

other and easier approaches to my goal. I had no plan; but I was obscurely confident of being able to crawl out of the uncertain situation in which I now found myself. I was filled with regret now for the indifference and even contempt which I had shown toward the Russian language in my younger years. And I remember having learned once: "Elisha the son of Abuyah says: to what may we compare him who studies as a child? To ink which writes on new paper. And to what may we compare him who learns in old age? To ink which writes on worn-out paper." I appeared to myself to be an old man in this respect: I had neglected to learn the language and I would never catch up. Our concepts of age move backward and forward through our life, and vary with our perspectives. The child of five thinks in terms of childhood, and compares itself only with other children: grown-ups are outside its real world. Therefore such a child, in saying: "I am grown up," says what it actually feels. At the time of my life of which I write now, I saw the path of the years only up to a specific point: the point where one becomes a doctor or an engineer. Everything beyond was outside my real world. And the point in that path was only ten years off. So that I had lived the greater part of my life, and I felt grown-up. I felt old. I know that at thirty I felt younger than at fifteen: simply because the perspective in front of me had lengthened.

I acted now with the independence of an adult. I consulted no one—not my teacher, not even my Uncle Meyer. I was through with Dinaburg, and I was going to try my luck in the Teacher's Institute of Vilna.

This institute had been founded when the Russian government closed its two Rabbinical colleges of Zhitomir and Vilna. The Rabbinical colleges had maintained a much higher standard of learning than the Teacher's Institute. But they

had never been particularly popular in the Jewish world. The government had had but one object: the steady production of Rabbis who would lead the Jewish masses in the right direction—that is, according to the wishes of the government. They were to be more officials than Rabbis. This was enough to create, on the part of the Jewish masses, a dislike of the colleges and of the Rabbis that they manufactured. The new type of Rabbi was regarded as an outsider, placed by the government at the head of Jewish communities. And the Jews distrusted the government: they knew that the government was following consistently one deep and unalterable plan: the destruction of everything that was Jewish. The destruction was planned even from within: these new-fangled governmental Rabbis were another blow at the integrity of the Jewish people.

This suspicious attitude the Jews afterwards transferred to the Teacher's Institute of Vilna. The new teachers were not as dangerous as the new Rabbis, for the circle of their influence was smaller: but they were none the less instruments of the Russian government in its wide plan for the Russification of the Jewish people. The new teachers, as they graduated, were placed in the special schools known as "Jewish Government Schools," which were supported out of the tax on kosher meat—that is, by the Jews themselves. But the control of the schools was in the hands of the government: the Jewish community—which raised the funds for these schools after the Jews had met all general taxes paid by everybody else—had no say in the conduct of them, as regards either curriculum or personnel. The place occupied by Jewish studies was, to the Jews who supported these schools, outrageously small: and the teachers had received no real training in Jewish studies.

I knew all this. My sympathies, too, were *not* with the

Teacher's Institute. But I decided to enrol there because I revolted from the idea of returning to Swislowitz without any result. Better the Teacher's Institute than nothing.

I had no relatives in Vilna. So that there I learned for the first time the curious feeling of loneliness which belongs to big cities. I stayed in a hotel, and for two days I walked the streets, admiring the houses and the great shops, but approaching no one. It seemed incredible to me that among these thousands and thousands of people there should not be one who cared about my fate. I was drowned in an ocean of indifference; and the feeling was depressing as well as shocking. To me particularly it was intolerable to be lonely in the midst of thousands of people. I asked, in the hotel, where one might pass a pleasant evening, and I was advised that near by was a theatre that gave excellent plays.

It was not a real theatre. It was a huge hall, with naked, unpainted walls, and with a raised platform at one end. There was no curtain. The platform was occupied by a dozen young ladies in the uniforms of Russian officers: and they sang songs in German and even in broken Russian. I could not understand a word. But the laughter—and the tone of the laughter—led me to infer that these songs had little affinity with synagogal chants, or with the psalms. The audience, seated at tables scattered through the hall, drank beer and devoured with its eyes the young ladies on the platform. The gestures and dances of the young women and the laughter of the audience were filled with something dissolute. I knew that I was in a temple of sin. . . . Women dressed as officers—this was to me the last word in immodesty, and I was amazed that the people in the audience did not interfere. There awoke in me the ascetic rage of the *cheder* boy. I remembered the express prohibition in the Bible: it is forbidden to a man to put on the clothes of a woman and to a

woman to put on the dress of a man. But side by side with that ascetic rage also woke the suppressed, and till now unacknowledged, longing to step somewhat closer to the forbidden tree. I had no intention, God forbid, of plucking its fruits: but I did want to see more closely what it looked like. For obscurely I was prepared to believe that this whole place was the lost Eden, and there on the stage blossomed the Tree of Knowledge.

And now I suddenly remembered. In spite of the law contained in the Bible against the changing of clothes, had not two Yeshivah students, in pious and severe Swislowitz itself, put on the clothes of women and acted the rôles of Esther and the Queen in the Purim plays? How was this? Was not Satan thus justified? But I could not yield so easily: the *cheder* boy was too strong. I argued: When a man puts on the clothes of a woman, he thereby merely disguises his masculinity. But when a woman puts on the clothes of a man, she thereby only accentuates her femininity. Thus I sat, at a small corner table, and argued long and vehemently with myself. A couple of times I rose to my feet and wanted to leave, right in the middle of the "performance"—and I sat down again. And so I sat right through, for a couple of hours, to watch a "performance" which was of no interest to me, but round which Good and Evil were now conducting a silent and obstinate battle.

On the third day I prepared my application to the principal of the Teacher's Institute. I already knew the regular formula, for I had learned it before leaving Dinaburg. But I was greatly exercised by the question whether I ought to address the principal as "Your Excellency" or as "Your High-Born." In my distress I chose the higher title, feeling that it was safer to err on the side of generosity. I wrote and rewrote the letter of application a dozen times, perfected

each phrase, improved the writing, till I myself was satisfied. And then I went off to the Institute.

I came, of course, an hour too early. This is the practice of all provincials who have appointments in large towns and are afraid of coming late. And so for an hour I walked about the little garden and the neat quadrangle of the Institute. The buildings were not particularly imposing. But I was impressed by the people who came and went; they looked dignified and important. One detail puzzled me. The teachers were distinguished by their special governmental uniforms, but I observed that while all of them wore the same uniform, some of them had caps without badges, while others had badges. I stopped one of the students and asked him to explain. He told me that the teachers without badges in their caps were Jews: the others were Christians. The badge was the symbol of full civil-service status. The most unimportant Christian official wore the badge. The most important Jewish official—even the examiner—did not wear it. The unbridgeable gulf between the Jew and the Christian had to be observed even in the Jewish Teacher's Institute.

At twelve o'clock I stood before the principal, in the reception room. He was a middle-aged, distinguished-looking man. My letter of application lay before him, and while he read it he kept lifting his eyes to me, as if to compare the contents of the letter with the man who had prepared them. When he had finished reading the letter, he delivered a lecture on the importance of knowing the Russian language well, and he began to point out all the errors, many of them gross ones, which occurred in my letter. And then he told me that he could have passed over the errors if there had not been one which made it evident that I was not only ignorant of the language, but that I was alien to its spirit. I had wanted to say, "I place my application before

you." But I had used, for the word "place," a variation of that word which had a different connotation—like "placing" a dish on the table, or a ladder against a wall. Mistakes of orthography and grammar, the principal said, were not fatal. But this lack of *feeling* for the language ruled me out. He advised me to study Russian for another year, and then apply again.

I pleaded. The man was not unsympathetic, and he let me lay before him the entire history of my development. But he was not to be moved. I left the room defeated, carrying with me the application that had betrayed me.

Again the Russian language had blocked my entry into the world of learning. It threatened to become an obsession with me. It stood before me like the cherub with the flaming sword, turning in all directions, before the gates of Eden. And my misery was the more profound because it seemed to me that I had been defeated by a single word: by less than a word, by a particle, by a letter. Had I written "pred" instead of "pri" my whole future would have been different. What? Even in the great modern world, then, the fate and future of a man could be decided by a single letter? Why then did they criticize our Jewish laws, with their fine distinctions and their fateful niceties? Why had our great Jewish poet, the satirist, Jehudah Leib Gordon, shown how, because of the miswriting of the tiny letter "*Yud*," in a bill of divorce, and because of the obstinacy of the orthodox formalists, lives had been wrecked? Was the modern world that he admired any better? Was not my life to be wrecked because of an inaccurate little participle?

And so I returned to Swislowitz, a failure, broken in spirit. All my plans, all my dreams, had come to nothing. I was like the fisher's wife in the fairy-tale: my castles had

dissolved in air, my proud demands had ended in the old, wearisome, monotonous life of an obscure village. The life of Swislowitz flowed around me as of old: but it was thinner and duller than of old. It was a tiny trickling stream which lost itself in the sands, and I had looked on the mighty rivers which roll down to the ocean. A year had passed—and I had nothing to show for it. I was ashamed to tell about my attempt in Vilna. And as for Dinaburg, I had nothing to say. I had climbed and climbed and I was back at the bottom. The brilliant Jewish student who had carried everything before him was an ignorant and helpless boy.

My mother said she did not recognize me. I had left my old joyousness behind me, in Dinaburg. And again she began to argue with me, urging me to give up my dreams of a secular education, and to return to the Talmud. Not at home, but in some famous Yeshivah, preferably Volozhin, which had produced so many illustrious scholars. Perhaps, she argued, this obstinacy of the Russian language was not a mere accident: God stood guard over me and would not permit me to break into the stronghold of the alien world. He wanted me to achieve greatness only among my own people, His children. My mother pleaded pitifully with me: her dream, that I might be a light in Israel, had never died, and it had flared up again now. My father was silent. He refused to exploit my wretchedness and helplessness in order to influence me in his direction. And often I felt that my father's silence did not issue from indifference, or even from a severe and disinterested sense of justice, but from genuine sympathy with me in my distress.

It was a critical moment in my life. I was wounded and broken. During the first days after my return it would have been easy to bend me in any direction. My father felt it. For all his severe, formal exterior, he understood his chil-

dren well, because of his intelligence and still more because of a deep current of warm sympathy. He refused to throw the weight of his authority into the balance. Also, as I have already said, he was not too firmly convinced that his original plans for me were the best. And thus he did not take advantage of my defeat and my depression.

I was left to my own resources. I had to decide my future for myself, and two old alternatives presented themselves. I had less inclination than ever to bury myself in a Yeshivah. And my father's business did not attract me. All that was left was to pull myself together and make another assault on the Russian language.

It may have been the encouragement that I received now from the Rav of the town, Joseph Kukess, and from his son Shneyur, which turned the scale. The Rav analyzed my situation carefully and wisely. He said that if, in my general outlook on life, I had remained where most of my schoolmates were, a Yeshivah might have been the right place for me. But I was already too much the Maskil, the modernist. My failure with the Russian language had not held up the development of my spirit. My ambitions were full-fledged and self-conscious, and neither the great Yeshivah of Volozhin nor my father's business could satisfy them. There was no way out of it except to return to my studies: all other paths would lead to a disappointed and defeated life.

The Rav's son was more outspoken in his views. He himself was a terrifying example of what might happen to me. He had been a brilliant Jewish student: he was able, gifted, and industrious to a degree. Yet he was a man wholly untrained for the world. Of such a man it might be said that he was good for everything and for nothing. He might become a merchant, he might become a teacher—and he would probably be an all-round failure. Many doors were open

to him: none of them led to a full, successful life. He was the child of chance now; and this status he shared with thousands and thousands of children of the Jewish middle classes in Russia—perhaps one-half of the total number.

Shneyur's influence was exerted in another way, too. He was a first-class Hebraist, with a profound love of the Bible. In particular he studied the Prophets, and brought to that study a clear philosophic and historic conception. I am quite certain that he found much help in books which he withheld from me—probably German books of the Higher Criticism. Very cautiously he attempted to inspire me with his spirit—of which I was then wholly innocent. As far as the Bible was concerned, I stood firm on the old traditional ground, and admitted no doubts to my mind. When one and the same Prophet made allusion to Sennacherib, King of Assyria, and to Cyrus, King of the Medes and Persians, I refused to ask questions, though I knew quite well that these monarchs were separated by a gap of centuries. One does not ask questions about the Prophets. The Prophet looks into the heart of man; he also looks into the future and alludes by name to kings who are to live many years after him. When King David—who was for me the undoubted author of the Psalms—sang of the captives by the waters of Babylon, they who refused to rehearse the melodies of their homeland for the pleasure of the conqueror, I saw no contradiction. I only marvelled at the divine gift of David, who could foresee events that were to take place many hundreds of years later. I was firmly convinced that King Solomon had composed both the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The obvious difference in language did not worry me. Had not the sages of old declared that when King Solomon was young he had sung of life, and when he was old he had pondered on its vanities? And what was more nat-

ural? Can the spring be compared with the autumn, or life that is in blossom with life that is withering? Yet spring and autumn belong to the same year. Why, then, should not the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes belong to the same author?

This naïve faith Shneyur, the Rav's son, undermined in me. He approached his task gently, carefully, like a skilful proselytizer. He began by bringing to my attention passages in the Talmud and in subsequent Rabbinic literature, from which it was clear that even our old sages had entertained somewhat freer views regarding the individual authors of the Bible. Step by step Shneyur became open, firmer, and more insistent. His criticisms became sharper and more far-reaching. I would not budge at first, and answered him with orthodox arguments at every point. But as he had logic on his side, whereas I on mine had only the force of repetition, he overcame me. I began to look more curiously and more closely at these criticisms. I suffered at first. I felt something in me undergoing painful dissolution: a deep loss was about to occur. But the transitional stage did not last long. I soon convinced myself that I was losing nothing. On the contrary, I was gaining something.

I remained in Swislowitz some three months—and it was in my backward and forlorn native village, of all places, that I got my first touch of modern scepticism. In these three months we worked steadily through almost the entire Bible. There unrolled before me something I had never felt before: the long *perspective* of the Bible. I began to glimpse in it, for the first time, the great creation of a people carried on through countless generations. I lost my childish and naïve faith. But there was created a new and firmer citadel. The Bible expanded before me. I stood in the presence of a gigantic structure to which one generation

after another had contributed a row of stones, till the whole was completed. The heavens came down a little lower for me, but the earth was lifted, in proportion. There were fewer miracles descending from the heavens: but there was greater glory in the human achievements which went up out of earth. My new outlook on the Bible taught me a new relationship between heaven and earth. I understood more deeply the significance of the passage in the greatest of poets: "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth." Heaven alone was not enough; earth too had to bear witness. Let the earth become heavenly and the heavens earthly; let the two of them mingle and become lost in each other, so that "truth may blossom from the earth and justice shine down from the heavens."

Perhaps this change in my outlook was made easier by the joy which I experienced in returning again, even under these new intellectual auspices, to my beloved world. I had abandoned it for nearly a year. I had neglected it for the sake of an alien language which presented, always, a hostile front, solid and unbroken. I felt at home again, and the feeling was marvellously pleasant: it was a return from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom.

But by now a deep and unexpected change, which amazed me wholly, had taken place. When, a year before, I had torn myself away from that which was my own, my Hebrew, I had been conscious of a crime: now I believed that I could tear myself away from my unwelcome second alliance, without difficulty or pain. But I was wrong. During the three months of my absorption in the Bible and the Talmud I felt something missing: the Russian book. This was the first sign that a relationship had been established between us. As a rule we misunderstand the character of

our relationship to a new language. If we are determined seriously to master it, a double process must take place: we draw near to the language, and the language draws near to us. We establish ourselves in the language, and the language establishes itself in us—at first as a tenant who may be easily ejected; then as a tenant with an indefinite lease; and finally as a co-tenant with equal rights: so that there finally arises a Sarah and Hagar struggle. But I had by no means reached the last stage.

At the end of the three months I returned decisively to my original plans. I told my mother finally that I would neither enter a Yeshivah nor join my father's business. My father still refused to interfere, and let me decide for myself. I made up my mind now to renew the attempt in Minsk. It was to be, however, my last attempt. I set everything on this effort, and played *va banque*.

This time there was no need to obtain money by a trick. My father, who was very sparing when it came to his own needs, was open-handed in meeting the needs of his children. He sent me out with enough money to cover the first few months. My mother, having yielded, prepared me for the journey by baking and cooking and roasting food for several days, as though I were going into a wilderness. And I left Swislowitz, the second time, accompanied by the blessing of my parents, and the good wishes of all my friends.

Minsk was the turning-point in my life. I allude not only to my studies, but to my public career. Till now I had been a village boy, retired, almost isolated. In Minsk I prosecuted my studies and entered, at the same time, the arena of public life. I began to occupy a definite position in the Jewish national movement.

CHAPTER VIII

MINSK

Minsk is today the capital of the White Russian Republic, the centre of a so-called independent and autonomous national unity in the complex of the new Bolshevik state. The Soviet government has proclaimed the cultural and administrative self-determination of all the nationalities comprised in the greatest empire in the world. One-sixth of the world's land is taken up by this empire, which stretches from the Baltic in the north to the Caspian in the south, and to the Pacific ocean in the east. The hundred and fifty million inhabitants of this empire are divided into fifty-odd nationalities, dominated by the Great Russians, the largest national state in the world. Never, in the course of Russian history, had these groups melted into one national unity, either in language or in feeling. They were held together by a severe, almost barbaric, centralized power. The pressure of the conqueror, and not the free will of peoples, built up the Russian empire.

From above, this mighty being looked like a peaceful and unified organism. But under the surface there always moved, darkly, obscurely, a multitude of suppressed longings and of impulses that could not live themselves out. The government, aware of these subterranean forces, never relaxed its vigilance for a moment. The first evidence of a separatist movement in any part of the empire was mercilessly crushed as soon as it showed itself.

At the time of which I write the suggestion of a White Russian Nationalist movement would have been met with laughter or contempt. And yet the event has proved that an impulse toward national freedom had always existed; it was secret and it was weak, confined in effect to a few scattered groups. But when the Czarist government was so thoroughly wiped out that no trace of it remained, there suddenly emerged to the surface a White Russian Nationality, with a demand for "self-determination." In that demand there was more "determination" than "self," for the "self" of White Russia had to be excavated first, and then had to pass through a resurrection. The content of the national character, the national distinctiveness, and the culture that composed it, were so meagre, so flimsy, that only the eye of the sympathetic expert could discover it. But the White Russian Republic is today a reality. The frame and the canvas are there: some sort of picture will ultimately emerge.

In my time Minsk was a Russian town, with all the peculiarities, possessions, and attributes of a provincial cultural centre. There was a classic gymnasium, a gymnasium for girls, a Realschule, and a Greek Orthodox theological seminary. That is to say, it possessed four secondary schools, a considerable number for that period. When I say, however, that Minsk was a Russian town, I speak only of the dominant cultural forces. In population Minsk was more Jewish than Russian. For the Jews, too, Minsk was an important centre, second only to Vilna, in Lithuania.

Minsk was a city filled with scholars and Maskilim, with great Yeshivoth and famous Rabbis. Yet the tendencies among the upper classes of the Jews were distinctly Russian. The young generation was set on Russian education, Russian literature occupied the first rank, the Russian language

had worked its way deeply into the upper Jewish classes, Russian books began to push Hebrew books off the shelves, and the latter were gradually moved either into the attic or the cellar. In the wealthier Jewish streets, and in the parks frequented by the youth, Russian was spoken almost exclusively. It was a period of transition: and the spiritual picture was not unlike that seen on evenings when the sun has not yet set and a pale moon is already visible.

I do not mean to imply that the Russian culture, as compared with the Jewish, is merely like the moon as compared with the sun. But as far as the Jews were concerned, that new culture was alien and borrowed—no less than the Jewish culture would have been for the Russians. No German or Russian group has ever been compelled to work out of its system the culture that had made up its history, in favor of a Jewish culture to which its past had no relation. The Jews alone have passed, from time to time, through this painful process, and they alone have had to live by the borrowed light of another and organically unfamiliar culture.

As an individual I passed through this process twice! I adopted not one, but two, alien cultures—the Russian and the German. I devoted the best years of my life to their acquisition, and expended on them the unnatural energies which such a situation demands: only to recognize in the end that all my efforts had not enriched my life, had not strengthened my creative impulses. On the contrary: this furious determination to become a full adoptive son in the home of another only led to what is described in the Hebrew phrase as "the scattering of the soul." The creative impulses move uncertainly between different worlds, lose their directive instinct and their original concentration, and with these half of their promise.

It was my misfortune to learn too late in life that a com-

plete harmony of being rises only from a concentration of our creative impulses; for the complete Jew—I am not speaking of the assimilated or half-assimilated Jew, but of the Jew who is still rooted in the folk-ways and folk-culture of his people—the best and happiest course is to remain where he is. Two languages had become his heritage, and this is more than enough. We would have done better not to try and translate ourselves: for once we had made the translation we lost the original, not only in the sense of language, but in the sense of the soul. And thereby we weakened our position in the world of the spirit.

But I began, in Minsk, to swim with the stream that led to cultural assimilation, and the stream was wide and powerful. And it would be well here to correct an impression that is as universal as it is false. Almost every Jew is under the impression that the impulse toward the cultural assimilation of his people was strong only in western Europe, while we, the Jews of eastern Europe, had remained unaffected by it. This is altogether inaccurate. We had come to this stage later than the Jews of western Europe: but when we reached it we became part of the movement no less decisively than the Jews of the west. There were two factors in the delay. There were, first, external obstacles. The government asserted that it wanted us to assimilate; actually it put a thousand obstacles in our path. For its real desire was to wipe us out, not to assimilate us. It even feared the intelligent and modernized Jew who, armed with the weapons of a western education, would become a greater danger than ever in the fight for emancipation. The second factor was number. We in eastern Europe constituted the Jewish mass, and the mass always offers a more obstinate resistance to assimilation.

But if we were to compare the Jewish upper classes in

Russian Jewry with those in Germany, we should perceive that assimilation had cut just as deeply into the former as into the latter group. The youth among the upper classes of Russian Jewry threw itself upon the Russian literature with all the fury of its famished desire for education. Out of that literature it drew its ideals. The Russian classics became their guides. Pushkin, Turgeniev, Gogol, Dostoievsky and Tolstoi worked their way steadily into the mind of the youth, and pushed out the content that had filled it before. Hebrew sank to the level of a language from which one translates: Russian became the language of their original.

In Minsk I was no longer lonely. I had fallen into a seething cauldron of passions, desires, and ambitions. I found a host of comrades who were faced by my problem and moved by my impulses. Among them were natives of Minsk, young people whose early education had broken halfway, and who were now preparing to enter the higher classes of the secondary schools. But the majority came, like myself, from distant parts of the province. Most of them were older than myself. They had studied Hebrew and the Talmud up to their fifteenth and sixteenth years, and had come—at a more advanced age than I—to the conclusion that these studies would bring them nowhere. Among them were students who had known, for years, the taste and discipline of a regular Yeshivah, and were far advanced in their Talmudic knowledge. Two or three years of further study would have qualified them for the Rabbinate. But they had now become fanatical enthusiasts of the Russian language and literature. I use the word fanatical not to indicate their passion for their *new* studies but their hatred for the *old*. They spoke with such bitterness of the years they had given to Jewish lore, that it was evident they

considered them a complete waste: it was as if they now saw the light of the world for the first time. They did not desire to build something new on the old foundations, but to destroy the last vestige of the old foundations, and begin to build on a cleared and empty space. But such a task is not as easy as might appear. The man who seeks to wipe out his own past is thrown into a state of constant hatred of himself. Out of this hatred is born, in turn, a profound sadness. The old cannot be cut out clean. There ensues a sort of spiritual gangrene. And even where the operation is successful, the life of the man has been shortened by so many years, and he walks around under the burden of a living death: he cannot rid himself of the corpse of his past.

These were young people whose lives were a profound tragedy. Almost all of them were fearfully poor, and lived in dire and unrelenting need. Many among them lived for months on a diet of dry bread, cheap cheese, and tea. A piece of herring was a red-letter occasion. Even after the spiritual revolution which swept them from their old moorings they remained, constitutionally, the same old Yeshivah boys, the same ascetics, holding body and soul together with a minimum of nourishment. From one point of view I pitied them: from another I regarded them as true heroes, and envied them their hardness against themselves. I believed them to be of a higher type than myself, created for higher purposes. I was simple flesh and blood: they were steel.

When I became more intimate with them—and I was drawn toward them more than toward all others—I discovered that in one respect at least we were alike, and shared the same misfortune. For them, as for me, the great obstacle was the Russian language. Most of them had sat twice for their entrance examinations, and had failed twice. Russian barred the way for them. Or, to be more accurate, the way

was barred for them by their previous languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, which in their spirit and structure are so remote from that most Slavic of languages, Russian. Hebrew they had studied deeply: Yiddish was the language of daily use. There was no room for another language in the same measure. I made a resolution of a radical character. I promised myself that for the six months which still remained before the examination, I would not speak a word of Yiddish: I would not look into a Hebrew book. It was a heroic resolve. But I could not carry it out.

Because of my widely ramified family, as well as because of my father's reputation among the timber-merchants of Minsk, I was received with the utmost friendliness in many circles, and I felt at home in Minsk within the first month. My experiences in Dinaburg helped me in my efforts to pass myself off as the free-born citizen of a metropolis. I had lived in one big city, and I had wandered through the streets of another. But an additional circumstance soon gave me a special place in the regard of my more intimate friends, and even raised me in the eyes of my older acquaintances. It was in Minsk that I first developed a talent that I had never before had a chance of testing: I made my first public speeches.

The Chibath Zion (Love of Zion) movement was at that time in its swaddling-clothes. It had taken hold of small, picked circles, mostly of Maskilim. This was of course natural, for the first appeal of the movement would be to those who had modernized their Hebrew education without having passed over to the culture of other peoples. The orthodox elements were at first passive to the movement, and the more extreme orthodox were distinctly hostile. For this was a movement which did not accord with their religious

lieved that the most sensible plan would be to argue it out logically with the assimilationists: show them clearly that their ideal was an impossible one, that an entire people could not assimilate. They were therefore impractical Utopians. There were others who believed that the best method would be a general assault on the moral front: to prove to the world how base and degrading was the philosophy of assimilation. And there was a third party which believed that we ought to ignore assimilation altogether, let it run its own course and reach the inevitable disastrous end.

As a singer I was not a success. And if I ever asserted myself during that part of the evening's programme I was gently requested to listen more attentively. But when the theoretical discussions began, I was in my element and was listened to with respect. But I was not content with the usual phrases. I had to deliver an entire speech, full of passion and invective. I used to forget completely that I was in the midst of my own comrades and that my fury was wasted. I could not speak calmly on the subject of assimilation, for it seemed to me that the very word evoked the enemy, and he stood before me. There they were—the assimilationists, the renegades, the cowards: and before I could proceed further with the address I had to let them have theirs. This was the exordium. After the exordium I came to the point—*how* to combat assimilation. But it was my exordium that was most effective—and it took up two-thirds of my speech. But no one ever protested against my procedure. On the contrary, I observed that I made a distinct impression even on my older friends. Before long I was, in that circle, an acknowledged speaker. And their recognition went so far that I was soon entrusted with an important mission—I was to address a propaganda meeting in one of the larger Synagogues. I remember that I accepted

the assignment without a tremor. I had only one worry: I wanted my thoughts to follow logically on one another: I wanted them to be strung like beads on a thread. If only my thoughts followed one another, I knew I would find the words.

My first public appearance was an important event in my life, and it occupies a distinct place in my memories. Two speakers preceded me. Benenson was the first speaker. He used too many literary and oratorical clichés. His phrases were artificial; they had something of the boudoir about them; they reeked of cheap eau de Cologne. He was followed by Sirotkin, whose speech had more content and developed more logically. But his difficulty was that the words came too slowly: they had neither fire nor force, and it seemed as if they froze on his tongue. I was the third speaker. I did not introduce myself or the subject, but plunged at once into the argument. And at once I was aware of two things: it seemed to me that the audience had an active attitude toward me; it was on the alert, anxious to catch my words and even to help me get them out. Second, I had the feeling that not I spoke, but another. *He* spoke, *I* controlled him. I guided him, so that he might not let fall the thread of his thoughts. The audience signified its approval by its applause, but my gratitude was not for the applause, but for the attitude of co-operation. And I was grateful to that other self who had spoken from within me, and who had proved so tractable to my control.

I am profoundly convinced that this first experience of mine in that Minsk Synagogue made it my destiny to become a public speaker. Neither my success nor the compliments of my comrades intoxicated me: but I felt that when I was on the platform I was in my own element. I did not have to exert myself. My thoughts were born of themselves,

and emerged completely robed in words. And I easily worked out the first rule for myself: before I mounted the platform, I was not to think about words—only about thoughts. The words would come of themselves. I understood in a flash that the "what" was more important than the "how." For as far as the "what" was concerned, I was master; but the "how" was in God's hands, and I had no power over it. Later, as I became a more practised speaker, I worked out some other rules. Until this day I have not read a single book on the art of public speaking. I once happened to come across such a book: I cast a glance at the title-page and put the volume aside. It may be that I thus lost a great deal; but my deepest instincts trembled before such a book. I wanted to remain free, unaware of the compulsion of any rules. It is true that I had worked out rules of my own, and that I did my best to follow them. But these rules had nothing to do with the manner of speaking: they applied only to the construction of the speech. They had to do with the architecture of the address, not with the phraseology. The thing I desired most was to remain myself: and what I feared most was to slip into the stereotyped manner, and become some one else.

I have always looked with amazement on the actor who can pass from one rôle to another. My own talent, whatever it was, had nothing in common with this. I could play only one rôle—my own. There were at that time—as there were later—some among my friends who had the gift of imitation to a high degree. I was quite devoid of it. But as against this, none of the imitators could imitate me. No one could catch the trick of it, or solve the secret. But I do not wonder at this, for I myself did not know the secret of it. Nor did I ever try to find it. I suspected early that if there was some secret, it was best for me not to know it. For in every man

who creates there is a secret that is his inner Tree of Knowledge. To taste of it is disastrous. In any case, I learned that it is much easier to find out another man's secret than one's own.

There were three main rules that emerged—not as the secret of my speaking, but as the obvious accompanying personal laws. The first, as I have said, had to do with the thoughts. Be careful of the thoughts, and let the phraseology take care of itself. But see that your thoughts are controlled, and follow one another according to your plan, and not according to their own. Second: If you have lost one of the thoughts during the course of the speech, do not return to look for it. A merchant does not retract, a speaker does not turn back. The third rule is the most important: Make a definite mark where you want to stop. Ecclesiastes says: "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." This saw applies to the speaker more than to any one else. Woe to the speaker who cannot cut his speech short where he intended. He approaches the close, hesitates, loses control, begins all over again, and turns into a verbal ruminant, chewing the same words over and over again, helplessly. The spectacle is not pleasing to the audience, and it is less pleasing to the speaker.

The Realschule of Minsk, for which I was preparing, had at that time (1884) no lower classes. It began with the fifth year. The majority of my friends were preparing for this school, instead of for the classic gymnasium, and for the same reason: they were afraid of the classic languages. We had found the war with Russian difficult and exhausting enough; and to ordinary Russian there was soon added, in the curriculum, the Slavic church language, considered the original Slavic language from which all others had branched

off. Extraordinarily strange to us, that language was hard to speak: the pronunciation was outside of our experience. It is an unusually difficult language, its sounds are harsh, its grammar marvellously complicated, much more so than plain Russian grammar, itself no simple matter. Here logic and intelligence played no rôle. It was dull grind, brute memory.

The subject was so repellent that none of us had the stamina to pursue it alone. We used to work on it in groups of four and five. It was a slavish labour, and unwittingly we used to set the words to the chant of the "Dubinushka"—a traditional song of the unhappy, perspiring serf, the song of labour and slavery. We learned the hard, unyielding grammar of a dead language that neither our fathers nor our fathers' fathers had ever heard of. Sometimes, from the "Dubinushka" we would pass over to the traditional chants of the Talmud: for all of us were Yeshivah students, and with us study was associated with that ancient melody which has been heard in a thousand Houses of Study. And from the room there issued a marvellous combination—"Dubinushka" and the Talmud chant; the grammar of the old Slavic church and the tune of the sages of Babylon.

There were forty of us preparing that year for the Realschule. The number of Christian students was smaller, and of these the majority were children of Polish magnates. They never became friendly with us: they considered themselves above us because they knew that the first vacancies in the Realschule belonged to them—and we would divide among ourselves those that were left. This was not yet the formal law of the land, for the liberal decrees of Alexander the Second were still on the statute books. But the oral law, as is usually the case, had already preceded the written law: the principals of all the high schools and the rectors of all

the universities had already been circularized "unofficially" —these were instructions pending the formulation of the new laws.

Since it was still impossible to refuse to admit the Jewish students to the entrance examinations, the rule was, to be easier on the Christian students than on the Jewish. We knew that the difficult and confusing questions would be reserved for us, the easy and obvious ones for the Christian students. And we also knew that if all the Christian students should be admitted, there would remain only six or eight free places to divide among the forty of us. The effect of this knowledge was to create a silent and suppressed envy among ourselves: we were comrades in study, but we were competing for something that represented our only hope of a freer life—and only a handful of us could be successful. Under the external comradeship there festered envy and fear.

At that time we used to pray that as many Christian students as possible would flunk even the mild examination prepared for them. Then more places would be left for us. Years later, a *numerus clausus* was instituted—so many Jewish students for every hundred Christian students who were admitted. And then the Jewish students used to pray that as many Christian students as possible might *pass* the examination. When the percentage laws were instituted it happened, more than once, that a rich Jew would gather together ten Christian students, prepare them for the examinations, and pay their fees—so as to create one place for his own son in the government school.

Among the Jewish students, too, there were certain privileged ones. They had pull. Their fathers were intimate with the principal of the school, or with one of the examiners, or with various teachers in the institute. Our bitterest rage

was directed against these privileged students. Sharpness of wit, good memory, and all the other attributes of the good student came from God: but "pull" was an insufferable injustice. Against these students we had only one weapon: to prepare ourselves so thoroughly for the examination that the most venal examiners could not give us bad marks.

My chances were considered weak—on account of my Russian. Neither my own resolution nor the advice of my comrades could compel me to take the logical step: give up Yiddish and speak nothing but Russian. I was already finding too much fulfilment and satisfaction in the work which I was doing for the Chibath Zion movement: the joy I derived from my addresses was too deep, and I refused to sacrifice either the movement or my own honour. During the day I studied industriously. The evenings I spent with my friends of the movement, among whom I had now won a permanent and high place as a public speaker.

My days were unhappy, for I knew how weak my chances were. I studied obstinately, but with a sense of futility which doubled my sufferings. But my evenings were happy, and they consoled me for the days. We used to meet almost every evening, and live for a few hours in a pure Palestinian atmosphere. The first student organization to found a colony in Palestine—the Bilus—was already at work in the homeland. Letters came regularly from Gederah—the first colony—and they were filled with such joy and enthusiasm, with such colours and descriptions, that we read them over and over again in our informal meetings. They described Palestine as an earthly paradise. About the Arabs they told stories that came directly from the *Arabian Nights*. First, they spoke a language which was almost Hebrew; and second, they freely admitted the right of the Jews to Palestine. In fact, an old sheik had told one of the colonists that he

knew personally that the Messiah was due. What more could we ask for? As for the Turks, we were informed that the Rothschilds were negotiating with the Sublime Porte, and an arrangement would soon be reached. The Turks, as every one knew, loved *baksheesh*—and was there any one who could hand out more of it than the Rothschilds? There remained only one task, then: the awakening of the Jewish masses. Ours was the work of the propagandist, and we would not be found remiss. I was happy beyond words that I, too, could play a part in the marvellous drama; and when I returned from some meeting, late in the night, and mounted to my room, the books on my table were reminders of something trivial and meaningless, and I looked on them with contempt.

The examinations began on a lovely summer day. Two hours before the hall was opened, the Jewish students, nervous, noisy, were assembled before the doors. The Christian students came much later, and their bearing was calmer—for they were more confident. The first item of the examination was the writing of a theme, in Russian, of course. What the theme was I do not remember: but I know that I began my essay with the words: "Our sages have said . . ." and followed it with an ingenious quotation from the Talmud. I had forgotten for whom I was writing. I was only anxious to find interesting thoughts—and they came to me from my own world, the Jewish. I remember too that I was continuously translating, and with great difficulty, Hebrew thoughts into the Russian language. We had four hours for the writing of the essay: I saw, with horror, that some of the examinees were through in one hour. They rose, radiant, and handed in their papers. And throughout the period students left—after two hours, after three hours.

I remained there till the end of the fourth hour, translating, crossing out, translating again.

Russian was followed by German, and German by mathematics. And geometry saved me. It happened that the geometry teacher had set a problem which was beyond the course. Translated into algebraic symbols, it emerged as a complicated equation of the second power—and we were not supposed to have prepared solutions of the second power. In this subject we again had four hours, and again most of the students left earlier. I remained till I was alone in the room with the mathematics examiner, and with his assistant, Kurilko, who was teacher of mechanics in the Realschule. The latter came to my desk, and watched me over my shoulder. I had covered twenty pages with calculations—but I was happy. I had found a solution which was logically consistent throughout. The teacher of mechanics picked up the paper, said "*Atlitschno*"—"Excellent"—made some remarks in a low voice to the principal examiner, and dismissed me. I knew at once that something out of the ordinary had happened—but I did not know what.

Of the forty Jewish students seven were admitted. I had flunked in no less than three subjects—Russian, geography, and history: and I was one of the seven. I was a stranger in the town, and I had no pull. But I learned afterwards that Kurilko had exerted himself strongly in my behalf. Not one of the candidates had solved the problem in geometry. Some of them had managed to reduce it to a quadratic equation, and had immediately given it up. Quadratic equations were outside the curriculum. I, however, could not content myself with an excuse. There was the problem—and it had to be solved. So I perspired, covered sheet after sheet of paper with experiments—and arrived

at the solution by sheer force of untrained logic. Kurilko declared, at the council of teachers, that he would take me into the school on his own responsibility. He was certain that I would make good in the other subjects too.

Who was it, then, that came to my rescue in the examination room that day—drove me without mercy to analyze the problem into its simple elements, and build them up again, level by level, in the mathematical form? It was not the student of Dinaburg and of Minsk: but the *cheder* boy of Swislowitz, whose mind had been trained and sharpened in childhood on Jewish studies. My gratitude went out to my earlier self—and to the teacher, Kurilko.

CHAPTER IX

THE REALSCHULE

DURING the first days which followed the announcement of the results I felt like a man who has bought a ticket in a big lottery—and drawn the winning number. How was it possible not to believe in pure luck—the luck that no one can foresee and which, when it happens, no one can explain. If the mathematics teacher had not made a grave mistake, and included in the questions something outside the curriculum I might never have entered the Realschule, and all my development would have taken a different course. A miracle had happened—for my sake. But together with the natural exultation which I felt, there was also a sort of confusion. An element of pure chance had broken the chain of logical cause and effect: and it had broken it precisely where logic alone is supreme: in mathematics! What could have been more paradoxical than this juxtaposition: chance and logic?

I came to know Kurilko more intimately during my student years. My first private visit to him took place when I learned that he had been the man to intercede for me. When I tried to thank him he stopped me abruptly. "I am a professional mathematician," he said. "What I did was purely in the line of duty." And I felt that this was not merely courtesy. He was, as I learned subsequently, the most severe of the teachers, and the most just—and for that reason, the best-loved. He was a mathematician in every fibre of him; nature seemed to have designed him mathe-

matically, too, for physically he was all straight lines and angles, an admirable subject for a cubist painter. He demanded two things of his pupils: industry and exactitude. "In mathematics," he repeated, "a dot plays a more important rôle than anywhere else in life."

A totally different type was Alexandrov, the teacher of Russian language and literature. He was a native of Moscow, the cultural centre of Russia, and in the Minsk Realschule, where eighty per cent. of the students were Poles and Jews, he felt himself in an alien atmosphere. He did not like the homely, provincial Russian that even the best of us spoke, even the authentic Russian group of students. He was unhappy because he could not achieve the impossible—transfer the cultured accent of Moscow to "uncouth" provincials of Minsk. He suffered from the Russian students; he suffered still more from the Jewish students: and most of all he suffered from the Polish students, who seemed to take a national delight in revenging themselves on the grammar of their conquerors.

His attitude toward me was friendly, for he soon observed that I was industrious and eager. I once opened my heart to him, and told him the complete story of my growth and development. He listened sympathetically and with understanding. But he begged me, in particular, to give up my practice of beginning every Russian essay with the words: "Our sages say . . ." followed by a quotation from the Talmud. He observed: "After all, Levin, I am a Russian teacher. What do I care what *your* sages say? Haven't we sages of our own?" Poor man! He did not realize that I had the same unuttered complaint to make. What did I care about *his* sages? Had not we Jews enough sages of our own?

These quotations of mine, from the Talmud and the later scholars, with which I peppered my Russian essays, were

not objectionable in themselves, I think. They were really a symbol of my resistance to the process of Russification which he, the teacher, represented. He was jealous. I did not quote the Talmud and the Ethics of the Fathers (the latter were my happy hunting-ground for aphorisms) out of a desire to annoy him, and not even because I might not, with some effort, have found another way of expressing myself. Unconsciously I wanted him to know that I was coming to the culture of his country not as a barbarian and a pauper, but as one who had something rich of his own to contribute. I came as an equal, prepared to exchange. And so, while he boasted of his Lomonosov, his Griboiedov, and his Pushkin, I thrust under his nose our Ben Zoma, our Hillel and Shamai, strange, outlandish names which meant nothing to him and everything to me. I was just as jealous as he! But our powers were not equal. He quoted his sages proudly, the symbols of the greatness of the conqueror people: and I quoted mine in defence. For I was coming to him, not he to me.

In my contact with Alexandrov I learned to see clearly, for the first time, the jealousy of cultures between a ruling people and a ruled. In later years I confirmed my first impressions. One specific instance will illustrate my meaning best. There once lived in Germany a poet by the grace of God, great among the greatest. His feelings were Jewish, his songs German, and the German people sing them to this day. When the singer was sick and broken, he sang a martyr-song, and begged that his tears "might flow forth and fall into the Jordan." In these words the poet betrayed himself, and uncovered the hidden secret of his being. All his sufferings, all his martyrdom, he poured into the Jordan. And the German people never forgave him. All his life this poet had sung the glories of the German Rhine, and now,

toward the end of his life, he dedicated his sufferings to the Jewish Jordan. The national jealousy flared up. But the complaint is old. Did not Naaman, the military lord of Syria, who was advised by Elisha to bathe in the Jordan, ask haughtily: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" The tears of Heine, flowing into the Jordan instead of into the Rhine, have been remembered till this day by Germany. There is no statue of Heine in his "fatherland."

In the actual conduct of the school we came across very little anti-Semitism. Nor would it have been easy for the teachers to be consistently anti-Semitic and yet retain their self-respect as teachers. For the best students were the Jews. In my class, for instance, there was a sort of conspiracy that no gentile should ever come into the first *minyan* (group of ten) of students. Even in the Russian language the Jewish students led. Their *form* was weaker than that of the Russian students: but the contents of their essays were infinitely more substantial. I ought to say, however, that the competition with us was weak. The Russian students were mediocre; and the children of the Polish farmers had not the slightest chance when pitted against former Yeshivah students.

One more teacher should be remembered in this story: Ossip Hurwitz, the religious instructor. In the Russian schools there were men appointed by the government to look after the welfare of our souls. For the government felt that citizens brought up in the fear of God made more obedient subjects. I do not know to what extent the government succeeded, in the case of the Russian and Polish students, through the instrumentality of its Orthodox and Catholic priests. But through its Jewish religious teacher it achieved the opposite of its purpose. The religious books given us

were modelled after the fashion of Christian catechisms; they were dryer than dust and duller than a multiplication table. And the teacher, like all of his kind, was a graduate of the former governmental Rabbinic seminary, and was steeped in the spirit of assimilation. Neither books nor teacher could awaken in us the slightest love for the subject. After the majority of us had spent years in the study of the Bible and of the Talmud it was stupid to subject us to the wisdom of a shallow teacher, and of books which were composed of silly questions and sillier answers—most of them detached and badly translated verses that we knew thoroughly in the original—on the deepest and most sacred questions of life. It was only natural, then, that the Jewish students in the government schools should invariably have regarded the religious teacher who was imposed upon them from above as an unmitigated nuisance. He was a bore—and he wasted our time, which was worse. On this point the government was not to blame. It worked according to a consistent programme: it was anxious for the welfare of the souls of all students. And it believed itself to be showing a particular sort of generosity when it allowed the Jewish students a religious instructor of their own. There was even a touch of equality about it. Of course the teacher was supported by the Jews: his salary came out of the kosher meat tax. And of course it was also impossible to put the Jewish religious instructor on the same level with the Catholic and Orthodox priests. The Jewish instructor was not, therefore, a government official. He was merely an employé—a servant of the government, paid for by the Jews.

But we could not expect anything better from the Russian government. Our complaint was not directed so much against the government as against the teachers. Their material was poor. Had they been men with an affirmative

attitude toward Judaism and Jewish questions, they might have been of some use, and might, in spite of the restrictions imposed by the government, have influenced the Jewish youth. But the majority of these instructors had been brought up to a negative attitude, and in spite of the degradation which they suffered at the hands of the government, they behaved toward *us* as if they were full-fledged governmental officials: and they believed they had been called to the high task of acquainting us with the lore and religion of our people.

Ossip Hurwitz—or, as we called him sarcastically, Father Ossip—was a well-educated man, even in Jewish subjects, particularly from German sources. But he was of the old type of government official. He served the government first, and then the Jewish people, and he was touchingly anxious to stand in well with his superiors: to this end he was ready to be more Catholic than the Pope. It goes without saying that no intimacy or friendliness ever existed between him and us. We had no use for him.

The Russian government stood, at that time, before an insoluble problem. Like all governments, it was deeply interested in the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth of the country. But its interest was of a special character. This was a government which was afraid of its own schools. Its task was to educate and to suppress the youth at one and the same time. The word *swoboda*—freedom—was hateful in the ears of the government. Had it been able to erase the word from the dictionary, it would gladly have done so. And the insoluble problem, the dilemma of the government, lay in the natural consequence of all education. Education leads to inquiry, inquiry to criticism, criticism to truth, and truth to freedom. How and where was this

vicious chain to be broken? How was the youth to receive the necessary education, but not more than the "necessary" —how could it be arrested in the first stages, before education led to inquiry?

The most remarkable element in this situation was, that the government seemed to know, fully, that the educated youth was bound to develop in the wrong direction—that is, in a spirit antagonistic to the government. It was impossible to withhold all education; the only hope of the government lay in the administration of some powerful prophylaxis. The Russian government regarded the student youth of the country as a deadly enemy: and the Jewish student youth was its most deadly component part. For, if the general student youth had that most dangerous of faults, youthfulness of spirit, the Jewish student youth had three faults. It was young: it was Semitic and therefore alien to the Russian spirit: and it had the impudence to regard itself as part of an oppressed nation.

In the villages, where the vast majority of the Russian people lived in a half-primitive stage of civilization, bound to the soil and yoked to unremitting labour, the task of the government was easier. It simply turned over the schools to the hands of the Church. The priest ruled not only in the parochial schools, but also in the so-called folk-schools, the "worldly" schools. And the Russian village priest, who was almost always a man of little education, was about the best instrument the government could have found for the care of its souls. In the cities the task was difficult. Here the priesthood did not suffice, and the teachers could not all be trusted to carry out the spirit as well as the letter of the government's policy. The teachers were busy men; they could not, with the best intentions, do more than answer for

their pupils during study-hours. But what of the evenings? What company did the students keep then, and what were their interests?

In brief: the surveillance of students had to be complete. To this end the government instituted, in all its secondary schools, a school police. The official name of this police was "Assistant Class Educators." Actually the men employed in the task had no relationship whatsoever to education—in any sense of the term. They were ignorant and incapable persons who had been demoted from the lowest classes in the school—complete failures. They had a double duty: During school hours they were an open police. After school hours, in the streets, or in the homes of the students, which they often honoured with unexpected visits, they were nothing more nor less than secret spies. Ostensibly they were interested in the welfare of the student, and came to help him in his homework. In passing they would cast a glance at the books which the student kept in his bookcase, or they would begin innocent conversations about the life of the students outside of school, and ask questions as to how the student and his friends spent their free time.

There were two such "assistants" in our Realschule. The older students warned us at once to avoid them like the pest: to permit no sort of intimacies: and above all never to enter with them into logical discussions. At first I failed to understand the drastic warning of the older students. But my ignorance did not last long. I soon learned that there were, among my comrades, Socialists, that is to say men preparing to make war on the government. I learned it from their own lips, during the course of our discussions. They were guarded in speech; they spoke in hints and vague allusions. But in their efforts to win me over they became, slowly, more intimate. And they might have won me over

if they had used other tactics, if they had been better psychologists and had been prepared to meet me halfway.

It should be remembered that in the eighties of the last century the Socialist movement in Russia, and particularly among the Jews, was in its embryonic stage. There was as yet no clear line of demarcation between Marxists and Social Revolutionaries, and the war between those two life-philosophies had not yet broken out. A Socialist, in those days, was, roughly, one who was not satisfied with things as they were. The Russian government was tyrannical toward all its subjects: it was murderously inclined toward its Jewish subjects. And it was not difficult either for Russians or Jews to find something to criticize. The vices and faults of the government actually cried out to heaven: and nothing could have been more favourable to the growth of a Socialistic movement than the constant policy of the government. By its own actions it provoked and strengthened the spirit before which it trembled. The concrete demands of the Socialists, simply and directly formulated, were just the kind to appeal to a youth which had not yet been corrupted by the perversities of life nor developed the petty egoisms of maturer years. But to the Jewish youth, who had been educated in the Prophets and in the later classic writings, the movement had a special appeal. One who had learned the Bible, and knew almost by heart the famous passage in the First Book of Samuel: "This shall be the judgment of the King," was hardly likely to be astounded even by the sharpest criticism directed against a crowned head. He who knew, just as intimately, the scorn which the Prophets had poured out on the rich, and the deep sympathy they expressed for the poor, could easily be roused to an equal sympathy for the poor of our own day. And apart from this, the Jewish youth had reasons enough of their own

to long for the overthrow of a government which was engaged in shameless persecution of their people.

My chief opponents were two students of the Realschule: Seideman was in the same class with me, Dugovsky was in the next class above. Seideman came from a Yeshivah, and Dugovsky from the Teacher's Institute of Vilna. Both of them were assimilated down to the marrow—that is, they had not the remotest interest in the affairs and problems of the Jewish people. They were both working "for humanity"—that is to say, they were completely absorbed in the affairs of the Russian people. They were not at all aware of the vehemence of their new Russian nationalism. Both of these students were under the closest surveillance by the "assistants." Seideman had been compelled to lodge with one of the assistants—a severe penalty. I met Dugovsky again in 1905, after the first Russian revolution, when he was released from the Schlisburg fortress, where he had passed five years in solitary confinement. The meeting took place in Vilna, and we used to visit each other fairly frequently. I do not know how it was, but we were friendlier then than in 1884. I know that I had not become more Russian. It is possible that he had become slightly more Jewish.

Some of my schoolmates could not make up their minds whether they stood with me or with Seideman. They listened gladly to both of us, but would make no decision. They belonged to the type which fears decisions because decisions entail consequences and responsibilities. These are, as a rule, men with no very urgent interest in public or social questions, men distinctly egocentric. In the Jewish folk-phrase they are called "the guests at all weddings." To what purpose decide for one side and against the other, win a friend and make an enemy? Better remain quietly and

easily in the middle, and be invited to "both weddings."

This type of man, with his eternal doubts, and his seeming intelligence, repelled me from the beginning. His perpetual, "Maybe you're right," and, "Maybe *you're* right," did not impress me as the tolerance of a thinker, because I at once saw through to the cowardice which it rationalized. They claimed they could not find the truth. Actually they did not want to find it and have to proclaim it.

These were my so-called neutral schoolmates. There were others who were not even neutral. They had not even a theoretical interest in the questions of the time. Mostly they were the children of rich parents. They were content with the order of things as it was, they were content with their own position and with themselves. They saw no reason to torment their souls with world-problems. In their courses they were just industrious enough to get their remove at the end of the year. They spent their free time in amusements, dancing, card-playing, and often enough in drinking.

I made strong efforts to become friendly with the neutrals, driven thereto by the zeal of the missionary. I could not altogether give up hope of winning them over. I even founded, to this end, a "Neutral Club," consisting of some fifteen students of the Realschule and the gymnasium. We used to meet once a week, making the rounds of our homes. We would read papers on the burning questions of the day, and follow up the papers with discussions. The meetings had to be secret. In particular we were afraid of the school police. I must admit that from my point of view the Neutral Club was not a great success. It was not easy to win these tepid souls. But I obtained valuable practice in two important activities. I had to prepare most of the papers myself, and to that end I read a great deal in the literature of our antagonists. But although I wrote out the paper,

I did not read it, but learned it from beginning to end by heart. I loved particularly the debates that followed the reading. I had a natural gift for discussion, and easily picked out the weak points in the arguments of my opponents. Beginning with these points I would launch a general assault, and destroy the whole structure. I learned also to argue in parables: so that when a logical approach seemed too abstract, I could summon up a parable which illumined, like a flash of lightning, the matter under debate, and carried me forward much more swiftly than detailed exposition. Parables came to me easily—almost instinctively. But the parable was always sandwiched in between two logical trains of thought.

I was not content with my work among the students. I looked for other fields in which to sow my ideas. Seideman and Dugovsky had organized groups of Yeshivah students and of young artisans—the Jewish type of factory worker was practically unknown at that time—and carried on educational campaigns. They taught these groups Russian, history, and geography, and from time to time lectured on social problems, always, of course, as Socialists. The Choveve Zion, on their side, organized similar groups, for their purposes. Three such groups were entrusted to me, and I met with them every Saturday afternoon. The Socialists always conducted their lectures in Russian—even though they might have known that it would have been infinitely easier to teach and convince their groups in Yiddish. But they were doing a double work: they were teaching Socialism and combating the Jewish culture-outlook. And so they made it appear that a lofty ideal like Socialism cannot be explained in Yiddish: it needs the resources and nobility of the Russian language. Yiddish was not a language for the spread of culture. We, the Choveve

Zion, were also compelled, through the pressure of competition, to carry on our courses in Russian. It was difficult for our groups, it was difficult for me. They would have gained in knowledge and I should have gained in comfort, if we could have carried on the discussions in Yiddish. And I remember how fantastic, how crazy, the whole business looked: I, among my old friends the Yeshivah students, and among plain, everyday young Jews, tormenting myself and them with a language which was not natural to any of us. But to such lengths does competition drive us.

I need hardly repeat that all of these meetings were illegal: that if the police had broken in on one it would have arrested every man present. Then would have followed a trial—and it would not have been easy to explain to the local police what we had been talking about. First of all, the local police was not up to such wild and complicated questions. It could never have decided whether this fantastic "love of Zion" was legal or illegal. It might be that the government was interested in spreading a "hate of Zion." Besides, the purpose of the gathering did not affect the law. All meetings, even of a private character, had to have special permission. And it was much easier to get into a Russian prison than out of it: first came the arrest and the assumption of guilt: then, while you remained in jail, the higher officials would slowly and laboriously disentangle the philosophy of Zionism and decide what punishment should attend the spread of it. There was current in the Russia of that time a popular anecdote which illustrated the general police policy. In a certain provincial town the chief of police issued an order that all hares should have their left ears cut off. Why hares, and why ears, and why left ears, we do not know—such is the fable. The Jews, however, were terrified by the decree and declared a communal

fast: any police officer might catch you on the street and cut off your left ear: after which you might proceed to prove to him and to his superiors that you weren't a hare. Russia was a police state from the foundations up: the basis of the constitution was the autocracy of the Czar and the self-sufficiency of the lowest and meanest official. The population was delivered up without safeguards into the hands of the police, and the governing principle was: Whatever is not expressly permitted is forbidden.

But the position of the Socialists was much worse than that of the Zionists; their work needed genuine courage and self-sacrifice. These students were staking their careers on the work, and perhaps their lives. Now this circumstance gave the Socialists an indirect advantage. The higher degree of danger gave them a superior prestige in the eyes of the youth and particularly in the eyes of girls. For youth, and particularly the weaker half of it, admires courage above all things. Of course there were other factors at work to make the female youth more sensitive to Socialist than to Zionist propaganda. I did my best to explain that it was no intrinsic demerit in our movement that it did not happen to be directed against the Russian government, and was not therefore attended with so much danger. And I pleaded that the time was coming when the *realization* of the ideal would be bound up with greater risks and sacrifices than was the Socialist movement. But I argued in vain: the Socialists were the heroes *of the day*, and we only promised to be the heroes *of the future*.

I envied my schoolmates Seideman and Dugovsky because of their superior success in winning over to their side the majority of the young Jewish women. Their groups were mixed: mine consisted almost entirely of young men. My

Socialist friends twitted me, and asked: "Is it true that the Chibath Zion movement is orthodox, and doesn't admit women?" And their old argument was reinforced: they were working for all humanity; I was working only for one half of it.

CHAPTER X

RULER AND INQUISITOR

THE nominal ruler of Russia during that period was Alexander the Third; but the power of Russia was concentrated in the hands of its evil genius, the learned and reactionary Inquisitor—so he was called among the educated classes—Constantine Pobedonostzev, former professor of civic law at the University of Moscow, and for many decades Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod. Pobedonostzev directed, without control or criticism, the spiritual and mental evolution of the greatest people in Europe, numbering at that time over a hundred million. And he dragged Russia from disaster to disaster, from abyss to abyss. He undermined, by his consistent and conscious policy, the creative energies of the Russian people, broke its morale and brought it to the verge of collapse. The historian who will undertake some day to review the latest developments in Russian history, will have to devote more space to Pobedonostzev than to any of his contemporaries. And it will become evident that Pobedonostzev was the embodiment of the destructive forces in Russia, the first among the band of scoundrels and fanatics who were responsible for the ruin of the country. The Rasputins and Iliodors who followed him found a ready and responsive field for their activities; the preparations had been made by their great model. A foul odour of corruption and oppression went up from every corner of the land.

Pobedonostzev hated all the foreign elements in Russia,

but his hatred of the Jews was frantic. He hated them on national grounds, and on religious grounds. He had worked out a plan, which he later made public, for the solution of Russia's Jewish problem. Conditions had to be created, he said, in which one-third of the Jewish people would perish, one-third would have to migrate, and one-third would be swallowed up in the Russian people. This plan, in its naked brutality, is reminiscent of one of the darkest prophecies: "And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part . . . and thou shalt take a third part and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind." What the Prophet was bidden to do with the hair of his head and beard, Pobedonostzev proposed to do with five million Jews.

According to those who stood near the throne, Alexander the Third was not by nature a despot. It was even the opinion of many that he was a man of justice and honour. His life was simple, almost retired, and he was satisfied with a minimum of imperial pomp. Such a man, guided by able and honest counsel, might have continued the work of reform begun by his father. But it was Russia's misfortune that Alexander was completely under the influence of Pobedonostzev and his clique. The Great Inquisitor, the Torquemada of the nineteenth century, planted in his imperial pupil the firm belief that he had been chosen by heaven to be the defender on earth of the Holy Greek Orthodox Faith, and it was therefore his duty to regard all other religions, and particularly the Jewish, as the enemies of God. Alexander the Third conceived himself to be the defender of the faith no less than of the country which he ruled: in this we

shall find the explanation of his consistent oppression of all "non-Russians" within his territories.

One episode will illuminate this.

A special committee had been appointed, under the chairmanship of Count Palen, for the study of the Jewish question. Certain members of the committee, older statesmen who had been educated in the school of Alexander the Second, wished to solve the Jewish question in a spirit of moderate liberalism. It was the Emperor himself who interfered against them, and who offered in defence of his views such reasons as one might have expected from a mediaeval hermit. One of the statesmen had the daring to submit to the Emperor a memorandum in which he described the intolerable conditions under which the Jews lived, and advised the cessation of government oppression. Alexander the Third returned the memorandum with a marginal note: "We must never forget that the Jews crucified our Lord and spilt His dear blood." As defender of the faith he was setting out to collect an ancient debt, with interest, and with interest on the interest.

For the Jews of Russia there set in again a true mediaeval era—a new edition, improved by modern ingenuities. Every day brought new decrees and new discriminations. The legal phraseology of the decrees was worked out in St. Petersburg; their interpretation into action was generally left to the governors of the districts and their subordinates. They took their cue from the winds that blew from St. Petersburg, and they took good care to err on the side of severity, and to give to the decrees an application which could not always be set down in incriminating print. *En passant*, Russian officialdom found a new and inexhaustible source of income. Every milder interpretation of a decree was purchased for heavy cash. It was an open secret that the bribes

that officials obtained from the Jews amounted to more than their salaries.

All nationalist movements, and even the mildest expressions of a national longing, were suppressed by the government with an iron hand. The thoroughness of the repressions may be judged from the fact that even the Ukrainians, the blood-brothers of the Great Russians, were under suspicion. The Ukrainian intelligentsia was closely watched by the police and even the songs of the Ukrainian poet Shevchenko were regarded as inflammatory material. With regard to the Jewish national movement, the government was rather at a loss, and could not determine on a definite policy. On the one hand no nationalism other than the Russian could be tolerated in Russia. But on the other hand the Russian government was pursuing a policy of oppression which was intended to provoke Jewish emigration: and Jewish emigration was an automatic encouragement to Jewish nationalism. Another reason occasionally tempted the government to make a partial exception in favour of Jewish nationalism: it might serve as a safety-valve for the Jewish youth. Perhaps the Jewish youth, absorbed in the problems of its own people, would cease to take any interest in the affairs of Russia. This last reproach was often thrown up at us by our Socialist opponents, and I must admit that it was one of our weak points. For to have anything in common with the intentions of the government was a genuine moral disgrace. But what were we to do? We could not renounce our ideals solely because the Russian government was able to make indirect capital out of them. Indeed, it needed a special variety of moral courage to work for a movement that entailed less danger, while many of our schoolmates were dedicated to an ideal that entailed more. But it must also be admitted that many of the Jewish youth

chose the Jewish nationalist movement simply because it was the less dangerous.

These considerations impelled us to introduce a greater element of danger into our movement; instead of confining our meetings to the Synagogues, where we were at that time practically secure from police interference, we began to look for more open territory. We began to hire dance-halls; we engaged large private buildings; and, whenever possible, we addressed meetings of workers in factories. . . .

We were not content with public meetings alone. We also engaged in personal man-to-man propaganda. This task was assumed by a small group of students, headed by Saul Ginsberg. For two reasons we concentrated our efforts on the middle-class shopkeeper. First, the middle-class shopkeeper always had plenty of time to listen—his customers were not too frequent; between one customer and the next an hour or two would sometimes pass. Second, we felt safer from the school police; if one of these instructors of the youth passed, and came in to see what we were doing, we had an excellent excuse. We were buying something.

I was assigned to a street lined by the poorer of these shops. The street had no name of its own, because in reality it was not a street—it was a narrow alley between two rows of houses—so narrow that two men could hardly walk abreast. Broad sunlight never came into that alley; only on summer evenings the departing sun would throw a dying beam that way, as if in conscious pity. In this pent and dark prison Jewish shopkeepers passed their lives; generation after generation inherited the dimness of the day and darkness of the night. These shops were open from the earliest hour till late in the night. It was a half-subterranean miniature world; families were raised, marriages celebrated, social distinctions established, in a perpetual twilight.

This "street" was not the only one of its kind. Their name was legion. In Minsk, as in every other large Jewish city, there were countless burrows inhabited by thousands of these Jewish shopkeepers, who lived after the fashion of moles, imprisoned for ever between the narrow walls of poverty. The vast majority of these shopkeepers lived literally from day to day: the earnings of each day decided the character of the family "dinner." An economy which envisaged the next day was outside their scope. The picture of these shops, with their prisoners, is still burned deeply in my mind. Very often the "shop" consisted of half a barrel of herrings, a few thin loaves of bread, a dozen cheeses, a handful of rusty locks, a box of nails, and a hunk of soap, from which the shopkeeper sliced pieces for a kopeck and half a kopeck. I have seen with my own eyes a customer enter such a shop, in Minsk and in Swislowitz, and buy a herring for a kopeck (half a cent) and half a kopeck's worth of herring-juice, called *liak*. The herring he wrapped in a piece of newspaper, and for the herring-juice he brought a cup. The *liak* would be the staple of the family dinner that evening. The mother would add to it large quantities of water, and throw in little pieces of bread. Among the poorest Jews of Lithuania this was the favourite dish. Such was the life of the Jewish workers, the poorer Jewish shopkeepers, and the type of unsuccessful *luftmensch*. And these classes, too, were the objectives of a violent government campaign. The highest officials in St. Petersburg took frequent council as to how to combat the Jewish exploiters. For it was an axiom that all Jews, from the highest to the lowest, were exploiters. And indeed, was not this the very symbol and extreme of exploitation, to use up a herring till not a shred was left of it—and then to make a meal even of the herring-juice?

I visited almost every shopkeeper in that alley. And from

one of them I once received an answer that I have not forgotten till this day. This man, Lipmanov, belonged to the higher class of shopkeepers. He maintained a well-filled store; but the contents of it, I am quite certain, could easily have been bought up for three hundred roubles, or one hundred and fifty dollars. From the proceeds of this store he raised a family consisting of himself and five children, and according to the standards of that time he was a decent and successful citizen with nothing to complain about. His life was perhaps pinched, but it was not beggarly. Lipmanov was a half way Maskil, and between one customer and another would dip into a Hebrew book. I was quite certain, before I went to him, that here I would meet with little difficulty, and I rejoiced in advance over the new member who would be added to our organization.

I girded up my loins and went forth to do battle. I made a frontal attack—no need for tactics here, I thought. First I drew, in the blackest colours, the picture of our exile, omitting not a single detail that might add to the horror and misery of our life. And then, on a sudden, I passed to the picture of our future life in Palestine, and I need hardly say that here I surpassed myself in the evocation of a world that was filled with colour, happiness, joy of creation. I spoke as if I had just returned from the land flowing with milk and honey. And then I finished up with a glorious peroration on the virtues and joys of freedom, in my grandest manner. But I noticed that my lofty style and fiery phrases did not move my hearer. This prisoner of the store, this mole of the underworld, who passed all his life among barrels of herrings and boxes of nails, returned a calm, unmoved gaze. His answer was short: "Young man, you are wasting your time. We shall never exchange Europe for Asia."

One meeting, well worth a description, was held soon after

the Kattowitz conference of 1884, when for the first time eastern and western Jews, representatives of thirty-five independent Chibath Zion groups, met to organize for common action. They founded, at Kattowitz, an organization under the extraordinary name of "Foundation of the Moses Montefiore Memorial in the Holy Land." This name was chosen for reasons of policy. It was dangerous to found a political organization; the movement therefore hid itself behind the name of Moses Montefiore, who was known even in Russia as a great philanthropist. The new organization was thus purely philanthropic. As a matter of fact, the Kattowitz conference laid the foundations of a world-wide Jewish nationalist organization, under the leadership of Dr. Leon Pinsker, whose famous pamphlet, *Auto-Emancipation*, had appeared in 1882 in the German language, and had produced a profound impression on the educated classes among the Jews.

We, the students of Minsk, had decided to celebrate the Kattowitz conference on a grand scale. To this end we managed to obtain permission from the Brothers Frumkin for the use of their brewery, which stood on Triune Hill. We Jews had given our own name to this hill; we called it the Turetzky (Turkish) Hill, so as to avoid the illusion to the Trinity and to the church of that name which topped the hill.

The arrangements occupied weeks. The brewery, which could seat over one thousand persons, was closely packed. Among the speakers, the two ablest representatives of the youth were chosen, Saul Ginsberg and myself. I no longer remember whether the incident I am about to describe took place before my speech, or after it, or in the midst of it. But I do remember that the meeting had reached its highest point, the faces of the audience shone with enthusiasm, and

the atmosphere was tense. Suddenly, and without any warning, the lamps began to go out, and a tumult rose in the hall. The police had arrived. Ginsberg and I were in the greatest danger, for we wore our easily distinguishable student uniforms; and the punishment for our participation in the meeting would have been expulsion from the school. In the darkness we were seized by strong hands and thrust toward a door that led into the hop-cellar of the brewery. No steps led downward from the door, which was swiftly closed behind us. There was only a rung-ladder which stopped abruptly halfway. We hung on to the last rung of the ladder for an hour or so, and our strength began to give out. Finally, having got rid of the police one way or another, our comrades remembered us. They opened the door and brought lights. We then perceived that we had been hanging with our feet a couple of inches from the floor.

It became increasingly clear to me that I was dedicated to the Hebrew and not to the Russian world. However intimate I might become with Russian literature, I could stand to it only in the relation of a friendly guest, a visitor from the outside. I speak here of the spirit of Russia. Russia as a concrete reality was not even a place of sojourn for me, as yet. And so the original plan that I had set myself began to yield to another. I had intended to finish the Realschule, enter a technical school, and become an engineer, as so many of my fellow students intended to do. But now another path lay clearly before me. I began to look for a profession that would bind me to Jewish life and to Jewish culture. To this end it was necessary for me to continue my *Jewish* studies. And in Russia there did not exist, apart from the old-fashioned Yeshivoth, any institutions for higher Jewish education. I began to think now of Germany, where three such in-

stitutes existed: two Rabbinical seminaries and the "Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums."

In 1886 I graduated from the Minsk Realschule. My examination results were excellent—again with the exception of Russian and German. In these two subjects I just managed to crawl through. But I stood, for all that, near the top of the list. A proud and happy son, I returned to my parents' home in Swislowitz, and there I passed the remaining months of the summer—one of the happiest interludes in my life. My parents, my brothers, my sisters, were prouder of me than ever. My time was my own; no examination stood over me with whistling whip. I could read freely, and write freely. I could walk again in the fields and forests of my childhood; I could spend hours in the company of my old teacher, Judah Artzer, and of the Rav of the town. During these few months I recaptured, for the last time, the spirit of my lost childhood. I felt, as I have never felt since, the first shock of life upon me, the first consciousness of faith. I remembered vividly the days when I had believed, earnestly, naïvely, with childlike wholeness, that God had created the world for his people Israel; that the other nations were only generous additions to creation; that we were passing now through a period of darkness and tribulation only in order that we might be purified and attain to the highest stages of goodness and piety.

CHAPTER XI

THE DISINHERITED

I FOUND it hard to broach the subject of my career. I was not quite certain, as yet, in what these modern Jewish studies consisted that I had heard my friends speak of in Minsk. And had I spoken either to my father or to the Rav about continuing my Jewish studies, they would have pointed at once to one of the big Yeshivoth. The scholars and thinkers which these Yeshivoth had produced could not be equalled abroad. And to go abroad for Jewish studies would have sounded fantastic to them.

As it happens, my father began once more to speak seriously to me about going into his timber business. He sat down one evening to a sober, mathematical discussion of the problem, took out his account-books and gave me the figures. My stay in Minsk had cost him in the vicinity of a thousand roubles a year. "Let us assume," my father said, "that you will have five sons who will resemble you, and who will want to study. You cannot favour one of your sons at the expense of the others: this is forbidden. At that rate you would need five thousand roubles a year for the education of your sons. And then there will be your daughters and their dowries —not to mention your own expenses. And now: Do you think you can work up that kind of income on your studies? I don't know how it is with the engineers—I have never, in all my life, come across a Jewish engineer. But I am well acquainted with the Jewish doctors, pharmacists, and lawyers of Bo-

brusk. And the best of them does not make as much as five thousand roubles a year." And so my father advised me to think long and carefully before I made up my mind. He would not compel me against my will; he even promised me his support whatever my decision. But he asked me to study again and again the plain figures he put before me.

I must confess that my father's simple arithmetic made a strong impression on me. I saw myself suddenly surrounded by five sons and two daughters, just as my father was, and my sons wanted to study; and abroad, of course. I needed five thousand roubles a year for them, and did not have it. . . . I was filled with consternation; there was nothing for it but to yield to my father. And at last I found an answer. I asked my father whether the merchant could, after all, be sure of his income; whether there were not plenty of merchants who could not even send one son to study abroad. But my father's common sense was stronger than mine. "The point," he said, "lies here. The children of a merchant have not the same inclination to study as the children of the professional man. They are as a rule prepared to become merchants—and they conduct their studies in their father's business, which is cheaper than a university in Germany. Your children will surely want to study."

It was a strange debate, centring on the needs of an unborn generation. My father did not compel me; but he did everything short of that to convince me he was right. "Among us timber-merchants," he said, "there are few with your education in Hebrew and Russian"—my father had a higher opinion of my Russian than did my teachers in the Realschule—"and you will surely occupy a prominent place among us." My mother, now convinced that there was no hope of my becoming a Rabbi, joined my father, and pleaded with me to remain at home and help my father, as my brother

Meyer was now doing. Even my old teacher, Judah Artzer, joined them. But his intentions were different. He still hoped to see me become a Hebrew writer of a high order. He believed that as a merchant, not finding an outlet for my mental and spiritual energies, I would be more certain to turn to the pen than as an engineer, whose professional duties absorb all his mental powers. The only one who encouraged me to go on with my studies was the Rav of Swislowitz.

This problem was the one cloud that cast a shadow over those three summer months. I was weakened in my stand because I could not formulate my own desires. My mind drew me toward mathematical and scientific studies; my heart impelled me toward the Jewish world, and inspired me with the longing to become a great Jew—not in the sense of worldly honours, but of steadfast devotion to my people, and satisfying labours in its behalf. I did not know then that I was passing through the uniform tragic struggle of the Jewish youth. The young man born to a normal people, when he is touched by an ideal, has before him a simple task. He has but to become a useful member of society, and he thereby becomes useful to his own people. But it is different with the young Jew. In his case the interests of his environment do not coincide with the interests of his people. Frequently that environment is even hostile to his people, and the welfares of people and of environment are then antagonistic. Such was the case in Russia. It thus happens that the young Jew who wishes to render service to his people finds the choice of professions limited.

This, too, explains that tragic—perhaps the most tragic—fact in our life: the Jewish intelligentsia did not, like other intelligentsias, retain contact with its people. The professions in which it scattered itself drove it from its racial source. The element of language alone might have been de-

cisive; but the professional man was steeped in a new world, of which the manner of thought, no less than the language, was strange to his own people. The intelligentsia lost its influence over the people, the people its faith in the intelligentsia; there disappeared from the Jewish world its most creative element. The best Jewish brains went over to alien gods and alien environments. The Jewish race remained standing like a solitary tree in a winter landscape.

In the eighties, however, began the backward flow—the return of the penitents. The persecutions and the pogroms touched of a sudden the slumbering conscience of the intelligentsia. One part of it turned back frankly and openly; it tried to re-establish its points of contact with its people; it looked for direct ways of serving it. This repentance took the form of Jewish nationalism. The other part of the intelligentsia could not return; it had moved to such a distance that contact could no longer be re-established. It tried to serve its people, therefore, indirectly. It allied itself vehemently with that section of the Russian people which was devoting itself to the overthrow of the tyrannical government. Consciously or unconsciously, there was allied with its Socialist faith a deep-rooted wish to prepare the day of reckoning for the despot who had heaped insult and injury and degradation on its people. It was a well-known fact that the Jewish Socialists distinguished themselves by their eagerness to undertake the most desperate and most dangerous enterprises. I do not believe that this can be explained by the superior courage of the Jewish Socialists. But the Jew had a double reckoning to settle; the enemy of society was also the enemy of the Jews. The Jewish Socialist always argued that he had no Jewish affiliation or sentiment; but I do not believe that every spark of Jewishness could have been so suddenly eliminated. It lingered in the corners of his mind:

and it made itself evident by the more intense ardour of the Jew in the Socialist movement.

The spiritual fate of the Jewish intelligentsia was a warning to me. I had no need to return as a penitent to my people. I had never drifted from it. But I realized that the profession of engineer was perhaps of all the best-calculated to plunge me into a life remote from my people. As far as that went, better be in my father's business. At least that would give me comparative freedom and entire independence. But the disadvantages were severe. I could not imagine myself passing six months of the year in the forests and remote villages of the interior. My opinion of my education was not as enthusiastic as my father's. I had begun to feel that with the completion of my Realschule course, I was only ready to begin my studies. And the distant centres of higher education pulled me, as if they had been earthly Edens, in which the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life were waiting for me. Of the two, it was the Tree of Knowledge that tempted me more. I believed that I would gradually develop into the writer and scholar. The Tree of Life, with the tumult of the wind forever in its branches, attracted me less.

The difficulty of persuading my father to send me abroad impelled me to enter on a temporary compromise. I returned to Minsk and took the post-graduate course in the Realschule. There were two sections in this course—chemistry and physics. I chose the latter. It was a pleasant year for me. The work was interesting. The teacher was my favourite, Kurilko, who was as happy to see me as I to see him—and who now unbent openly and singled me out for special friendship. We were now like university students; we were left more to our own devices. We were not always tied to the school,

but made excursions into the factories of the vicinity, for practical demonstrations. We were permitted to doff our uniforms when we went on the street—we only kept the cap. And the vigilance of the student police, the "assistants," if it was not relaxed, was at least exercised with a little more subtlety.

My friends of the Chibath Zion movement were particularly happy to have me back, and they used me intensively for their work. The movement was at that time on the defensive on several fronts. The periodical, the *Voschod*, which had concentrated the best of the assimilatory Jewish intelligentsia, was now conducting a systematic and sustained campaign against the Chibath Zion. Its weapons, which were directed against both the movement and its individual leaders, were no longer particularly clean. It had begun to use misrepresentation of facts as well as of theory. At that time the *Hazephirah* was negative in its attitude toward the Chibath Zion; as a Hebrew organ it could not very well be assimilatory; but its tone was anti-nationalist. But the bitterest and most active of our enemies were the heads of the Chalukkah, that ancient charitable institution which had turned Palestine into an Old Folk's Home, and which still flooded the Jewish world with the mediaeval concept of its relationship to Palestine. Palestine was a land sacred to pious old men ready for the grave and preparing for it by study of the sacred lore. The heads of the Chalukkah lived in Palestine. And from Jerusalem issued a declaration of war against the movement that was destroying the foundations of Judaism, and against the godlessness which masked itself with talk of sacred memories and a historic past. With this declaration were also sent scores of agents from Jerusalem, whose business it was to unite the darkest forces in Jewry against us. All means were declared honourable if only they could in-

jure the Chibath Zion. Calumny directed against the land itself, and against the colonists who were working on it, became the order of the day. It was a war in which poison-gases and stink-bombs were used without hesitation or shame.

My progress in the Realschule was satisfactory. The six hours a day that I spent there, in practical and theoretical work, sufficed to keep me abreast of the course, so that, freed from the necessity of home study, I could carry on to my heart's content both the movement and my personal literary pursuits. Kurilko was satisfied with me. He assured me that if I continued to work with the same industry and intelligence, I would undoubtedly become an able engineer. And probably, if I had thus continued, I would have followed the regulation path marked out for thousands of us. But now an event took place that brought a fateful change into our lives.

I have already stated that until now the schools, for both secondary and higher education, had been subject to the liberal laws of Alexander the Second, who had dreamed of drawing the Jewish youth into the general stream of education. Whatever the attitude of the new government toward the Jews, whatever the discriminations practised in effect, the law itself had so far remained unchanged. But with the rise of Pobedonostzev a new attitude toward education in general had set in. Pobedonostzev preached Byzantinism: and he saw Russia as the logical heir of the Byzantine tradition. He saw the general education of "the corrupt West" as a danger to the spiritual integrity of Russia. Russia, he said, had a mission of her own in the world, and the path she had to follow was as individual as it was glorious. Peter the Great, who had established his new capital as if by sorcery on the Finnish swamps, and had by brute will broken

a window through to Europe, had been the greatest enemy of his country. The greatness of Russia could not lie in general education and European enlightenment. It was based on the double foundation of the absolute power of the Czar and the absolute ascendency of the Orthodox Church. The cry was therefore: "Back to Moscow!" (We shall see later that even the Bolsheviks took over a rich part of the heritage of Pan-Slavism. Instead of the absolute power of the Czar they adopted as a slogan the absolute power of the proletariat: instead of the absolute ascendency of the Orthodox Church, the absolute ascendency of orthodox Marxism. The Bolsheviks carried this programme to its logical extreme. The principle that the power in a country can belong to a minority remained in force: the distance between self-rule of the people and the rule of a minority is much greater than between the rule of a minority and the rule of one man. And the principle of the return to Moscow, formulated by Pobedonostzev as a moral indicator, became a reality under the Bolsheviks.)

The new attitude toward the Jewish student youth was the natural consequence of Pobedonostzev's view of general education. If the educated Russian was a danger to throne and Church, how much more dangerous was the educated Jew, who had not even the background of a relationship toward the Russian throne and Church. The logical policy was to bar all Jews from access to education. In support of this view, the police reported that the Jewish youth was furnishing to the revolutionary movement numbers out of all proportion to the Jewish population: nor was this to be wondered at—it was the natural effect of Jewish oppression.

Ours was the last generation of the Jewish student youth of Russia to taste the benefits of the old régime. In July 1887 the government issued an open decree for the legal regulation of the numbers of Jewish students to be admitted to

the elementary and secondary schools and universities. In the Cherta—the permitted pale of settlement—ten per cent. of the Christian student body; outside of the Cherta, five per cent.; in St. Petersburg and Moscow, three per cent. Like the famous oppressive laws of Ignatiev, put into effect in May 1882, this new decree was not issued through the regular channel of the governmental council, in which one or two of the old liberals might still be found by accident; it was issued as an administrative ruling by a Minister of the Crown, on the command of the all-highest authority. There were, in the permanent commission of Count Palen, some far-sighted statesmen who warned the government that the publication of such a decree was against its own interests. They foresaw that the Jewish student youth, locked out of the Russian schools, would flock to the schools of western Europe, and return to Russia as the most dangerous of the opponents to the existing régime. The warning was ignored. We shall see later that the Russian government paid dearly for its mistake.

The girls' schools were for the time being excluded from the new decree—a marvellous repetition of history. "And the king of Egypt spake to the Jewish midwives, of which the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and set them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live."

It must be remembered that the Jewish population was almost exclusively urban. The Jews were not admitted to the villages, and even those who had been living in villages previously were largely driven out of them by the laws of 1882. In certain towns the Jewish population made up eighty per cent. of the total. The brutality of the new decree,

and the horror of the Jews, can therefore be easily imagined. Only a tiny fraction of the ablest competitors could look forward to an education.

When a Jewish boy was received into a government school, the parents celebrated the event as if it were an extraordinary achievement, and they were warmly congratulated by relatives and friends. At first children were admitted on the basis of competitive examinations, and only the ablest children were admitted. But before long a new industry arose—the bribing of officials, the corruption of examiners and inspectors. A class of go-betweens was established, agents between parents and officials. The rich Jews were of course the gainers, and the system of bribery extended through the high schools and the universities. The anti-Semitic press now found new ammunition against the Jews: they were undermining the morale of Russian officialdom, and teaching it to accept bribes. The Minister of Education, Delianov, had a number of Jewish friends, among them Alexander Cederbaum, the publisher of the *Hamelitz*—one of the best types of benevolent Jewish Shtadlanim, the notables who acted for (not with) the Jewish people. Many Jewish students were admitted over and above the legal quota into the universities by special permission of the Minister of Education. On one occasion the Minister complained bitterly of the Jews who bribed his professors and teachers. It did not occur to him to blame the venal professors and teachers. Cederbaum argued the question out with the Minister, on a philological basis. The Russian word for bribery is *vziatka*, from the word *vziat*, to take. The Russian word for "give" is *dat*. By derivation Cederbaum proved that the guilt of bribery lay with the taker, and not with the giver: the proof being that bribery was called *vziatka* and not *datka*. The creator of the

Russian language had been careless in his choice of a word for the concept of bribery.

This new decree, which was in the air, and which was momently expected, threw me into complete confusion. I foresaw that only a second miracle, like the one which had admitted me to the secondary school, could open the doors of the higher education. And I had no faith in a second miracle. I discussed my unhappy situation with Kurilko. He advised me to carry on till the end of the course, and try my luck. But he spoke without conviction. He too had no faith in miracles. He was only too decent to take away all hope from me.

A stroke of the pen had destroyed for thousands of young people their sole chance of acquiring honourable and useful professions. For all of us the future was covered with a dark cloud. Those who had completed, or were just completing, their secondary-school education were now in the same condition as the child Cantonists whose tortures I have elsewhere described: they had been made thirsty for knowledge, and the means of slaking their thirst was withheld from them. And now these hosts stood in front of the gates of their paradise; the road to the Tree of Knowledge was barred, not by the cherub with the flaming sword, but by the slaves of the despot, by the Russian police.

One course was left to the Jewish youth: flight to the West and asylum among other nations. Through these gates, thoughtfully held open by the Russian government, poured a mighty stream of persecuted and ruined Jews. To these fleeing hordes were now added thousands of the youth, hungry for knowledge. They set out for the West in groups, mostly without means and with no training in the earning of a livelihood. In the hunger of the soul the youth of a people forgets the hunger and nakedness of the body.

But most of the foreign universities and technical schools would not admit students without the graduation certificate of a secondary school. There thus arose in Russia a new type of student: the "externe." The government had not been thorough; it still permitted students who did not attend the schools to take their examinations. Jews were for the time being admitted to this privilege. Later even this privilege was removed. Every year the externe came to the examination, until he had worked himself up to the graduation certificate. As a rule such students belonged to the poorer classes, and while they studied they tried to make ends meet by giving lessons, keeping account-books, and so on. There arose a modern type of Yeshivah *bachur;* one who imitated the Yeshivah *bachur* in his asceticism and suffering, but not in the substance of his studies. Once again young Jews "ate days," when they could find them, and starved when they could not. Few of the externes ever reached their goal. Many of them, by heroic efforts, reached the last examination, and then failed. It was forbidden to sit for the last or graduation examination more than three times. But often enough the Jewish externes, by influence or bribery, sat much oftener. I have known externes of the age of thirty, and more, still struggling for their graduation certificate of the secondary school, which would admit them to a Western university. Such men were known as "the eternal externes." The anti-Semitic press exploited this tragedy of the Jewish youth, and demanded special restrictions for Jewish externes. It argued that the Jews were altogether too sly and underhand; it accused them of ingenious acrobatics in evading the law of the land. A caricature of the situation might easily be drawn. A man is drowning in the waters of a deep river. On the bridge above stands a Chachol, a Ukrainian, possessed of the natural sense of humour of his people. He

watches the man below struggling with death, contorting himself, performing in his agony all sorts of "acrobatics." And he shouts down to the drowning man: "You there! Stop playing the acrobat, will you?"

I fell into a mood of deep depression, such as I had never known before. I felt that I was being choked, and I wanted to utter a cry of protest. And I did protest—through a most illogical act. Without any grounds, that is, official grounds, I came to school one day and asked for my papers. I was withdrawing. I was one of the best students in the school. In another few months I would have completed the course. But I could not continue in this oppressive atmosphere. The inner instinct that drove me to this futile step was one of revenge. I had no hope of ever entering one of the higher institutions of education in Russia. For a foreign university my graduation certificate sufficed. I would not wait to be refused by Russia: I would rather withdraw of my own free will. This is the revenge of the condemned criminal, who will not give the executioner the satisfaction of inflicting the death penalty, but anticipates him by committing suicide.

CHAPTER XII

I BECOME A RUSSIAN SOLDIER

I stood once more at the cross-roads. I had to choose between my father's business and study in western Europe. I would certainly have chosen the latter road, and would perhaps have won my parents over, if a new difficulty had not stood before me: military service. In another year I would be of age, and would have to report for duty. In the opinion of the doctors to whom I went for examination, there was some hope that I might escape because of my short-sightedness. But I could not rely on this, for in the matter of military duty the Russian government was unusually gracious toward the Jews. It "permitted" the Jew to enter the army even if he fell short by several inches of the regulation height and chest measurement. Nor was it very fastidious in the matter of eyesight, and Jewish soldiers could be much more short-sighted than the most short-sighted Russian soldiers.

However, in return for these concessions, the Russian government laid a special collective burden on the Jews. The Jewish population was compelled to furnish a specific number of soldiers in a higher proportion than any other group in the country. If the number fell short, the government would also exact an only son, frequently the sole wage-earner in the family. For the rest of the population an only son was exempt.

Nor did the government take into account the new and heavy Jewish emigration. It based its quota on the old statis-

tics. Those that had remained behind had to meet the obligations of those who had emigrated. The Jews therefore contributed more effectively to the Russian army than the rest of the population. But this did not prevent the hired press from maintaining a perpetual clamour that the Jews were evading their military obligations from lack of patriotic feeling. The demand for a military patriotic feeling on the part of the Jews was the extremest form of impudence. But the accusation was based on falsified statistics. It is quite true that every one tried to evade military service, but this was as true of the non-Jew as of the Jew. The difference was that the non-Jewish evader did actually rob the Russian army of a soldier. Not so the Jew, for his evasion was made good through the collective responsibility imposed on the Jews as a group. The Russian army thus suffered no loss in our case.

Even if I had been certain that I would be refused for the army, I would have suffered deeply in the knowledge that another person would be serving in my place. And in the townlet of Swislowitz it would have been known at once what victim had been chosen to replace me. I decided not to wait for my turn. I would volunteer for service as one of the "privileged" classes: as the graduate of a secondary school I would not have to serve more than one year. I went to the military doctor, who examined me and discovered at once that I was exceptionally short-sighted in my right eye. He was happy to tell me that I would not do for the army. I began to beg him to overlook my short-sightedness, and to give me a certificate of fitness. The doctor stared at me; he believed that he had to do now with an abnormal young man. And the impression seemed to strengthen him in his decision. He had met countless young men who begged him to discover somewhere in their system a fault which made them

unserviceable for military purposes. Here was a man with a first-class fault begging to have it overlooked. It took me several weeks to obtain the certificate, and it cost me almost as much as it had cost others, without a fault, to obtain their freedom. I myself did not give the doctor any money. But on our second interview he told me that to do what I wanted would entail a heavy responsibility for him. He understood my motives, he said, and he sympathized deeply with me. I thanked him warmly for his delicate perception. I understood him equally well.

The city of Bobrusk, where I volunteered for service, was not new to me. I had visited it several times with my father, who had business connections there. I also had near relatives there, the widely ramified family of one of the most important Jews in the town, Mendel Wigodsky, who was supplier of timber and provisions to the local fortress, and who was therefore well acquainted with the military hierarchy. The employés of Mendel Wigodsky placed their influence at my disposal, and they also advised me in which of the four regiments stationed in the fortress I should register. I chose the Hundred and Seventeenth Yaroslav Infantry, Company Six, which was commanded by Captain Maximov.

If my memory does not deceive me, I was the first Jewish volunteer among the garrison of Bobrusk. Jewish volunteers, too, were restricted; no more than two could serve in the same regiment. A non-Jew volunteer was, in the public opinion, a higher grade of soldier; he was regarded as half an officer. But a Jew could not become an officer, not even a sergeant or a corporal. And this gave the Jewish volunteer an even higher standing in Jewish public opinion. The Jewish volunteer was regarded as a splendid, living protest against the government: "Let the whole world see that we

do our duty. Here is a man who was cut out to be an officer, but the government will not see it."

Between the day when, in the all-highest name of the Czar (such was the formula), I demanded to be enrolled in the service, and the day of my actual entry, lay an interval of several weeks. I had plenty of free time, and knowing that before long I would have much less, I hastened to become acquainted with the Jewish youth of Bobrusk. I was of course interested primarily in the leaders of the Chibath Zion movement. There is something marvellous in the binding power of a common ideal, especially among young people. I felt at home with my new friends from the first moment of contact. I was received among the leaders of the Chibath Zion with the warmth of an old comrade.

Three men stood out among the leaders in Bobrusk: Leon Lozinsky, Solomon Fried, and Lazarovitch. The Lozinskys were among the wealthy and exclusive Jewish families of Bobrusk. But Leon Lozinsky was an orphan, and his widowed mother was not rich; he was, however, helped by his family, and he kept a fine house. Leon was the oldest son; his two brothers and three sisters treated him with great respect; he had graduated from a secondary school and had given up his education because of weak health. He was regarded as one of the best-educated young Jews in Bobrusk, but he was more respected for his character, which expressed itself in the integrity and firmness of his opinions. He was clever and witty, but sarcastic to the point of cruelty. Solomon Fried was a typical Maskil, quite a good Hebraist; but his talents did not carry him beyond the writing of reports of commonplace occurrences for the Hebrew press. Lazarovitch was a Hebrew teacher above the ordinary calibre. He had come to Bobrusk from Borisov, and it was

whispered that he had an interesting past. What there was interesting about it nobody knew.

These three men were vehement Choveve Zionists. Lazarovitch was the most uncompromising, and demanded a Jewish state with all the attributes of a state. Fried had a weakness for fine phrases, and was always prepared to make practical concessions if the phrase was a happy one. The most intelligent approach to Jewish problems was that of Lozinsky. He was well read in Russian literature, and in world literature through Russian translations. He had come to his Zionist convictions not through the more usual path of the Haskallah, but by way of his general education. There was something aristocratic in his character and bearing, and this something did not permit him to bend before any one. His criticism of the assimilationists was as sharp as a keen razor. He did not dwell on the practical difficulties of assimilation, but on the contemptible and slavish point of view with which it was bound up. For him assimilation represented what was most repugnant to his proud instincts: an admission of inferiority, and a desire to imitate.

I do not know whether it was his aristocratic attitude which led to his nationalist conviction, or whether the process was the reverse. But his bearing was one which had a deep effect on me. He was, for me, the first self-conscious proud Jew who approached his nationalist self through the general human point of view, and did not plead for us on the basis of our historic achievements. "Suppose we are just an ordinary people," he said. "Suppose we gave the world no rich heritage? Have we for that reason the less a right to live? Must we for that reason be the plaything of the lowest instincts of the peoples? Must we pay by exceptional achievement for the ordinary right to live?"

This sort of argument was new to me. It had been my custom to justify our existence on the basis of the greatness of our fathers, the historic achievements of the past. When I heard this man defend our existence without reference to the past, I felt that we had been enriched. I did not have to pay for my present with my past. The past remained my own, a sort of capital reserve not to be used for ordinary daily purposes.

My new comrades had heard from the group in Minsk that I was a good speaker, useful for propaganda purposes. Leon Lozinsky invited me to the house of his fiancée, the daughter of his uncle Hezie Lozinsky. Some fifty young people were assembled there—in secret, of course. Lozinsky himself was the first speaker, and I was to follow. I liked Lozinsky's approach to the question enormously, but I could not at once reorientate my own. I clung for the time being to my old method, a pride in past achievement and a sort of new interpretation of the meaning of a "Chosen People." In such a speech it is easy to bring to bear passion and temperament, and I brought to bear all that I had. Within the first couple of minutes I felt that I had established my contact with the audience. I felt secure, certain of myself. I was in control of my thoughts, my tongue, and my listeners. I spoke for perhaps an hour; and then I sat down, feeling as a hero feels after he has achieved a great victory in the lists.

The first one to congratulate me was Lozinsky. But his radiant face conveyed more gratitude than did his words. Among the many who came to thank me there was a young girl with a pleasant smile and a pair of winning eyes. When she took my hand and murmured some words of thanks, I was aware of a sudden and involuntary interest. I could not, at the moment, make out what it was that affected me. I had met pretty girls often enough, I had pressed their hands

and felt the returning pressure; but the shock that went through me now was unique. I knew instinctively that this handshake was not going to be only one among the hundreds of others I had experienced. There are moments in our lives that are singled out for particular emphasis. The currents of life run by us—or perhaps we run by them—and suddenly there is a strange suspension in their motion: time stands still for a moment and the world has ceased to exist. Then we feel: This is *my* moment; this is the first link in the chain of my destiny. . . . It is as though Mother Time had withdrawn one drop from her infinite ocean and bestowed it upon you: "This drop is for you and for no one else." This was the strange feeling that came over me when the young girl took my hand and thanked me. I wanted to say something friendly to her, in return for her thanks. But my tongue would not move. At last I managed to get out: "I saw you in the audience."

And it was the truth. I had seen her before she came to thank me. Because of short-sightedness in my right eye, I was in the habit of addressing myself more to the left half of my audience. That habit I have kept till now. And more than once listeners who have sat in the right half of the audience have asked me why I ignore them and do not throw them a single look. Another habit that I have is to choose some centre of attention in my audience—frequently only one person—and through that point to establish my contact with the whole body. This happens involuntarily. I do not seek the point; it seeks me out, emerges from the sea of faces, and holds my attention. And it so happened that when I delivered my first address in Bobrusk the face of this pretty girl had been my centre of concentration. Her name was Anna Lozinsky, and she was the sister of my comrade Leon.

I passed the first few weeks in Bobrusk exclusively in Zionist work. And then I entered on my military duties. As a volunteer I had special privileges. I was not required to live in the barracks along with the other soldiers. But in exchange for this I had to feed and clothe myself at my own expense. I lived in the city of Bobrusk proper; the barracks were in the fortress. Every day I had to report for service at six o'clock in the morning, and the punishment for lateness was severe. The official title of a volunteer was "Barin" —something above the ordinary Mr. and below the dignity of an officer. As my teacher—in Russian *diadka*, or uncle— I received a corporal, who gave me first instructions in how to carry and manipulate a rifle, how to stand at attention, and how to salute the higher and the lower officers. I mastered the ritual in a few days. My teacher and my sergeant were proud of me. And no wonder. I was the only one in my company of several hundred soldiers with a secondary-school education. The others were all of them peasants, mostly from the far interior, Pensa Gubernia, and one did not need a knowledge of the higher mathematics to achieve distinction among them. Any one who had gone through the first classes of an elementary school—which my fellow-soldiers had not —would have made the impression of a positive genius.

I had read a great deal about the peasant of Great Russia, and I expected to meet in the barracks plain, simple illiterates. I knew that ninety per cent. of the population of interior Russia did not know one letter from another. But I was astounded when I came face to face with that element for the first time. It was primitiveness personified: people to whom the word culture has absolutely no application. The civilization of our times had not even blown upon them. Our peasants of White Russia, too, belonged to a low level of

education and civilization, but as compared with his brothers of Pensa he was a polished modern. I am relating a simple fact when I state that it took us weeks to make these recruits understand which was their right and which their left hand. And many of them could not grasp the abstraction of right and left: we had to put a wisp of straw round their left legs, and a wisp of hay round their right legs, and call out, during the march: "Hay! Straw! Hay! Straw!" instead of "Left! Right!" And even this was sometimes too complicated for them.

It took them weeks to learn the names of the various parts of the rifle, and of their ammunition. But it was when we came to the purely theoretical ideas that every soldier had to master, that our real tribulations began. The Russian soldier had to know the names and the titles of the members of the Imperial family. Our recruits never mastered the list; the family was too big. The plainest regulations, such as those that governed the salute, or the to-and-fro walk of the sentinel, were too complicated for them. The sergeant who taught them was driven frantic; he perspired; he handed out blows right and left. The recruits sat with a look of idiotic and helpless concentration on their faces, praying fervently and silently for the lecture to come to an end.

To these soldiers one of the officers would deliver, every day, a stereotyped lecture. There were set questions and answers.

Officer: "What is a soldier?"

Soldiers: "A soldier is one who defends the fatherland from external and internal enemies."

Officer: "Who is the external enemy?"

Soldiers: "The Turks, the Hottentots, the Bashibazouks."

Officer: "Who is the internal enemy?"

Soldiers: "The Socialists."

It was told that many officers used to add, to the last answer: "And the Jews." But I never heard it myself.

In the second month of my service I was appointed the teacher for my company. I must confess that I was not at all delighted with my promotion. My sergeant commanded me to be severe to the point of harshness. I was to remember, he said, that I was teaching not little children, but grown-up soldiers: and Pensaites, at that—famous all over the world for their thick skulls, into which no idea could penetrate unless assisted by blows. The sergeant assigned one soldier, during the first few weeks, to report to him whether I had been too lenient with my pupils. I never once lifted my hand against a soldier. I simply could not bring myself to do it. And yet the sergeant forgave me my criminal complacency, because it soon become evident that my pupils, without blows, were making more rapid progress than the pupils of my colleagues, with blows. I saw very soon that I had somewhat exaggerated, under the first shocking impression, the incapacity of these soldiers. True, they were extraordinarily ignorant; their ideas were primitive and narrow; but under that pachydermous primitiveness I often discovered a sharp if savage intelligence, and a childlike eagerness to learn, to know, to understand something. The gross brutality of the officers, and particularly of the sergeants, had called forth their peasant obstinacy. In response to the abuse and the blows that rained upon them, they retreated into an inner fastness. It was almost deliberate: "You want to teach us? We refuse. You make life hard for us? We won't make it any easier for you." I was a stranger to these soldiers, and I approached them with the civility of a stranger. They saw at once that I was not going to domineer. And I was not at all anxious to impress them with the fact that I

occupied a rank superior to theirs. They paid me back in my own coin—with civility and friendliness. They were no longer afraid to ask questions; and I tried hard to answer them in their own language of monosyllabic ideas.

Often I would come even during free hours to spend some time with my Pensa pupils. They would tell me stories of their home-life; and their eyes would light up with passion and regret when they talked of their fields and forests, of their relatives and sweethearts. The daily instillation of patriotism, the lesson that they were now the defenders of the throne against the Turks, the Bashibazouks, the Socialists, etc., could not drive from their hearts their deep homesickness. They counted each day a step nearer to the return. Many of them used to cut the passing weeks into the hard wooden trestles on which they slept—so many weeks gone, so many weeks to go. Many of them had never seen a Jew, and had no idea what one looked liked. I was the first with whom any of them got more intimately acquainted. In a simple, childlike way they expressed their astonishment that they should always have been taught to hate Jews. For the Jew was a legend to them, a dark figure in a story, a bogey to be avoided. But that legend was old, and its roots were deep. And when they met a Jew who did not fit into the legend they looked for the explanation not in the legend, but in the Jew.

I became deeply interested in this authentic type of Great Russian peasant. I had, of course, to be very careful in my conversations. Many things that I would have liked to ask it was impossible to touch on: the barracks was not the place. I avoided with the greatest care the question of religion, and the question of their patriotism. I had a consistent impression: I saw before me human dough, which could be kneaded into any form. But the yeast that was poured into that

dough was prepared by the government, and it contained a heavy admixture of poison.

I have already mentioned Captain Maximov, of the Sixth Company. On the drill-ground Maximov was severe and stern. But it was a pose. Every one knew that Captain Maximov never slapped a soldier. Every one also knew that Captain Maximov did not drink; and an officer who did not get drunk regularly and frequently was as rare as a white crow. Strangest of all, Captain Maximov was not an anti-Semite. He never used the word "Zhid"—the Russian equivalent of "Sheeney." And he conducted himself toward the Jewish soldiers in his company with marked friendliness. If a Jewish soldier was ill-treated by a sergeant or corporal, he knew that he could appeal for justice to Captain Maximov. In brief, Maximov was an enigma among officers: he did not slap, he did not drink, he did not swear at the Jews. His nickname was: "Maximov the half-Jew." It suited his appearance no less than his character, for though his face was not specifically Jewish, it was more nearly Jewish than Russian.

Maximov was particularly friendly toward me. He did not hesitate to tell the sergeant, in my presence, to remember that I was a privileged soldier, and to go easy on fatigues. I began to feel that Maximov's friendliness was not of the ordinary kind; behind it was something strange and intimate, something that was not born of our relationship as officer and soldier, but came of a common factor. This feeling of mine did not deceive me. But I did not permit it to intrude itself on our relation. I continued to be exact and cheerful in the performance of my duties. I would not exploit the friendliness of my chief.

The friendliness of Maximov developed into something

like friendship. He began to invite me to his private quarters. He introduced me to his family. I felt that I was faced with a secret that was steadily approaching revelation. Frequently I would turn the conversation toward the Jews, and complained of the oppressions which they had to suffer. And Maximov always expressed warm sympathy for our condition, and tried to comfort me; we must be patient, the times would surely change. Had we not just had Alexander the Second? Perhaps another liberator would soon come again. I tried in various ways to provoke Maximov to speak more freely. I wanted him to uncover his secret of his own accord. For it became clearer and clearer, from his behaviour, from his words of comfort, that there was a secret in him. I felt from his voice that when he comforted me, he also comforted himself, as though he were a partner to my pain. Of the something Jewish in him I was quite certain: but I could not know whether it was a baptized Jew—baptized either by his parents or of his own free will—or a descendant of a Cantonist. It was not a matter of pure curiosity with me. My interest went deeper. This man carried within him a wounded soul, and that soul was perhaps of the same substance as mine. I did not let up in my pursuit. My conversations with him became more and more provocative.

Then, one evening, I turned the conversation from the general topic of Jewish oppression to stories of the Cantonists, those Jewish child-victims of the black era of Nicholas the First. And a scene passed between us that I shall never forget. I was reminded of that biblical scene in which Joseph could no longer restrain himself and discovered himself to his brothers. Maximov suddenly embraced me and kissed me. He confessed himself. Not he had been a Cantonist, but his father. After his "free" conversion to Christianity, his father had worked himself up to high rank.

Shortly before his death he called in his son and left him a spiritual heritage in a few words: he was always to love Jews. Captain Maximov was born a Christian, the son of a Jewish convert and a Christian mother. He knew nothing at all about Judaism, but he had always held sacred his father's testament. And he had worked out a special interpretation of that testament. His father had told him to love Jews. He could not love all Jews, for he had already drawn too much suspicion on himself. Was he not called, among people who did not know his origin, Maximov the half-Jew? He therefore sought out one among his Jewish soldiers toward whom he practised the last commandment of his father. He added, at the end: "I am happy that this time God sent me a Jew who is a 'privileged' soldier, and whom I can invite openly to my home." But he asked me not to mention his secret to any one. He was not ashamed of his origin, but he held his father's testament to be something too holy to be spoken of by others. The friendship between Maximov and me became firmer and more intimate. We were bound to each other by our grandfathers.

I discovered later that in our regiment there were two other Cantonists, both of them officers of high rank; and they too bore themselves with sympathy and friendliness toward the Jewish soldiers. But as against these there were two Jewish officers who had been baptized of their own free will —and of all the officers they were the most brutal in their treatment of the Jews. This is the difference between the innocent children of apostates, and apostates proper. The former enclose within themselves a deep tragedy, and they touch our sympathy and affection; the latter embody a principle of treachery, and they hate and are hated.

Of the two apostate Jews one was called Ass. He had studied at one time in the Vilna Rabbinic school. He fell

through in the middle of the course; whereupon he was baptized and entered a military school. Ass was a typical apostate. He was angry with himself, and angry with his origin, which his fellow officers never permitted him to forget. He vented his anger on the Jewish soldiers under his command. He never used any other word for them than "Zhid," and he never passed up a single opportunity to hurt their Jewish feelings. He sought, obscurely, revenge for his own lowness, and tried to dull the feeling of treachery by an excess of cruelty. Years later I read in Schedrin-Soltikov's *Letters to an Aunt* a profound study of an apostate who, tormented by his conscience, seeks to flee from himself, and is condemned for ever to wear a mask to hide his true self from the gaze of others. During the day the mask served his purpose. But what—asks the artist—was the apostate to do in the night? The condition of the apostate is hateful in his waking moments, but in his dreams it becomes horrible. For all his dreams are nightmares. When I read that sketch there rose again before me the picture of the apostate officer, Ass—a hateful and repellent picture.

The majority of the Jewish soldiers did not eat with their comrades. The Jewish community of Bobrusk maintained for them a special kosher kitchen. The government gave its permission on the ground that piety was good in a soldier, and confirmed the instinct of discipline. The apostate Ass carried on a continuous campaign against the kosher kitchen. He argued that it was dangerous, because it bound the Jewish soldier closer to the Jewish religion, which was a bad thing for a good soldier. The failure of his campaign he revenged on individual Jewish soldiers. On one occasion he ordered some Russians to hold down a Jewish soldier and pour lard down his throat. This soldier happened to be par-

ticularly pious, and the incident took place one week before he ended his service of four years and eight months. During all that period he had not permitted a piece of any but kosher food to pass his lips. Ass was determined to see that record broken.

Ass disliked me specially. My education was superior to his, and I had the impudence to be proud of my Jewishness. He saw in this a deliberate insult to him, the apostate. But he could do nothing; for had he tried to punish me in the line of duty, he would have had to face Maximov. He therefore did his best to annoy me when he happened to meet me in the city—and especially if I happened to be with girl friends. He insisted that I had not saluted him properly, and he compelled me to repeat the salute several times. One winter's day he saw me skating on the lake in the company of some girls. He stopped me and asked whether I had a written permit from my captain. I had to answer that I had not. I was compelled to take off my skates and leave. He hung around while I undid the skates, hoping, I think, to have me ask *his* permission. But I would not ask any favours of an apostate. I asked the girls to wait for me until I could return from the barracks with a permit. On my return he saw me again, but could do nothing. But from time to time I caught a bitter look from him.

At that time my elder sister Hannah Braine fell very ill and had to be taken to the hospital in Minsk. My father and mother left Swislowitz and stayed at my sister's bedside day and night. Hannah Braine was beloved of all of us. She had inherited my mother's piety and gentleness, and she added to it an ability which commanded our respect, for she conducted a large general store almost single-handed. I received a letter from my father with the news that Hannah Braine had asked me to come to her. I obtained a week's

furlough. I found my sister sinking fast. But she was still able to speak, and she asked me repeatedly to promise her that I would marry Zire Braine Astrakhan of Beresin, my second childhood love. My sister lingered on, and my furlough came to an end. I had to leave her. But a messenger to the train brought me the news of her death.

As a soldier I was forbidden to speak at public mass-meetings. I therefore met Leon Lozinsky and his sister Anna less frequently than before. But I used to meet almost daily Anna's younger sister, Manya. The Lozinskys had a provision-store in the Bobrusk fortress, and Manya was the manager. I would go in there almost every day and spend some time with her. Manya knew that I did not come for her sake. But she received me with all friendliness. Anna came to the store at rare intervals. But it was pleasant at least to be able to speak with her sister. I felt vaguely that if I looked lovingly enough at Manya, some of my glances would carry over in the evening to Anna. The truth is, I would never have dared to look so affectionately at Anna herself. But I was quite sure that the sister would not mind if my looks were really intended for some one else; they at least remained in the family. I was young, perhaps in this respect younger than my years. Something was happening in me which had never happened before. But I was not of the conquering type. Anna, too, was reserved and shy. And so we found our way to each other slowly, and by hidden and devious routes. It seems that what we really needed was a *shadchan*—an old-fashioned Jewish marriage broker. I chose as the *shadchan* Manya, the younger sister. I may have been mistaken. The right *shadchan* might have been her older brother, Leon, with whom I had formed a friendship before I met Anna. But who can plan the meeting of an Adam and Eve, and who knows when the first spark is lit?

Four months passed swiftly. I was considered a first-class soldier. I was a good shot, and among the best gymnasts. I was strongly built, muscular, and able to give a good account of myself when necessary. The soldiers respected me primarily for my physical strength—the first object of respect in any army.

Shortly before we left for the summer manoeuvres, we received a visit from General Afrosimov, of Minsk, commander of the Thirtieth Division, of which we formed a part. General Afrosimov was known in Minsk as a martinet. He was mild toward the rank and file, but severe with officers—and particularly with young officers, who had just been hatched and who wore their brand-new uniforms with all the haughtiness of first possession. He was very fond of stopping them in the street, in the presence of a crowd. He would examine them from head to foot, and from every side. He would put questions to them and correct their answers. He wanted to impress them with the fact that they too had their superiors, and that even an officer's pride has its limits. Afrosimov's visit was unannounced. He appeared suddenly on the field, in the midst of target-practice. The command was given to keep our rifles at the fire, but to cease firing, and the general walked down the line. In the Russian army, as in every other, the firing was done from the right shoulder, with the fingers of the right hand at the trigger. But I was so short-sighted in my right eye that I always fired from the left shoulder, and had the fingers of my left hand on the trigger. The general suddenly stopped. He saw two rifles very close together, and two rifles very wide apart. The spectacle was extraordinary to him. He asked angrily what this meant. The company commander explained respectfully that I could not use my right eye. The general was not satisfied. He would permit no exceptions—not even to

volunteers. The plain soldier was not permitted, in the Russian army, to wear glasses. I was ordered out of the line and back to barracks. In a few days I was in the military hospital, where, on the orders of the general, I was minutely examined. I might have been faking short-sightedness: he could not know how much I had paid to have my short-sightedness overlooked. In two weeks I was declared unfit for military duty and honourably discharged. I was free—and no man had to serve in my place.

CHAPTER XIII

EDEN AND TIMBER

I CANNOT say whether I was happy or unhappy with my unexpected release. The prospect of spending several months in the field, making long marches and carrying on mimic war, had not tempted me. The fact that I had been declared unfit to be a soldier, either in peace or war, did not depress me. I was not worried about my short-sightedness: I had gone through my studies without feeling it a handicap. I should, for every reason, have rejoiced in the unexpected gift of eight months. I had nothing more to seek in Bobrusk. But the prospect of leaving the city depressed me profoundly. And I could not understand why I already felt, even before I was gone, strange qualms of homesickness. But it was not the barracks that I regretted; nor even my activity in the Chibath Zion, though I made fine friendships in the movement.

I repeat again that I had nothing to seek in Bobrusk. The truth was that I had already found that which every man, consciously or unconsciously, seeks in life. There is an ancient Oriental-Jewish interpretation of the biblical story of Adam and Eve. God took a rib from Adam, and with it created Eve. All the days of his life Adam seeks what he has lost. He will make it good when he finds *his* Eve, she who was created for him in heaven. But seldom does Adam find his own rib. As a rule it is the rib of another—hence most

of our sufferings. Men have mixed up their ribs, and the Eves are all in confusion. There are pairs, but not predestined, original pairs. And for this reason—the old story tells—the proper pairing of a man and woman is as difficult as the dividing of the Red Sea. As the dividing of the Red Sea called for a miracle, so only a miracle can bring together Adam and his right Eve: little hope for Adam and little consolation for Eve.

I do not know whether I knew of this ancient interpretation at that time; but I knew that I had found what I had lost, and that Anna Lozinsky was my destined bride. It was my own secret, which I felt in all the fibres of my being. Anna carried the same secret within her, and we became its common owner. We repeated it to each other ten times every day when we met by chance, and it was always fresh in the telling. We repeated it more often in the evenings, when we went walking in green fields and under trees in blossom, along paths that led far, far from the city. We were certain beyond all telling that the secret had hit upon the truth, for both of us. What better proof could we have sought than the friendly, confirming light of the moon and stars? The ripening wheat in the fields nodded in like confirmation: it agreed to the match. We were both of the same age—how could it be otherwise? For little time could have passed between the hour when Adam was created and God took the rib from him to make his Eve. Anna was not as closely read in the Bible as I was, and she spoke to me more directly. But I found it impossible to speak of my love so simply. All the biblical pictures and stories that had been cut into the tables of my mind in childhood now rose before me; and when I wanted to speak, the verses of the Bible danced on my lips. The heroes of the pictures and stories took on flesh and blood. And it seemed to me that all I had

learned, all that I had drawn into me, no longer belonged to me. It belonged to Anna, for whom I had waited till now, whom I had sought without knowing I sought her. Often it seemed to me, in the moments when all my soul was flooded with happiness, that my life till then had been a dream. I had just been admitted to God's world, I had opened my eyes for the first time, and I now saw, for the first time, its light and the glory. And often I even thought that I was surely the first man, Adam, and Anna was the first woman, Eve. We were, then, in Paradise, and I was waiting for Eve to tear the apple from the tree and share it with me. I wanted only one change in the legend: I wanted no snake to come between us. In brief, I lived my first love according to precept: as it is written in the Song of Songs and described, in more watery form, in modern books.

And our love would have run a smooth and happy course if, into that early paradise, there had not come the petty calculations and commonplace interference of an older and more corrupt world. Anna and I, the two chief characters in the fable, were happy. And Anna's older brother Leon, my most intimate friend, was content with the bond between me and his sister. But Anna's mother, the widow Lozinsky, was opposed from the first. As a mother, and still more as a widowed mother, she thought of the practical outcome, and she wanted for her daughter a man who was fully prepared, a man with an income. And I was not such a man. From her point of view she may have been right. I was still a boy—true, a promising boy—and with every likelihood that I would make good if I once found the right path. But a practical mother cannot operate with *ifs*. And Anna's mother was practical. Even Leon, though he liked the idea of having me as his brother-in-law, was worried, and he began to introduce new subjects into our conversations: my plans, my

prospects—practical things in no wise related to the Song of Songs. Yes, even he, the Chovev Zion, who believed that an entire disinherited people could create a new life for itself if it only had the will, became exceedingly practical when it came to the question of the individual, that is to say, of me, his most intimate friend. "In talking to the individual," he said, "you have to drop all pretty phrases and return to plain prose."

I was angered as well as hurt. I was suddenly confronted with a new world of petty worries of whose existence I had had no suspicion. I had been, till then, my father's son, lacking nothing that I desired. If I had thought of the future, it was in loftier terms. I had believed that life was to be lived, and practical questions would answer themselves. And now the rulers of my destiny asked me exactly how I pictured my future life. How would I live—and on what?

Of course I could give only the most evasive answers. On one occasion, when Leon had gone deep into such a discussion, I answered:

"What is it that you fear? You see me in front of you, alive and willing. I lack nothing, I am able. All that I will win in this life will belong to Anna—even if I should have to hunger for it."

It was the answer of a child, an expression of helplessness. Leon did not fail to make merry over my reply. "It's sweet of you," he said, "to be ready to hunger for Anna. But I know Anna to be a good-hearted child, and I don't think she will be happy with a hungry husband. Take my advice as that of your best friend: see to it that there shall be enough not only for Anna, but for you too."

These discussions were always conducted on the assumption that I would still cling to my plan to study abroad. And in fact I had not yet given it up. It looked as though

there would have to be a preliminary wait of five years, until I had finished my studies. And after that Anna and I could begin to talk of practical things. I saw at once that neither Anna's mother nor even her brother Leon would stand for this. I began to look for new approaches to my problem, and the course that my father had so long proposed in vain now became my only recourse. I determined, of my own free will, to enter his business. The path I thus chose was not my own. My instincts were opposed to it. But it was a shorter path to practical results.

I wanted to break down the barrier between Anna and myself, and I brought the first sacrifice. Out of faithfulness to Eve, Adam becomes unfaithful to himself. My dream of study in western Europe had been bound up with my dreams of the Jewish national movement. I wanted complete instruction in everything that had to do with Judaism, in order that I might be fully equipped to serve the cause of my people, whether as a writer or as a political worker. I saw at once that as a merchant I could not dream of realizing this ideal. True, I might still remain a member of the Chibath Zion; from time to time I might even take up the pen in its behalf. But I knew too well that most of my energies would be absorbed by business. I saw all this, and made my decision nevertheless. I was prepared to become the ordinary Maskil, the educated Jewish merchant whose life was devoted to himself and no one else—the type I had so often and so bitterly criticized in my addresses.

My parents knew that I was in love, and they treated the whole subject with a delicacy that awoke my deepest gratitude. When I declared that I had decided to become a merchant, they did not even ask me why I had so suddenly changed my views. My father took me into his business at

once. No mention was made of the match between Anna and me. In my father's business I was not tied down to any routine. I was able to study in my own way all the operations of the forest timber-trade. And because my time was my own, I was able to go down to Bobrusk two or three times a week to meet Anna. But our meetings no longer took place in her home. We met in the house of a cousin of hers, Anna Rosenblum. Anna Rosenblum was one of the most beautiful and most intelligent Jewish girls in Bobrusk. She was widely read in Russian literature, both the classic and the new, and her intellectual sympathies drove her strongly toward the Socialist movement. She herself had already passed through her first love, which had come to nothing because of the opposition of her parents. She could therefore sympathize with her cousin and me, and she did all that lay in her power to strengthen us. I remained a close friend of Anna Rosenblum's until her untimely death at the time of the second Russian revolution.

Thus passed the late summer months, and the autumn of 1887, and the winter of 1887-1888. The merchants with whom I came in constant contact did not interest me. They were commonplace men, in the full sense of the word. Their educational level was very low, and I felt myself a stranger among them. The winter was the hardest period, for by that time I knew that I would never be a merchant. I would not have the strength to carry it through to the end. I would not be able to break myself in and to suppress the ever-constant desire to study, to read, and to write. But I dared not come out into the open. I could not tell my parents that all their efforts and all my efforts had been in vain. And I was afraid to return to my original plan of studying abroad, because that meant renouncing Anna. I carried a lie around within me, and I did not reveal my suffering either

to my parents or to Anna. And though Anna had observed the change in me and knew that I was worried and confused, I obstinately clung to my lie. I was still going to be a merchant.

That first sacrifice which I had brought to my love had been a false one, and I did not know how dearly I would pay for it. Anna loved me, but she had not the courage to strengthen me against myself and bid me not to yield. When I asked her whether she was prepared to wait for me five or six years, she gave me an answer which was neither yes nor no: she was too completely under the influence of her mother. She was faithful as a daughter and as a sweetheart in equal measure, and by character she was born more to suffer than to act.

I passed the long evenings at home writing: letters to Anna and Hebrew poems. The letters I would deliver myself, and the poems, which were mostly to her, I would read to her in Russian translation. But my own poems did not suffice for me. I sought help in the poems of Heine, also in a Russian translation. I believe that the poems of Heine made a stronger impression on her than mine, in spite of the fact that they had not been written expressly for her.

During that winter I had frequent occasion to visit Minsk on business. In Minsk I spent my evenings very differently. I wrote no Hebrew poems there, but on the contrary, I learned to play cards. I should mention, in passing, that card-playing had eaten into the gilded Jewish youth of Russia like a deep-seated disease. The games were all games of chance, and they frequently lasted through the entire night; the players had reached a point where they no longer hesitated at tricks and meannesses that sometimes bordered on the criminal. My business affairs drew me into the circle of the wealthy youth, and I began to spend my evenings

and nights with them in the same pursuit. I felt myself sinking deeper and deeper. I already saw the bottom of the abyss. After every session I would take an oath to myself not to return to my weakness. I would invoke the image of my pious and God-fearing mother, of my stern and upright father, and of my Anna, whom I loved and who loved me with the pure love of a child. But I was helpless. The next evening I would break my oath—again with the firm intention of making this the last time. I did not understand until years later how grave the danger had been. I might have destroyed my soul, as countless young Jews destroyed theirs, at the card-tables. Till this day I do not quite understand how I saved myself. There is an old legend that tells that when Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he saw suddenly the picture of his father, Jacob. Evil pulled him in one direction, and the image of his father pulled him in the other, and Jacob's image triumphed. Perhaps I too was saved by my sacred images.

I had lost my spiritual balance. The ground under my feet was unstable, and I could not find the right path. And with my balance I had also lost my self-respect. The dreams of my childhood and boyhood, that I should come to the rescue of my unhappy people, were now covered as with a mist; I could hardly catch a glimpse of them. The strengthening spirit which had been with me from the first chapter of Genesis till the last chapter of the Prophets was slowly withdrawing from me, and I was terrified by the prospect of becoming one of the gilded youth of Minsk, who carried nothing in their hearts, for whom life and the world were a market-place for pleasures, and who gave up all their days to the sickening chase of empty merriment and the satisfaction of commonplace passions.

I saved myself, I repeat—but I do not know how. When the turning-point came, I understood that only heroic measures could prevent a relapse. I understood too that I owed my almost complete moral breakdown to my false way of living, in which the authentic self in me had not been permitted to control me. I had to return to myself, listen once again to the voice of my own conscience, and become master of myself; thought and deed had to become harmonious; there had to be a correspondence between my ideal and my daily life. And I understood all at once that my original resolution to study abroad had also contained a compromise: yes, I had not the courage to shake myself free of my old habits, I had not the strength to carry out an inner revolution and approach my ideal by the short and direct route, which, for instance, had been traversed by the first student pioneers. Instead of that, I was merely walking round my ideal, finding excuses for myself. And I said: "If you are really a Chovev Zion, be one wholly, without evasions and pretences. Go out and become a pioneer; take this bitter life upon you, sow, plant, reap; do not hide behind excuses; do not pretend that you wish to be more useful to your people. No one is more useful than the pioneer."

I now saw in front of me the road that led to Palestine. At first I entrusted my new plan only to Anna and her brother Leon. Anna had to know, of course, from the beginning. And Leon was told because from him I expected moral support. When I revealed the plan to Anna, she was clearly frightened. Leon did give me his support—but not in my capacity of his future brother-in-law. This was not his way of expressing himself, but it was clear enough in all his bearing. I became dearer to him as a comrade, but at the expense of my status as the future husband of his sister. He would have been proud to see me one of the

pioneers; he believed, too, that I had the physique and the general abilities that would enable me to succeed. But he could not bind up with my destiny that of his sister, his orphaned sister, for whom he, as the oldest brother, bore the chief responsibility.

It was a difficult task that faced me with Anna. She believed me to be earnest, and she sympathized deeply with my ideals. But she could not imagine me in the rôle of a colonist, ploughing the fields, planting trees, and leading a primitive life. At first she tried to argue it out with me. Failing to move me, she declared that my new intention threatened our lives with shipwreck. She would be prepared to go with me to the end of the world, but she was bound to her mother. Against her will she could not act. She had held out long enough for my sake, and of late, that is, since I had become a merchant, her mother had even softened a little. Then, overcoming her shyness, she confessed that she had come to love me chiefly because of my gifts as a speaker, and she believed that with my tongue and my intellect I would render better service to my people than with my hands. . . . And there was no way, was there, of delivering speeches while following the plough? I, for my part, did all I could to convince her that the times were such that a pair of hands was more important than the most skilful tongue. But if I convinced her at all, it was again through the skill not of my hands, but of my tongue: the more I succeeded in convincing her, the more I was failing in effect. Anna was deeply Jewish, and as a daughter of her people she loved the voice of Jacob more than the hands of Esau.

When I saw that my own words were insufficient, I called to my aid my beloved books. I read with her the Prophets, and, more particularly, the Song of Songs and Ruth, those two little books from which the magic odour of the Pales-

tinian soil goes up with elemental power. I also read with her Mapu's *Love of Zion.* But nothing helped. The marvellous towers that I built up in the evenings crumbled in the hard daylight of her mother's common sense. The moods of the night evaporated like dew in the hard, dry rays of the morning sun.

But I still stood firm. The picture was clear before me. I was a pioneer, one of a band of enthusiastic comrades. I ploughed the fields, I planted, I sowed. The grain ripened in the fields, the fruit on the trees. I cut and harvested the grain, I gathered the grapes into the cellar. Within a year or two I was back in Bobrusk, and I could say to Anna: "Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me. . . . Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us go up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth." Then Anna would understand me better and a new life would begin for both of us. But the main thing was that Anna should not weaken; she should have strength to wait.

I laid my new resolve before my parents, and again they treated it with rare delicacy. They only asked me to think again and again before I put my resolve into execution. Inwardly, my mother even sympathized with me. Had she not dedicated her inmost dreams and her most secret prayers to the Messianic idea? How could she have stood in the way when her own son was preparing to go to Palestine? She dreamed of countless hosts of young Jews seized suddenly with the fever of the ideal, streaming toward Palestine, and toward the sacred city of Jerusalem, in which the divine glory receives the prayers of the Jews when they turn their faces to the East. Before long the rumour spread through Swislowitz and Bobrusk that I was going to Palestine, and

I was lifted to a new level among my friends and comrades. I had at last returned to myself, and I was again on the right path.

In Minsk, which I continued to visit frequently, I became acquainted with Nachman Syrkin, a young man of about the same age as myself. We were related by marriage. My older brother, Meyer, had married a cousin of his, also a Syrkin, of Minsk. The parents of Nachman Syrkin lived in Minsk, and Nachman himself already had an interesting past. First, he had been expelled from the gymnasium of Mohilev, not for lack of ability, but for impudence against the principal. But this was not a personal clash. The principal made a remark which was directed against the Jewishness of Syrkin, and Syrkin's reply was haughty and defiant. Second, Syrkin had already passed some time in London, with a troupe of Jewish actors. He had even manufactured some dramas for the Yiddish theatre. I do not know what success his pieces met with, but they sufficed to cover him with the halo of a young man who knew the great world.

I shall have occasion to speak again of Nachman Syrkin, who played an important rôle in the Jewish national movement. Here I ought to mention that already in 1888 Syrkin was seeking the synthesis of his two ideals—Jewish nationalism and Socialism. At the time I met him he spoke both as a fiery Socialist and as an ardent Jewish nationalist. He already defended, at that time, the point of view which subsequently became the philosophy of his party; not only was nationalism a necessary and logical corollary of Socialism, but Socialism necessarily and logically led to nationalism, while true Jewish nationalism, as preached by the ancient prophets, necessarily led to Socialism.

Later, when we were students together in Berlin, Syrkin and I shared a room for some time. His gifts were only

slightly above the commonplace, but he possessed an astounding industriousness. His personal needs were so modest that he could be said to be living on the absolute minimum possible to a civilized man. He could have competed, in this respect, with the famous Rabbi Chanina, who used to manage on a pot of carobs from one Saturday night to the next. But, as against this, I have seldom met a Jew with the same nationalist daring and the same vast national appetite as Syrkin. This man who lived cheerfully on the absolute human minimum was in his nationalism content with nothing less than the maximum.

I became acquainted in Minsk, at that time, with another rising star in the Jewish nationalist movement—Menachem Mendel Ussishkin, who today, after nearly half a century of service, is still one of its leading and most influential protagonists. Of him too I shall speak later at some length, for we worked together in the movement for several decades. Here I shall give only an introductory sketch of the man. In contrast to Syrkin, Ussishkin never racked his brains for syntheses, since he was never aware of antitheses. His conviction of the rightness of his views was never troubled by a single doubt, and he never knew the spiritual torment of an inner competition between Jewish nationalism and any other ideal. Ussishkin did not know the meaning of compromise. As a student in the Moscow Realschule, from which he graduated in the late seventies, he chose his friends only among Russians, for the Jewish students were all from assimilated homes. Even as a young man Ussishkin preferred a complete non-Jew to a half-Jew. He disliked a Jew of shreds and patches, for he himself was a human monolith. Later this singular unity of his expressed itself in his fight against Yiddish. He formulated his view in a slogan: Either Hebrew or Russian.

Ussishkin was an only child, and all his days he behaved in the movement like a spoiled son. Whenever he was compelled to take second place, he so manoeuvred things that the second place became the most important. But he served the movement with chivalrous loyalty from the first moment on. No one has ever cast a shadow of suspicion on Ussishkin's complete devotion to his ideal. Ussishkin was one of the founders of the Moscow "Sons of Zion," which was regarded as the intellectual centre of the Jewish student youth. The other founders were Jacob Mazoh and Yechiel Tschlenow. The latter was, during the World War and during the two years preceding it, the associate president of the World Zionist Organization. Ussishkin created a profound impression on me at our very first meeting. I knew at once that this was no ordinary man. His appearance was impressive: he was strongly built, with handsome features, and a bearing which expressed the will to command: something Napoleonic, purposeful, and obdurate; his glance was direct and steady. Such was the young man with whom I worked, later, for several decades, often in a parallel sense, and more often at a sharp angle with him.

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE WAY TO PALESTINE

My preparations for the journey to Palestine absorbed two months. It took several weeks before I could obtain my passport. And then there were the personal farewells with my numerous family in Minsk and Bobrusk, and the farewell meetings arranged in my honour by the Chibath Zion groups of these cities. As is usual in such cases, the evenings were filled with fiery speeches and magniloquent phrases in which I was extolled as the hero of the day and an inspiring example to the Jewish youth. I felt doubly uncomfortable under this torrent of exaggerated praise, for I knew that if it had not been for my unfortunate love-affair, I would have carried out my original plan; I would have obtained a visa not for Jaffa but for Berlin. But I had to sit silent and accept the compliments of my comrades as if I were impelled toward Palestine by purely Zionist motives, untouched by personal complications.

Neither my father nor my older brother Meyer was home at that time; they were in Ekaterinoslav on a long business stay. My leave-taking from my mother and my immediate family went off normally. My mother begged me to write frequently and to fill my letters with details of the life in Palestine. And she gave me the blessings of a pious Jewish mother for whom Palestine is all that is holiest and dearest.

My leave-taking from Bobrusk was darker. My heart told me that I ran a great risk with Anna. But the road ran

forward now—especially after all these fiery farewell speeches. I left Bobrusk by railroad for Homel, and from Homel proceeded by boat to Kiev. The second part of the trip, first on the Saj and then on Grandfather Dnieper, was a glorious experience. I began to understand why Gogol had dedicated his loveliest poetic prose to the Dnieper, why this river had played the foremost rôle in the old heroic stories of Russia, and why it had received the name of the Jordan of Russia. In this river the Russians had first been baptized when they left the old gods for Christ. The waters of the Dnieper are broad and slow, and they take from the skies and the banks a million shades of colour. He who travels on the Dnieper begins to feel why many races have loved it to the point of idolatry.

I remained in Kiev two weeks. The city itself cast a spell over me. Even today, after I have become acquainted with Moscow, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, and Odessa, I remember Kiev with a thrill as the loveliest of Russian cities. Kiev is not only beautiful but full of graciousness and aristocracy. Its situation on the Dnieper places on it the stamp of nobility, and I could almost dare to say that this city is touched by a breath of sanctity, like Jerusalem. Rich and brilliant cities have never attracted me. What draws me most is character, and character comes with tradition. I want to hear something: not in a loud, raucous, and boastful voice, but quietly, almost inaudibly—a secret, like an intimate and sacred folk-story told by a mother to her child. From Kiev I learned for the first time that cities have souls. It may be that my emotions had been bribed by the many books I had read about Kiev before I set eyes on it. I knew that Kiev had been founded by the Khazars, a people who had been converted to Judaism, and who had disappeared from the scene of history as mysteriously as they appeared

on it. I knew that Jews had probably settled in Kiev before any Russians were known there. I knew too that in the sixteenth century Kiev had been a great centre of the Torah, and that the proverb had once been current: "From Kiev shall go forth the Law." And I knew that Kiev was a city that had often been steeped in Jewish blood, from the earliest to the most recent times, from the first Russian princes to the League of Chmelnitsky, and from Chmelnitsky to the latest pogroms. I knew, finally, that I had no right to sojourn in the Holy City of Kiev, and that house-to-house searches were made every night for unauthorized visitors. But I evaded the searchers and remained in the city two weeks.

However, it was not the beauty of Kiev that held me there for two weeks. On the steamer journey from Homel to Kiev the quiet Dnieper had poured into me some of its own thoughtfulness. I had begun to sober up and to examine my new plan more closely. I realized that I was perpetrating a swindle against myself; that is, I was hiding from myself the truth about myself. The question of what I was to start doing when I got to Palestine emerged with brutal sharpness. I knew of the bitter trials that our first pioneers had had to bear in Palestine. Would I be able to bear them? And suddenly I began to be astonished that not one of my comrades had ever spoken to me about them. Perhaps they had great faith in my endurance and my physical strength. But I did not overrate my own qualities, and at this point the first doubt stole in on me. I knew that I was on the right path: but I also knew that the right path is not always the path of possibility. I hit upon the idea of obtaining, from some Russian firm, an agency in Palestine, which would thus help to solve, at least in part, the question of my livelihood. With this idea in mind I determined to apply to the

Brodskis, one of the richest Jewish families in Russia. They were flour and sugar merchants, and I knew very little about flour or sugar; but how much knowledge does a pioneer need?

It was not easy to reach one of the Brodskis. I therefore went first to Professor Max Mandelstam, the famous eye-specialist. Mandelstam was not really a professor. He had been for years a tutor in the University of Kharkov. His colleagues had often recommended him for a professorship, but the University Senate had refused to accept him because he was a Jew, and a proud Jew, who refused to be baptized. In revenge he was crowned with the title of professor by the Jews. He was recognized as one of the foremost medical authorities of Russia. He had received a splendid general education, besides, and was widely known as a great Jewish patriot. Mandelstam received me in friendly fashion, listened to my plan, and gave me an encouraging reply. He was happy, he said, to see any Jew leave Russia, for he had the most pessimistic views on the future of Russian Jewry. He believed that every Jew who could save himself should do so while there was time.

Mandelstam gave me a letter to the Brodskis. The second person whom I sought out in Kiev was the famous poet Yehalel—Jehudah Leib Levin—who was accounted, after Jehudah Leib Gordon, the greatest Hebrew singer of his time. Yehalel was the first Hebrew poet whom I met face to face, and I must confess he was a great disappointment. I too considered myself something of a poet, and I had clear ideas of my own as to what a great poet should look like. I saw before me a typical Jewish employé, without any distinction in his appearance to inform the world that he belonged to a higher type of being. Nor was he very friendly; his reception of me was dry and formal. I was

a passionate admirer of his writings, and I was deeply chagrined afterwards that I had made his personal acquaintance. Yehalel was employed in the offices of the Brodskis, and he told me at once that I was wasting my time. However, he gave me permission to come to him in the office, and he would try to have me received by one of the Brodski brothers. In the office, he presented me to a colleague, Eliezer Shulman, also a Hebrew writer and a lover of Jewish literature.

Shulman led me into an inner office and presented me to the great Brodski himself. I had not spoken more than a few words when Brodski opened his eyes wide and stared at me as if I were a freak. Here was a young Jew, a good Hebraist, a graduate of a Realschule, healthy and intelligent—and going to Palestine. He began to question me about my parents, my father's business, and my motives in going to Palestine. This gave me an opportunity to deliver a long propaganda speech. I forgot for the moment that I had come to him on a business matter, and all thought of sugar and flour vanished from my mind. I spoke instead of Jewish liberation and a Jewish state, and I became as excited as if I were facing a large audience. Brodski let me speak on. All this time he stared straight at me and I at him, and our looks were those of two duellists. I knew that Brodski did not agree with the Chibath Zion, that he belonged to that small group of Jewish magnates which toadied to the Russian government, in the belief that their exaggerated patriotism would help to improve the condition of the Jews. But this was the very circumstance which provoked me, at that moment, to defend my Jewish nationalism.

I cannot deny that I was conscious of a feeling of revenge. I had so long dreamed of speaking out my mind to one of the Jewish magnates. And since I was not bound

to know that Brodski belonged to the group of the Poliakovs and Ginsburgs and the other Jewish super-patriots, of the Russian government, I poured forth a stream of denunciation against the latter, criticized bitterly their attitude toward the Jewish problem, and even denounced them as traitors. My propaganda speech did nothing to help me win my original point—an agency in Palestine. When I was through with nationalism and Jewish problems, I returned to the question of sugar and flour. Brodski told me drily that he already had an agent in Palestine.

From Kiev I went to Ekaterinoslav, where I spent some time with my brother Meyer. My father was then in Kherson. His business was in a critical condition. He had bought up a large forest—larger than he should have tried to handle—from a Polish nobleman, Prozer, who was up to the ears in debt. The forest had already been mortgaged, but this my father found out only later. Because of this purchase my father fell, for the first time, into the hands of the moneylenders, and he could not free himself. He had no other recourse than to extend his notes. There was no talk of bankruptcy. My father's assets were more than enough to cover his liabilities, but he needed time to realize on them. My father suffered greatly. He hated to have in his purse another man's kopeck. I was always in close touch with my father. He believed I had a clear head, and he frequently consulted me. In Ekaterinoslav I received a letter from him in which he put the situation before me. He could easily obtain a renewal of part of his notes: but then he would find it difficult, because of shortage of capital, to carry on his business. And he might not, in the end, be able to meet the extended notes. He could with more difficulty obtain a renewal of all his notes; in that case he was quite sure that within two years he could pay off all his debts, with interest.

I had not any doubts as to my father's complete honesty. He was not merely seeking to make things easier for himself. His one wish was to owe no man money. I therefore decided to advise him to adopt the second alternative. I sent my reply in a single line, using for the purpose a popular quotation from a Talmudic commentary. This commentary tells that when Sarah, the wife of Abraham, was a hundred years old, she was as beautiful as a girl of twenty; and when she was twenty years old, she was as pure as a child of three. The Hebrew phrase runs: "At a hundred as twenty for beauty; at twenty as three for innocence." This was all I wrote my father. The meaning was simple: "If you are to renew the notes, twenty thousand and three thousand are the same as regards the innocence of your intent. And a hundred thousand is just as nice to have as twenty thousand." Later, when my father was out of debt, and was again strongly established, he used to show my line around as being the shortest business letter he had ever received and the one most packed with meaning. But the credit was not mine. It belongs to the old sages who have produced so many of these meaty and logical phrases.

I wrote to Anna almost every day. But in Ekaterinoslav I began to mark that her letters were growing more and more reserved, and I felt that something not to my benefit was taking place in Bobrusk. I was uneasy, and would have paid a visit to Bobrusk but that I was ashamed to show myself after those eternal farewells. I thought of something else. Leon Lozinsky was at that time in Kachovka, the centre of the grain business of the Kherson district. He was in the employ of the firm of Dreyfus, which had concentrated in its hands almost the entire grain-output of the Ukraine. Instead of going to Bobrusk, I went to Kachovka. Leon received me with the old comradely friendliness, and for the

first few days I observed no change in his bearing. He introduced me to his friends and told me many stories of the wild life of the merchants of Kachovka and their employés. Their favourite occupation was card-playing. In Kachovka, by the way, I saw for the first time the decline of the Jewish Sabbath. Almost all Jewish shops and offices were open. I had seen Jewish shops which kept open in Minsk; and a larger number in Ekaterinoslav. But never had I seen such a workaday Sabbath as in Kachovka, a Jewish town. The extraordinary part about it—at least to me—was the matter-of-factness of it all. People bought, sold, and worked as if there had never been—and that so recently—an ancient and powerful institution known as the Jewish Sabbath. I do not know what the atmosphere was like in the homes; but the streets looked as they did every other day of the week.

Through Leon Lozinsky I got to know, in Kachovka, Elchanan Leib Levinsky, who in later years was my colleague on the famous journal *Hashiloach*, under the editorship of Achad Ha-Am. At that time Levinsky was still unknown to the world. But he interested me for other reasons. He had been one of the first pioneers—the Bilus—had been in Palestine, and had returned. I told him of my plans, which I had not yet relinquished. Levinsky told me of the fearful hardships I would encounter at every step. Only bodies of iron and souls of steel could endure to the end. He did not try to persuade me against going. But he thought it his duty to tell me the naked truth. In the exile, he said, we could be only half-Jews, and most of us were only one-third or one-quarter Jews. To go to Palestine meant to become a whole Jew, to reconvert to Judaism the apostate parts of us. And it is an old law, that if any stranger come to the Jews, and wishes to convert, he must not be received

too lightly. On the contrary; he must be warned that our way is a hard one, and that the life of our people is a bitter one. It is only when he has passed through his test of fire that he may be received. Levinsky's way of expressing the truth was sharp, clever, and yet friendly. I felt that this was a man who loved his people; but his love of his people did not obscure his love of the individual.

During the last days of my stay in Kachovka I noticed that my friend Leon Lozinsky was greatly perturbed. I might have written down his perturbation to business worries if it had not been for the exaggerated friendliness which he showed toward me. It was the extreme affection which we show toward a friend against whom we have committed, or are preparing to commit, an unfriendly act. My suspicions were justified. When I pressed him hard to explain his confusion and obvious uneasiness of mind, he handed me a telegram. His sister Anna had become engaged.

I cannot say that the news came like a bolt from the blue, for my skies had long been covered by threatening clouds. But I was stunned. I received the news in silence. I wanted to say something and could not. And some hours passed before I found my speech again. I uttered not a word of protest. I concentrated all my inner forces to hide my weakness in that critical moment. Before me stood a man who was my friend, my comrade in the movement and the brother of the woman I loved, and during that first period I felt in me a poisonous feeling of vengefulness. It was this feeling that dictated my behaviour: I would show him that I was strong enough to bear the blow.

I made a virtue of necessity and took to talking feverishly of my Palestinian plan. Now I would be able to dedicate myself completely to my ideal and devote all my forces to

the great task, unshaken and undeterred by personal motives. My friend seemed to be delighted with my attitude. He did not perceive that my courage was forced and affected. Instead of leaving me alone, he began to encourage me and to strengthen me in my resolution. His words worked like salt on an open wound. My heroism ran out of me, my courage disappeared, and I was left alone with the deep anguish of a disappointed love. My nights became long torments. I have, like most people, known many painful and sleepless nights, called forth by sickness and deep psychic disturbances; but the last night I spent in Kachovka stands apart from all the other nights of my life, under a black rubric of its own. All the pictures men have drawn of the hell beyond the grave have been drawn on nights like these.

I went from Kachovka to Odessa, on the Black Sea. In my outward bearing I was more or less controlled, but within me a hell of suffering was my constant companion. I felt that I was rolling downhill at frightful speed. My thoughts lost their powerful tension, my opinion of myself its pride, and I was driven by sick motives to actions that would have been impossible in my normal condition. I did not understand myself well enough; I did not know how deeply this thing which had happened to me would cut into my life and would influence me in all my acts. I only felt a pain that I wanted to dull, a memory that I wanted to thrust into some obscure corner of me, because I knew that it had gone too deep to be uprooted.

There are two accounts in the Bible of the creation of man; one is the longer, the other the shorter, account. According to the first account God created the male first, Adam, and when he saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone, he took pity on him, and out of one of his ribs created Eve. This I would say is the *masculine* account,

Adam was the more important; he was the primary intent of God, who realized in him his ideal of man. Eve is the secondary creation, an addition. Adam was created for his own sake, Eve to serve Adam. She was created for some one else's sake. But the second, and shorter account, gives us quite another picture of the creation of the first man. There is no separate Adam and Eve. There is only male and female, and both together are called Adam. "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." The second account is short, without an Eden, without a Tree of Knowledge, and without a serpent. But for that reason it is not egotistically masculine, and enters deeper into the secret of creation. It denies the existence of a separate Adam and a separate Eve. There is a pair, and the pair is called by the name Adam, Man. There is no priority, no degree of importance, the male does not occupy the first place, and the woman does not occupy the place of the help-meet. Man, the crown of creation, is one and indivisible; he only appears in a double form. But that is an optical illusion, the result of our imperfect earthly sight and our imperfect earthly ideas.

That first account, adorned with the marvellous story of Eden, in which Adam is the lord, waiting even to eat of the apple till the woman serves him, had bribed the masculine pride of the artist. He saw *himself* as the complete man, and in this pride committed the greatest error that an artist can commit. I am convinced that if the biblical story had begun with the second, with the dryer and more truthful, account, all the impulses of the artist would have taken another course. We would have understood better the eternal

problem of Adam and Eve, not in its vulgar but in its highest sense, and perhaps under the influence of this more accurate viewpoint, our life would have taken better form. We would have understood better the meaning of Adam's eternal quest for Eve, we would have been more earnest *in* our love, and played less frivolously *at* love. And there would have been, in this world, more whole people, and more harmonious ones.

I return to myself. Broken in soul, half a man, I left Kachovka and arrived in Odessa, in the new, proud, and beautiful city which stands on the most southernmost point of Russian soil. Its sunny mood casts a spell on the visitor; and from its towers he catches a glimpse of the Near East. I did not know a single soul in Odessa. But Odessa was already, in those days, the centre of the Chibath Zion, and of the second Haskallah period in its more modern form. And I therefore decided not to hurry through, but to wait and become acquainted with the leading personalities of this important Jewish centre.

I first sought out Moses Leib Lilienblum, who was famous throughout Russia as one of the pillars of the Chibath Zion. His writings, both in Hebrew and in Russian, with their sharp logic and rich content, exerted a powerful influence on the national-minded Jewish youth. I had read everything he had published, down to the most insignificant articles. Judging the man from his writings, I expected to meet a hot-headed Chovev Zion, an enthusiastic supporter of every plan that sprang from the urge toward Palestine. I was certain that Lilienblum would understand me better than any one else, and that from him I would obtain the moral encouragement of which I stood in such need. Actually I could come to him with a sort of claim. He had been among the first to issue to the Jewish people that powerful call;

"Back to your home!" It had come immediately after the first pogroms. He was perhaps the most considerable intellectual force in the founding of the new Jewish national ideal. And he disliked empty, showy phrases. He was a man of supremely logical mind; he did not appeal to the emotions only, but concentrated all his knowledge of Jewish and general history in an appeal to the intelligence. I could say to him: "I am one among that younger generation who listened to you and was convinced. I have come to you because I wish to fulfil *your* ideal, and follow the path which *you* have marked for us. In a word: you called to us—and I am here."

I was thunderstruck to see before me a man of middle age with features which reminded me irresistibly of some village Rabbi, some helpless, impractical *batlan*, rather than of a fiery leader of a national idea. His appearance was a million miles from my idealization of him. But it was not only his appearance; neither his bearing nor his speech had any sort of relation to the picture of Lilienblum which I had carried around within me for so many years. He was cold, phlegmatic, without a spark of enthusiasm, or a tremor of excitement; his speech was cold and hard, not as if uttered by a human tongue, but as if cut out with a stylus. The first question he asked me was simple, direct, devoid of high ideals: "How much money have you with you?" That question was enough to shear my wings away. I tumbled suddenly from the high empyrean into the cellar of humanity. I did not expect to hear, from Moses Leib Lilienblum, such a commonplace question. I could not yet understand that a man who was so logical in all his writings could remain true to himself only if he was logical and consistent also in individual cases; I was too young to understand that a logical thinker like Lilienblum could not, when he saw before him a man who had torn himself away

from an opening career, and was on the way to Palestine, ignore the accursed money question. I was plunged into a still deeper depression when some Jews interrupted us, and in my presence began to bargain with Lilienblum about the price of a burial and of cerements. . . . Lilienblum was at that time both the secretary of Dr. Leon Pinsker, the president of the Choveve Zion organizations, and the secretary of the Odessa Chevrah Kadishah or Burial Brotherhood. I had visited him in the offices of the Chevrah Kadishah, and I obtained an immediate insight into the daily occupation of my great Lilienblum. I felt almost as if I had been personally insulted. On the one hand the revival of a people, on the other hand the burial of Jews, and wrangling over the cost of graves and grave-clothes: the two activities did not harmonize. Later on I had a similar shock with Isaac Leib Perez when I visited him in the Chevrah Kadishah room of the Warsaw Kehilla, where he held the same position as Lilienblum in Odessa.

Later, when I became acquainted with some of the other personalities of the Odessa Central Committee, I complained to one of them of my reception at the hands of Lilienblum. He consoled me, and told me that I was not the first to be treated so abruptly by him. He even defended Lilienblum, who, as Secretary of the Chibath Zion, carried a certain responsibility, and had to see to it that the people who went to Palestine knew what they were about. And he told me the following story:

Some time before there had arrived from Kiev a halfway Maskil and a fiery Chovev Zion. In his own town he had been a small shopkeeper. Suddenly he sold out his shop, scraped together a few hundred roubles, and set out for Palestine, where he was going to open a factory for the manufacture of mother-of-pearl buttons. That was his plan.

He had never in his life had anything to do with mother-of-pearl buttons; and it was by pure accident that he hit on the happy idea. He had read somewhere that between Haifa and ancient Sidon there were, on the seashore, vast heaps of oyster-shells, belonging absolutely to no one. Out of these shells he was going to manufacture mother-of-pearl buttons. He spoke to every one about his plan, with indescribable enthusiasm. And he was looked upon as a half-wit. But no one could dissuade him from his crazy idea. He carried around with him a notebook filled with calculations which proved that his factory was going to be a gold mine. They brought this Jew to Lilienblum, and Lilienblum, having listened coldly to his plans, inquired, with brutal brevity: "Who will buy your buttons?" The Jew turned fiery red with rage: "What do you mean, who will buy my buttons? The Arabs of Syria and Palestine and Mesopotamia and Egypt. I only hope to God my factory will be able to supply the demand." Lilienblum answered, in the same brutally calm voice: "Mr. Jew, I think you are in error. The Arabs wear their shirts not buttoned, but tied up with cords." The Jew remained standing motionless, as if he had been drenched with icy water. The mother-of-pearl button factory was laid in ruins by the cords of the Arabs; or, more exactly, by the cold-bloodedness of Lilienblum.

Nevertheless Lilienblum took me with him to Dr. Pinsker, and introduced me warmly as a young man who was going to Palestine driven not by necessity but by the strength of the ideal. Dr. Pinsker made a very different impression on me. His look was pleasant and aristocratic and I felt that I was facing a man of the highest intellectual gifts. Such men are more sparsely sown than even the chosen heroes of a people. They have been predestined to personify in their being the finest spiritual possessions of their people.

Until this day the little pamphlet of Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation*, is regarded as a masterpiece; its concentrated wealth of thought and its high, distinguished tone are still the wonder of every intellectual Jew. In the ranks of the Choveve Zion there were elements that were dissatisfied with the leadership of Dr. Pinsker. In particular many intrigues against him were woven by the orthodox Rabbinic circles, to whom he was a stranger. He came to his Judaism from the western world, free, in his nationalism, from every theological traditional background. Yet the respect which was felt for this man was as universal as it was great, and an open fight against him was impossible. Dr. Pinsker, though himself a Russian Jew, and a descendant of famous Jewish scholars, was a typical west-European, under the exclusive influence of western ideas. In this respect Pinsker prepared the path for the second west-European leader of the movement, a man who is now, both politically and intrinsically, closely bound up with eastern Jewry—Dr. Theodore Herzl.

CHAPTER XV

THE FAILURE

It was not long before I became acquainted with the lion of Odessa Jewry—Mendele Mocher Sephorim himself. If I remember rightly it was I. H. Ravnitsky, at that time a Hebrew teacher launching into journalism, who introduced me. I was thoroughly acquainted with the Hebrew writings of Mendele, but I must confess that what moved me most was his Yiddish work, as exemplified in those classics, *Die Kliatsche* and *Yudel*, which had earned him the widest popularity among the Jewish masses. His reception of me was very friendly. He was torrential in conversation—an irresistible stream of stories, anecdotes, quips, and puns. One expression played perpetually over his features—satiric, Mephistophelian: it was an expression which declared clearly: "Please don't try to play-act with me: it's a waste of time."

It was not my nature to remain silent in company, and the brilliant, inexhaustible wit of Mendele provoked me to sharp effort. But I remember well that he not only overwhelmed me, but inspired me with a feeling of helplessness. I was lucky if I was able to edge a word in now and again.

Mendele invited me to attend "his" services of the New Year and the Day of Atonement. These were, in reality, the services of the Odessa Talmud Torah, of which Mendele was the secretary. In that group was concentrated all that was worth while in the Hebrew centre of Odessa. There was one

practice which Mendele loved in particular: and that was to translate the High Holiday Prayer-Book—the Machzor—from the sacred tongue into the vernacular. With his mastery of both languages, his translation was extraordinarily charming, folk-like, and faithful to the original. Whenever he launched on this pastime, the auditors became silent and listened open-mouthed. I was not only a mere sojourner in this group: I was also the youngest member of it. But I was received with special friendliness, on the level of an intimate and an equal. For I was, after all, no ordinary visitor: I was on my way to Palestine.

On the first Friday evening of my stay I was conducted to a house in one of the remoter suburbs of the city. The occupant of the house was a young manufacturer with the commonplace name of Asher Ginzberg. I say commonplace because these were the days before a certain famous article moved that name into the foremost ranks of the Hebrew movement. But even then Asher Ginzberg enjoyed a peculiar reputation in the limited circles of the Hebrew national movement; he was already spoken of, among the élite, as a rising star in the Jewish heavens. There were already those who uttered his name with that same trembling voice, that same veneration, which marks the attitude of the followers of some great Chassidic Rabbi. Marvellous things were told concerning his erudition in Jewish matters and his education in worldly, non-Jewish fields of learning. But an even greater respect was reserved for his extraordinary piercing intelligence and his iron character, which was incapable of compromise but drove irresistibly toward the core of truth in all problems. I arrived at Asher Ginzberg's house after the evening meal and found a considerable company gathered there.

The instant we were brought face to face, this frail little

man produced upon me an instantaneous and profound impression such as no other man ever produced upon me before or since. There lay upon his features, simple and festive, a strange spiritual radiance. They were open and expressive features, across which the passage of his inward thoughts marked a clear, unmistakable path: a serene, natural, and unforced succession of ideas, severely logical and therefore appealingly harmonious. In contrast with Mendele he spoke little, leaving the burden of the conversation to his guests. But it was clearly seen that the guests conducted themselves, in his presence, as disciples do in the presence of their master: and however their conversation flowed, it seemed to be directed toward the winning of his approbation. Among those present were some who loved high-flown phrases and deep, involved thoughts, heaped upon each other in profusion and confusion. Woe to the speaker who became tangled up in his thoughts! The word of the master was then like a sharp, quiet blade which cut clean across the tangle, so that the imposing mass of thoughts suddenly collapsed into a helpless heap of shreds and tatters. He made the cut like a skilful surgeon, a minimum of blood-letting, a maximum of effect.

I need hardly say that the main subject of conversation was the Jewish problem and Palestine. There were other questions too, literary and political, but everything revolved round the theme of Jewish nationalism.

It was shortly after I met him that Asher Ginzberg published a sharp, almost annihilating criticism of the *methods* of the Chibath Zion movement. The title of the article was *Lo zu ha-Derech*—"Not This Is the Way"—and the pen-name he chose for himself was Achad Ha-Am—One of the People. It is quite certain that he chose this pseudonym out of instinctive modesty: but the name is chosen by the author; the interpretation and significance of the name is later sup-

plied by the public. And it was not long before that title was interpreted to mean "The One who Represents the People," the representative in the most distinguished sense of the word. Asher Ginzberg, quiet, modest, retired, became the spiritual leader. He did not seek the leadership: it sought him out. There was not in his nature the shadow of a desire for greatness: but he was a great man. For me, personally, he remained for ever the leader and guide, and long decades of common work and of intimate friendship never diminished the distance between us—the distance between the disciple and the teacher. It was—so I shall always believe—one of the luckiest circumstances of my life that during the greater part of it I was thrown together with Achad Ha-Am in a work which was dear to both of us. And it is a source of pride to me that in his presence I did not forget for an instant that I was the contemporary of the great thinker, and the still greater Jew, Achad Ha-Am. I have the deep inner conviction that when God, looking down upon this swarming humanity of his creation, is touched with a sense of its monotony and its dreariness, he throws into its midst, just for the sake of relief, one of the great men of all time: something to liven up for a time the oppressive dulness of the daily round. Such an avatar was Achad Ha-Am.

Within a few days my boat was due to leave for Constantinople. I was all prepared for the journey when, one fine morning, my father fell into my room out of a clear sky. I was alarmed by his appearance. His face had aged, and it carried the marks of profound worry. My father had always been sensible and decent in his business affairs and had never been in the habit of undertaking deals beyond the scope of his capital. Now, for the first time in his life, he had undertaken something beyond his control and involved

himself in money difficulties. He begged me to give up the idea of Palestine and to remain with him instead. He felt the need of a confidential agent and adviser capable of sharing the worries of his complicated situation. He had great faith in my business sense. He had nothing at all against my ideas. He himself, he told me, had been won over to the Chibath Zion idea. But he begged me not to abandon him in one of the most critical moments of his life. There is something peculiarly terrible in the plea of a father to a son for a personal favor. The situation must have been very uncomfortable for my father. But I too was conscious of a deep distress. I was not accustomed to seeing my father in a helpless condition. I had always known him as a proud, secure, and imperious type of man. The word "father" was not bound up, in my mind, with the concept of weakness.

For two entire days I struggled with myself. And here again I must confess that, just as in the case of my first resolution—to become a pioneer in Palestine—so now, in my second resolution, the ideal of Palestine itself did not play the principal rôle. True, the inner urge toward Palestine was genuine and strong. But this was not the factor which stood between me and my immediate yielding to my father. What held me back, more than anything else, was the feeling of shame vis-à-vis my friends and acquaintances. I had babbled to the whole world about my glorious plan: I had already come as far as Odessa—the last Russian point. And now—to turn back ignominiously! How on earth would I be able to look my friends in the face? I would be known henceforth and for ever as Halfway Shmarya: which, in Yiddish, is about the equivalent of Half-Wit Shmarya. I shrank from putting myself forever on the defensive. I felt, too, that I had assumed a certain moral obligation toward the entire movement: that is to say, I was in much the same position

as my father. Neither father nor son was apparently able to meet his obligations. All these arguments I paraded again and again before my father. And my father tried to soothe me. Had I not advised him to try and get a renewal on his notes, so that he might be in a position to meet them later on? Was there anything dishonourable in that? He now returned the advice neatly to me. I did not have to repudiate my resolution to go to Palestine: I had only to ask for an extension. And on the surface the turned-round argument did look plausible. But there was one decisive and psychological difference. If we human beings only treated our moral obligations toward ourselves with the same respect, the same fear, as we treat our legal obligations, if the voice of conscience was as imperious as the voice of public opinion, we would undoubtedly be better men than we are.

I was obdurate: but I felt that behind my obduracy there was no real substance. I gave way. I said farewell to not a single soul in Odessa. Together with my father I took boat and we embarked at Nikolaieff. The sea was stormy that day. Before me rose recurrently the misty picture of the Prophet Jonah. In thought, I was in the port of Joppa; and like Jonah I fled. There was only this difference: Jonah fled from God, and I was fleeing from myself.

On my homeward journey I stopped in Bobrusk and met Anna. We were both of us helpless children, and neither of us knew what we were about. Between us had risen a wall of granite—her engagement. And we parted as helplessly, as wordlessly, as we had met.

It was at this time that I fell to the lowest point that can be reached by a young person. I cannot, even at this distance, say other than this: I simply let myself sink—I lost all pride and self-respect. This is something that happens with many young people—boys and girls who think that

they have reached the estate of full manhood or of full womanhood, and who play with the most precious things in life as if they were meaningless trifles. I became engaged. It was a dull, banal affair, without character and without taste. It was an act of treachery toward others, and still more so toward myself. And to this step, too, I was driven by a low motive—the motive of revenge. I only wanted to demonstrate that my love for Anna had not been any more substantial than hers for me. I wanted no one to pity me, so I became cruel toward myself. But the meanest element in the situation was this: I was exacting revenge not with my *own* resources, but by involving a *third* party. To shame Eve the First I had to humiliate Eve the Second.

I cannot pause long on this brief incident in my early life. I can only say this much: that I had not a place where to lay my head in peace. It was not the opinion of the world at large which tormented me. As far as the public was concerned, what had I done that was out of the way? Is the banal and the tasteless anything but the usual thing? I had gone the way of all flesh. It was when I was alone that I was thrown into agonies of inner torment, and I felt in all my flesh one burning desire—to wipe out, without a moment's loss, my latest act.

It was a tangled and distressing period in my life. I look backward and see the thread of the years, spun evenly till then, suddenly lose their direction and smoothness for a while. The knots remain forever. Wounds that have healed into scars still remain wounds: there are moments when pain returns to them. In the calloused flesh still lingers the poison of remorse.

If there is something basically ugly in the arranged marriage, in the commercialization of love, when older and more

cunning people make a commodity of youth, there is something even uglier in the self-deception whereby a man makes a commodity of himself. The ugliness of the sin is intensified if the man has, in fact, already tasted the joy and cleanness of authentic love. I allude to the time when I began to "make love," with all the hateful implications of that accepted phrase. I began to imitate myself. In such circumstances a man is either a fool or a blackguard. He either plays with his shadow on the wall, or else he deceives himself and deceives others.

If men were only capable of pulling back after the first step in the direction of folly, our sins would lose most of their substance. But the trouble is that every folly—we like to call it folly, but it would be more correct to call it meanness—imparts to us an accelerated velocity downwards, draws us toward the abyss with almost irresistible force. I had to write letters to my bride—and I had not the courage not to write. So the letters were false from beginning to end, both in content and in form. If there is any truth in the aphorism that man was given language to disguise his thoughts, I achieved at that time a high artistic eminence. I took myself as a model, forged my own handwriting, plagiarized my own style, imitated the letters I had originally written to Anna Lozinsky. I do not believe that I wanted to practise a deliberate deception. What I really wanted was to avoid the truth, jump out of my own skin, and snap the cords that bound me. But I had lost control of myself, and tangled myself in one falsehood after another. There was a vague thought in my mind: it ran parallel with the wish for self-liberation; perhaps, if I could not break the cords, I could break myself. From true emotions spring phrases of beauty; perhaps from phrases of beauty would spring true emotions.

Perhaps I could work myself into a state of true affection and friendship.

Lost as I was, bankrupt, a failure in my Palestinian venture, dragging with me the lengthening chain of a false relationship, I took refuge once again in study and writing. I returned with renewed passion to my desk and my books. My father urged me to take a more active interest in his business, but he was not very insistent. Both my father and my mother observed that I was in pain, and they hoped that in the course of time my feelings would simmer down and everything would run smoothly again. By this last they meant that I would forget my dreams, marry, and enrich the Jewish people with one more family.

But now something unexpected happened within me. I had wanted to drown my pain in study; I had looked upon my books as a narcotic. But it did not occur to me that through my books I would achieve a sort of purification and renewal. I worked consistently and closely, chiefly on poetry, and with the work came spiritual peace. I found myself in a world in which I could move freely, unburdened by the weight of an inescapable lie. It became ever clearer to me that I had to put an end to a condition for which I alone was responsible. It became harder and harder to use the same hand to write pure songs and lying letters. My letters became rarer, and I moved closer and closer to the truth. At first I indicated the truth between the lines of the letters; and having prepared the way, I touched very carefully on the truth within the lines themselves. And then I stopped writing altogether. For the truth was that I had never had anything to write about.

It was a dear and lovely interlude that set in again, in my native village of Swislowitz. I was again sheltered by the visions of antiquity, and moved in the spacious freedom

of ancient days. This was a world which I had created myself, over which none other had power, and in which I could therefore live unmolested. I passed the days in reading, the nights in writing songs. A marvellous silence took hold of the village at night, the silence of retreat and isolation: not a dull, sullen mechanical silence, but one that moved and flowed around me, a stream of silence that bound heaven and earth, and made both part of itself. There was such peace in the night, such joy and longing for work, that I hated the coming of the day and resented the first rays of the sun.

When I had accumulated a whole sheaf of songs, I sent them to Jehudah Leib Gordon, whose influence over me was very strong. The reply came promptly: the foremost Hebrew poet of the day praised my songs! He stated distinctly that I had talent! All I needed was practice and greater smoothness and neatness of expression. It was widely known, alas, that it was Gordon's habit to praise every beginner: but I took him seriously, and resolved forthwith to publish a volume of poetry. And here again I must confess that besides my natural desire to appear thus in public I was driven by another motive. I wanted to show Anna Lozinsky whom she had thrown over in this way. Was it a feeling of revenge? I hardly know. Perhaps, unconsciously, I felt that I owed Anna a debt of gratitude for my songs, for they belonged to her more than to any one else.

So I arrived in Warsaw, carrying my sheaf of songs in my bag, and in my heart the longing for recognition. Warsaw was the great centre of Hebrew literature in the heyday of its strength. It was also the first world-city that I had looked upon. Twice the size of either Kiev or Odessa, Warsaw was also different in character. Kiev is outspokenly Russian Byzantine, steeped in the sacred atmosphere of heroic legends and the earliest history; the beauty of the city is

unified and concentrated. It is an inward beauty, distilled by many generations. But the beauty of Odessa is outward; it has an Italian gaiety mixed with the impudence of the parvenu; it looks not backward at Russia, but outward toward the Mediterranean and the Near East. Warsaw is wholly and thoroughly Occidental. It is the last of the Eastern, the first of the Western, cities. It has taken as its standard—and not as its last goal, either—three cities, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. There is very little of the Slavic in Warsaw, less, in fact, than in Prague. The city declares at once that its builders were under the influence of the West—first of Paris and Vienna, and then of Prussian Berlin. It was in Warsaw that I felt for the first time that I was abroad. Two circumstances contributed to this feeling—I knew no Polish, and even the Yiddish that is spoken in Warsaw sounds different from the Yiddish of Russia proper. The Russian administration, the Russian military, and the Russian cathedral lifting its five triumphant cupolas on the most beautiful of the squares—the Sachsischerplatz—did nothing to weaken the Western impression. They did not mingle with the rest of the city; Warsaw remained Polish, and the Russifying elements stood out like a brutal patch on the body of Poland. The Russian language was to be heard everywhere in the streets. But it was universally regarded as the language of the administration and of the soldiery. A peculiarly uncomfortable situation had been created for those Jews who had been driven by persecution and restrictions out of interior Russia into the commercial centres of Poland—principally Warsaw and Lodz. Their language was Russian; and without any desire to help the Russian administration in its violent campaign of Russification, they became an instrument in the hands of the anti-Polish authorities. They were better Russifiers than the regular officers and officials in two re-

spects: First, they got no pay for their work; second, as Jews, they did not mingle with the Polish population. But of the higher Russian officials it was said that they made better pupils than teachers. They taught no one Russian; but they learned to speak Polish. The young ladies who taught them Polish were altogether too charming. Moreover, the indigenous Polish Jews did not feel particularly friendly toward the newly arrived Russian Jews, who through no fault of their own did a good deal to spoil—if it was still possible to spoil—the relations between the native Jews and the Poles.

I remained in Warsaw two months—just long enough to see my volume of poems, which appeared under the simple name of *Ten Songs*, through the press. Because of this book, and because of my activity in the Chibath Zion movement, I found easy entrée into the Hebrew literary world of Warsaw. I was received with particular signs of friendship by Saul Pinchas Rabinowitz, famous throughout the Hebrew world under the pseudonym of Shefer. The man, and the circumstances he lived in, are well worth recalling as a symbol of a time and of a particular type. He was not only a writer, but an active worker in the Chibath Zion movement—its secretary general. One of his sons was in Siberia, the result of too open an interest in the Socialist movement. Shefer himself was a man of extraordinary erudition, particularly in the field of Jewish history. He had a curious gift for languages. His method of learning them might well be called the method of "direct assault." He would sit down with a dictionary and simply learn the language by brute force. Having swallowed the raw material, he would proceed to digest it, and turn it into organic knowledge of the language. I used to visit him frequently. He lived in a wretched two-room apartment, into which the sunlight seldom penetrated. His library and writing-desk were in the bedroom. And yet

this man had many enemies. He was envied for the "salary" he received from the Chibath Zion organization, and all sorts of evil rumours were circulated concerning his honesty. Shefer suffered keenly, but remained at his work, and was tremendously active both as writer and organizer.

The lion of the Jewish community of Warsaw was Chaim Zelig Slonimsky, a patriarch eighty years of age who had retained a remarkable degree of youthful freshness. Slonimsky was regarded in the Jewish world as the living personification of a legend. It was known that his mathematical gifts had won him the prize of the Prussian Academy of Science, and that it was he who had invented the method of sending four messages simultaneously over one telegraph wire. But he had achieved his greatest popularity, especially in orthodox circles, by his thirty years' war on behalf of the Jewish calendar. The struggle was not as bloody as the Thirty Years' War of Germany, but it evoked and sustained the interest of the entire Jewish world. Jews have loved the heavens from of old. Was it not told of Abraham, the very founder of the race, that when he was grieved by the childlessness of Sarah God had bidden him go out into the open and count the stars in heaven? . . . Probably a hint that the Jews would at all times have a greater portion in the heavens than in the earth. And then, the Thirty Years' War of Zelig Slonimsky centred round the specifically Jewish luminary, the moon, which is the key to the Jewish calendar. Slonimsky had proved mathematically that in their fixing of the holidays the Jews of the Far East were bound to follow not the meridian of Greenwich, but the meridian of Jerusalem: a purely Jewish astronomical affair. Slonimsky defended his views with the strength and ferocity of a lion. The Orthodox Jews were strongly on his side: they had faith in him.

Physically Slonimsky did resemble a lion. He had an enor-

mous, snow-white beard, square in shape, covering a face that was almost devoid of wrinkles, and out of which shone the clear intellectual eyes of a Jewish scholar. I could never look my fill at the man. I could never decide which to admire more, the giant spirit or the body that contained it. Slonimsky received me with patriarchal kindliness. He talked interminably, but at random, leaping wildly from subject to subject. At eighty he had retained all his physical faculties, and there was an extraordinary freshness in his conversation. And yet, to the close observer, it slowly became evident that the force which carried him was the inertia of eighty years of activity.

The periodical *Hazephirah* was at that time in the fifth year of its career. Slonimsky was the editor-in-chief: but the real editor was the young, amazingly gifted, and more amazingly industrious Nahum Sokolow, who was already distinguished for his encyclopaedic knowledge and for his incredible fecundity: work after work issued from his pen, like one edition after another of the man himself, every edition an improvement on the last. But these works still remained —encyclopaedias, covering an enormous area of information, and touching a thousand and one subjects. The energies of the writer were swallowed up by the sweep of subject and the width of knowledge: and the two surface dimensions thrust out the third—the dimension of depth. Every problem that Sokolow treated—and what subject was there that he did not treat?—emerged from his pen polished, balanced, and highly finished. But the interior remained unorganized, not by any means as well worked out as one had a right to expect from talents such as his. Sokolow was a swift swimmer in a calm sea. He was no diver, and the pearls that are under the surface of the waters were never brought up by him. He loved a level and placid ocean, and avoided the

storms. And if storms came, as they are bound to come, he thought it best to wait till they had subsided—and from time to time pour oil on the waters.

Such was the intellectual character of Sokolow. He envisaged all life, but he did not penetrate it. He was witty, learned, intellectual, and intelligent—but not passionate. For passion is storm and storm was not his element. For a long time he was the leading spirit both in the *Hazephirah* and in the Jewish Polish *Israelita*. Sokolow's was the political part of the work. He treated the questions of the day; but however passionate these questions might be, his articles were always quiet, deliberate, and fair to both sides. He was opposed to the Chibath Zion movement, and fought it openly and consistently, often with biting irony. Himself steeped in Jewishness, as much as any of his contemporaries, filled with Jewish history and Jewish knowledge, he found nothing in the Chibath Zion movement to satisfy his ambitions for the Jewish people. He was, moreover, too much of the European, and he could not identify himself with the men who were the leaders of the Chibath Zion in Poland. He looked upon them as idlers, chatterers, who had not the remotest relation to world-politics. It was only with the coming of Herzl, who changed the Chibath Zion into a modern movement, and gave it a sweep and power it had never before possessed, that Sokolow was attracted to Zionism. He came in first as a devoted follower of Herzl; later he became one of the chief pillars of the movement, exerting himself to the utmost to wipe out the debt he had contracted in the years of his hostility.

Sokolow, too, received me with the greatest friendliness. He was, indeed, friendly to every one, even to his opponents, and in all his relations he was the very personification of the

gentleman. But Slonimsky was not particularly friendly toward him. It was, as a matter of fact, the struggle between the declining and the rising power. The story was told that one day Slonimsky lost his temper completely, then, recovering his balance, shrugged his shoulders and said: "Well, he can't live for ever, can he?" The old Jewish astronomer and mathematician had become too accustomed to being alive: the old calculator of the calendar had lost his own sense of time.

Before long there appeared in the *Hazephirah* a long review of my book, in two instalments. The reviewer was not a professional writer, and he had never before even attempted to review a book. He made this one attempt as a favour to me. I did not even consider him personally a good critic of books: but nothing could prevent me from deriving a deep satisfaction from the review. I sent copies to all of my friends: two of them, in fact, to Leon Lozinsky, one for him, one for his sister Anna.

Now that I had got to know the leading Jewish spirits in Odessa and in Warsaw, and now that—as I thought—I had myself become a part of their world through the publication of a book of poems, I definitely relinquished all thought of a business career. The road that led to my father's business was now closed forever. Had the literary career constituted a profession in those days, for the Hebrew as for other writers, I would definitely have given myself up to it and abandoned the search for another profession. But the type of the professional Hebrew writer had not yet emerged. Only a tiny handful among the many writers made their living by the pen, but they had editorial positions on one of the two Hebrew papers. All the other writers had to find their living elsewhere, and Hebrew literature could not,

in those days, provide bread and butter for the most gifted of its practitioners. The writing of Hebrew was not a profession, but a luxury.

Had any one dared to prophecy in those days that within a period of twenty years there would arise a whole army of Hebrew writers, who would live solely by the labour of the pen, he would have been regarded as a crazy dreamer. No one suspected that east-European Jewry was standing, at that time, on the threshold of a new epoch and a new spiritual development. On the contrary, all indications pointed to the probability that the burning economic and political questions of the day, and the question of immigration in particular, would swallow up the energies of the people, and leave nothing for spiritual creation. But it appears now that neither the persecution of the governments nor the hatred of the master-nations was able to arrest the march of the Jews toward spiritual self-liberation.

I made a brief stay in Swislowitz before I left for Berlin. My parents had resigned themselves to my plans, and they treated me now like a beloved and important visitor. I was, after all, the author of a book. My mother, as usual, baked and cooked as if to provide for a transcontinental caravan. And I left my home weighted down with her provender and the hopes of every one.

I made two stops on the way to Berlin: in Minsk, to get my passport and to see my friends; and in Kovno to get the blessing—at my mother's urgent request—of Rabbi Isaac Elchanaan Spektor. I remained in Kovno only one day, for the Rabbi received me without delay. I told him why I had come, and what my plans were in regard to my Jewish studies. I told him, further, that I did not know exactly to what use I would put these studies. I might remain a writer, I might become a Rabbi; but in any event, I wanted his

blessing. I had expected that this most distinguished Rabbi, idolized by the masses and respected even by the intelligentsia, would make some effort to impress me with his importance. Above all, I expected a quiet exhibition of piety. Nothing of the sort took place. His blessing was given in the simplest form, gentle, and affectionate, as though he had known me and liked me for many years.

And with this incident there closed the second of the three periods that constitute my wander-years: from Beresin to Dinaburg, from Dinaburg to Minsk, from Minsk to Bobrusk, and then my stay in the two Jewish centres, Odessa and Warsaw. From the beginning I was the wandering Jew in miniature. Wherever I set foot, I came in direct contact with the various levels of Jewish life, and everywhere I became part of the worries, the hopes and the dreams of the Jewish soul. I loved books, and I loved to lose myself in the memorials of our past. But I had not sundered myself from the stream of life. The life that rushed on around me drew me into itself, provoked me, and delighted me, and in the material of the past I found only the directives for my dreams of the future. The last and third epoch of my wander-years I passed in Germany: a different world, different people, different Jews.

CHAPTER XVI

STUDENT DAYS IN BERLIN

FOREIGN lands! No modern, on either side of the Atlantic, no man who has passed many years in a halfway civilized country, can ever taste the magic and mystery which lay (and which, alas, still lies) for the Russian intellectual, and particularly for the Russian Jewish intellectual, in the word "abroad!" It was not and is not the primitive emotion of curiosity natural to every man with some imagination, nor the ordinary desire for change. In the Russian intellectual it was and still is the profound longing for freedom. In the heart of every Russian intellectual there was a desire like a prayer, to break free, if only for a moment, from the great prison which was called Russia; to fill his lungs deep, if only for once, with the breath of freedom; to see with his own eyes how human beings walk about unintimidated; to hear men talking as they wished concerning God and man, devil and government, unterrified by their own thoughts.

When we remember that the word "abroad" did not imply France, or England, or the United States, but that for the modest Russian it was Prussian Germany or Austria that represented the earthly paradise, we shall appreciate in what sort of hell the Russian lived, and how relative were his concepts of freedom. However much he reads of that incredible land, the non-Russian still cannot quite picture the extraordinary reality. The sense of freedom was possible in Russia

only to one who himself belonged to the oppressors, or else to the idiot.

The instant I passed the frontier, and arrived at Eidtkuhnen, a village adjacent to Russian territory, I already felt like a freed slave. I was beyond the reach of the Russian gendarme. Had I been of a pious turn of mind, I would have recited the prayer of the freed prisoner, and if I had not been ashamed, I would have embraced and kissed the Prussian gendarme who now boarded the train. That the Prussian gendarme, too, could prove himself a nasty individual, that he too was not a fount of pure justice, and that even in his presence it was just as well to observe a certain degree of caution—this was something that we learned later, from experience, when our concept of freedom became a little more advanced, and Prussia ceased to be our idea of paradise.

Joyous thoughts danced in my brain, keeping rhythm with the jolting of the wheels on the sleepers. I wanted to dance with my thoughts and with the rhythm of the wheels: and since this was impossible I pulled out the huge bundle of things that my mother had cooked and baked and fried for me, and invited all the travellers in my car to join the feast. I knew German: or at least I thought I did. In any case, the Germans understood me perfectly, and after every mouthful said "*Prachtvoll!*" By the time I reached Berlin the basket was almost empty. I told the travellers that all these good things my mother had prepared with her own hands; and the Germans praised my mother to the skies and I myself was in the seventh heaven.

In the darkness of an early autumn morning I arrived in the city of Berlin. I was received there by my friend Nachman Syrkin, who was already a student in the University of Berlin. The huge electric lamps in the Friedrichstrasse

station made on me the impression of suspended terrestrial suns, which turned night into day. I moved, weirdly, in a sea of light—and I accepted it all as an omen. Syrkin refused to let me take a droshky or carriage: it cost too much money and it was not fitting for a student. He had, as a matter of fact, ordered his landlady to come down to the station with a small cart drawn by a dog! In the cart there was room enough for my baggage: and Syrkin and I went up on foot to his lodgings, like pilgrims approaching a shrine.

The dog pulled away at the cartful of baggage: the landlady drove the dog: and Syrkin and I strolled two or three miles through the streets of Berlin to his lodgings in the northern quarter of the city. I cannot truthfully say that my entry into Berlin was majestic or imposing. I had not thought of it in connection with a dog yoked to a small cart: in fact, I did not know this curious combination existed. But as soon as Syrkin told me that this was the proper thing for students, I dismissed the subject from my mind. Syrkin's room lay on the fifth floor of a typical worker's tenement: a vast building housing a huge swarm of lodgers. The room was large, well lighted, and decently furnished. Until my arrival Syrkin had been paying fifteen marks (three dollars and seventy-five cents) a month for room and breakfast. The two of us would now pay twenty-five marks for the same service.

Breakfast, as I soon learned, consisted of a cup of coffee and two slices of black bread thinly covered with butter. By way of variety the lodger could order a cup of coffee and two white rolls *without* butter; for white bread, unbuttered, was the equivalent of black bread buttered. During the week Syrkin went in for black bread and butter: on the Sabbath he sacrificed substance for elegance—a memorial of the Sab-

bath white bread of his far-away home. The landladies were, in almost every case, workingwomen or the wives of workingmen. The average earnings of a workingman in Berlin, in those days, was between seventy-five and ninety marks a month (between eighteen and twenty-three dollars), and the income derived from a student lodger counted heavily in the family budget; the result was that a student was always treated with consideration and respect.

Immediately after my first Berlin breakfast, Syrkin conducted me to the Russian Reading Rooms, two moderate rooms poorly furnished, but supplied with all the Russian papers of a liberal tendency. The reactionary papers were excluded. The Jewish press was represented by the Russian *Voschod*. It was only some time later, after a bitter struggle at open meetings, a struggle which lasted for months, that the club agreed to subscribe for the Hebrew papers too. The readers were ninety per cent. Jewish, ten per cent. real Russian or Polish.

What should be noted is, that the fight against the Hebrew papers was not conducted by the Russians or Poles, but by the Jewish students, who thought it their duty to express their abhorrence of nationalist chauvinism by refusing admission to the Hebrew press. The *Hamelitz* and the *Hazephirah*, they argued, were reactionary by virtue of their language alone. This strange circumstance suffices to indicate what was the spirit among those Jewish students who had been practically expelled from Russia *for being Jews*. Arrived in Berlin, they at once proclaimed themselves Russians, and violently repudiated anything that bound them to their own race and people.

To illumine this queer situation, I want to interpolate at this point an incident that took place some time later. Long after my arrival in Berlin we founded the Russian Jewish

Scientific Society, which was the point of concentration for all the Jewish national elements of the student body. A group of students consisting of twenty Jews, five Russians, and two Poles got together, then, with the idea of founding a rival organization. It was proposed that this new organization should be given a frankly anti-nationalist name. But the Russians objected. They suggested the name, The Russian Society—but there they met with the bitter opposition of the two Poles. For the latter argued: "We fled from Poland in order to escape the ruthless policy of Russification pursued by the dominant government. Shall we now voluntarily put on the mask of Russians?" After the matter had been debated unsatisfactorily for some time, a student by the name of Mandelstamm asked for the floor. In a long and earnest address he offered a compromise resolution. He understood thoroughly, he said, that the name of the Club should properly represent the pure Russian element: on the other hand he understood equally well the opposition of the two Polish students. He had a name which would satisfy, as he thought, both sides: namely, the Slavic Club. His resolution was defeated. Two of the Russian and one of the Polish students had some doubts as to the Slavic origin of the Jews. Mandelstamm was no fool: yet he never understood how ludicrous and slavish his proposal had been. He himself was so eager to deny that there was anything like a Jewish national entity, that it did not occur to him that others, non-Jew, would perceive its existence and consider it an obstacle.

In the nineties of the last century Germany was drunk with her great victory over France, and with dreams of a Roman world-power. In folk-school and university, in village and metropolis, in the local club and in the Reichstag,

the burden of all music was *Deutschland über Alles:* and the music was filled with a fierce national pride and provocative chauvinism. And if this song was insufficient to express the rising temper of the country, there was that famous word of the Iron Chancellor: "We Germans fear no one but God."

The meaning of that phrase was: "We ignore the public opinion of mankind; we are the sole judges of our own acts. We do not deny the existence of God, but our account with him is private and confidential. And since we are the greatest power on earth, as He is in heaven, we shall no doubt reach an easy agreement with him." In society the place of honour was given to the Junker, and in the German Holy of Holies was enthroned the God of War. Goethe, Schiller, and Kant receded into the background; their place was taken by Bismarck and Von Moltke. The famous slogan of the French Revolution: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, was replaced by: Infantry, Artillery, Cavalry.

This general spirit in the Germany of the nineties was not without its effect on German Jewry. The German Jew, the last of the Jews of the West to be emancipated, felt himself impelled to take over the moral rulership over the Jews of the rest of the world—that is, to whatever extent the disorganized state of world Jewry permitted the existence of rule. For there had not yet arisen Jewish world-organizations with a political programme. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century it was France that had set the tone for the rest of the world; and as a parallel effect it was French Jewry that played the leading rôle in world-Jewry. The Alliance Israélite Universelle was the recognized leader in world Jewish affairs, and the spokesman for the Jewish people.

After 1870 German Jewry, a body within the fastest-growing power in the world, could not content itself with a

second place in world-Jewry. Even objectively, the Jews of Germany probably were entitled to the first place. They were, after all, the largest group among the emancipated Jews of the West: for the Jews of Galicia were only half emancipated, and to a certain extent they belonged to the Jews of eastern Europe. Moreover, the geographic position of German Jewry gave them a definite advantage.

The greatest Jewish problem was in Russia, and Germany was a neighbour of Russia. But there was another, and more important point, to sustain the claim of German Jewry. They were, after all, the creators of the *Jüdische Wissenschaft*, modern Jewish science, and had hung up new constellations in the skies of Jewish scholarship. They had surpassed all other groups in their work on the rich Jewish past. Their records were enriched with names like Mendelssohn and his followers, Zunz, Geiger, Steinschneider, Jost, Fürst, and Grätz. For more than one reason, then, the Jews of Germany felt entitled to the first place in world-Jewry: but they did not attain to it without a fierce struggle, and in the days that I am writing of, the struggle was at its fiercest.

The Jews of Germany looked down on the Jews of eastern Europe. They were totally ignorant of the important and organized political struggle which was then taking place within the body of Russian Jewry. They were ignorant of the great renaissance which was swinging the Russian Jewish masses upward. No one had an inkling of the new Hebraic literature which was then beginning to blossom. As for the Yiddish literature, that was beneath the notice of the German Jews, for Yiddish as a language was a constant shame and reproach to them. They said that Yiddish was *Maushel* language—Sheeney language—and they resented the re-

minder that only a few generations back they had known no other.

There used to be Russian Jewish students in Berlin even before our time; but they had been few in number, and they had belonged to a special class. None of them had passed through a high school. The University of Berlin, like most of the German universities, had certain excellent principles. It made no demands on the *foreigner*—no examinations, and no previous certificates of any kind. These conditions had been freely taken advantage of by former Yeshivah students, who were caught up in the passion for education, and who had no hopes of ever getting into a high school, or of picking up equivalent credits. They obtained immediate and easy entrance into the University of Berlin. Some of them, the most gifted, went far, and achieved great reputations in the scientific world, particularly in mathematics and medicine. But most of them remained "perpetual students." Some of these typical Russian Jewish students I still found in Berlin. After 1887 the picture changes. The University of Berlin is flooded with Jewish students who had gone through high school at home, and had been stopped at the threshold of the Russian universities by the new decrees. These decrees sent them abroad in hordes, to Switzerland and France and Germany, but chiefly the last.

The majority of the Russian Jewish students went in for medicine and chemistry. Chemistry was, at that time, *the* modern science, and therefore the most attractive to youth. Today we realize that forty years ago chemistry was in its infancy. Only a handful of students went in for pure philosophy, while two or three chose mathematics. I remained true to my original plans: to study Jewish science. There were two possibilities before me: either to enrol in the theological

seminary of Dr. Asriel Hildesheimer, the representative of the extreme orthodox, or to enter the Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums, which prepared trained Rabbis of the liberal wing, and also admitted students who did not intend to enter the Rabbinate. It should be noted that even the Hochschule was very far from Reform Judaism. In America, for instance, it would be regarded today as a representative of conservative Judaism. I knew that the seminary of Dr. Hildesheimer was as good as closed to me: the severe standards set for the beginner and the régime maintained in the school ruled me out. But I was interested in getting to know the leader of orthodox German Jewry, and I paid him a visit. He received me at seven in the morning, by which time he had already said the long morning prayers, and his first question was, whether I had done so too. I told him truthfully that I had not said prayers yet. He made this the subject of an immediate little lecture—polite enough in form. The first few minutes of conversation convinced me doubly that I had nothing to look for here, and I turned the conversation to the more general subject of the condition of the Jews of Russia. I permitted myself, during the talk, to introduce a great many Hebrew phrases, not to show off, but because I was short of German. Dr. Hildesheimer showed a deep interest in the state of Russian Jewry; but before me stood a representative of an old order, which had become petrified in ancient forms, and had little understanding of the problems of a living, suffering, and struggling Jewry.

The pride of Berlin, the symbol of her imperial rule, was and still is Unter den Linden, the magnificent street which began at the Brandenburg Gate, with its bronze chariots and its rearing horses of bronze, brought in triumph from

France in 1870, and ended with the palace of the young Caesar. Between these lay palaces and princely homes, embassies and museums and the buildings of the university; here too were the headquarters of the greatest commercial houses, and cafés known the world over—the most famous among them being the Café Bauer, the rendezvous of writers, scholars, scientists, and statesmen. In those days Unter den Linden was the centre not only of Berlin, but of Germany and of Europe.

The Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums had also managed to edge its way into Unter den Linden, so that on paper at least it had a distinguished address. But apart from the paper address, the institute that was intended for the training of Jewish scholars and leaders was most ignobly lodged. The houses of Berlin were built deep; often they had two and three inner courts, parallel with the street. In such a courtyard, on the third floor of a square building, the Hochschule occupied three dark rooms that would have been a disgrace to an unpretentious elementary school. When I visited the building for the first time, in order to enrol, I was simply shocked. This, then, was the respect with which wealthy German Jewry treated the Jewish Torah! In its staff of teachers the Hochschule was almost as poor as in its housing. There were, in all, four professors: Dr. Joel Miller for Talmud, Dr. David Cassel for History, Dr. Chaim Steinthal for the philosophy of religion, and Rabbi Dr. Maybaum for Homiletics. The most important of them, famous as one of the greatest German Jewish scholars, was Steinthal. He was a luminous spirit. His special field was research in philology and the history of culture, and together with M. Lazarus he was the founder of the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie* in which the foremost scholars of the time co-operated. Steinthal's chief work, *The Origin of Lan-*

guage and Logic, was regarded as a classic. His colleague in the Seminary, Dr. Cassel, was only in the second rank as historian, nor were Miller and Maybaum particularly distinguished.

The student body had thirty members, the great majority of them foreigners, and of these most came from Galicia and Hungary. There were four of us from Russia. The German Jewish students were astoundingly ignorant; their knowledge was about equal to that of a *cheder* boy at home, in his second or third term. Yet they were looked upon as the leaders in the seminary, and were treated with special tenderness by the professors. Their claim to special consideration lay in their passports; they were, after all, Germans, while we others were aliens.

After the era of Zunz, Geiger, and their colleagues, German Jewry fell away from Jewish scholarship with extraordinary rapidity. The old scholars died, and no new ones rose to take their place. Things had reached such a pitch, that of the dozen or so Rabbis of the United Community of Berlin, three-quarters had been imported from Hungary. This explains why the seminary gave such special treatment to the German students, and offered them all sorts of compromises in order to keep them in the Rabbinate. The fact that they spoke German—and spoke it without an accent—covered a multitude of shortcomings. I knew certain young German Rabbis whose knowledge fitted them much better for a Protestant church than for a Jewish temple. But the Jews of Germany felt more comfortable when German chauvinism was preached to them by a native Jew rather than by an imported Hungarian Jew. I shall have much to say later concerning the rôle of the Hungarian Rabbis in the de-Judaizing of the Jews of Germany.

I must confess that in the field of Jewish knowledge I

learned more from the Christian professors in the university than from the Jewish teachers in the Hochschule. There was nothing astonishing in this. The Jewish scholars of the Zunz-Geiger epoch (the middle of the nineteenth century), who really achieved great things in Jewish research, had made it their object to display to the world the spiritual and cultural treasures of the Jew of the past. Zunz himself stated clearly that the road to emancipation lay through Jewish scholarship: as soon as the world at large should learn from what decent forbears the Jew was descended, it would receive him as an equal.

The difference between the Jewish scholars and their Christian colleagues was a matter of time; for both of them Jewish values lay in a great cemetery. With the Christian scholars that cemetery ended with Nazareth; with the Jewish scholars it ended with modern times. A deep instinct of piety urged the latter to put up the most gorgeous monuments to our past, and to adorn them with rich flowers: "There was once a glorious past—may it rest in peace for ever!"

And the inevitable happened. If the past is dead for the modern Jew, the modern Jew is dead to his past. Under these circumstances it was impossible that the Hochschule should mean anything real to the east-European Jew, for the latter had been brought up in another atmosphere; for him Judaism was something living and struggling, something that strove toward new forms of development. For instance, I tried to start up a conversation with the teachers of the Hochschule concerning the new Hebrew literature, our great modern writers and poets; but they simply did not understand me. Hebrew was a thing of the past, and all these efforts to awaken it to new life were pure waste of energy.

The most outspoken opponent of Hebrew as a living lan-

guage, as the symbol of an existing Jewish folk-will, and a still-developing Jewish culture, was Dr. Maybaum, one of the foremost Rabbis of the United Jewish Community of Berlin. He was opposed to Hebrew not because this language, so long a language of books, was unable to meet the needs of the modern man, but because it was a principle with him to oppose every expression of the Jewish national will. Maybaum was one of a group of German Rabbis who considered it their duty to shield the Jews of Germany from the dangerous winds of Jewish nationalism which had begun to blow from the East. Himself a Hungarian, he eagerly adapted himself to the narrowest German chauvinism, and exerted himself with all the ingenuity of a gifted orator to reinterpret even ancient Judaism as anti-national in spirit. Under his skilful guidance, the Prophets of old suddenly emerged as cosmopolitans, and Judaism became a colourless, raceless, and passionless form of philosophic monotheism. It was in this spirit that he strove to train his students of the Hochschule; but not all of the students were as docile as the Germans and the Hungarians. He had particular difficulty with two students, Joseph Luria and myself; and it was hard going with some of the Galicians, Zvi Malter, Joshua Thon, and Mordecai Ehrenpreis. During the Homiletic hours, one or another of these five would precipitate a debate, and sharply criticize the viewpoint defended by the teacher. Until we arrived—so the older students told us —there had been peace and harmony in the Hochschule. We were the first to disturb the slumbers of cemetery Judaism in that retired and peaceful corner known as the Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums.

It was the custom among the teachers to invite some of the students to the home ceremonies of Passover. My invitation came from Dr. Maybaum. The exegesis I heard that

evening concerning the traditional customs and rites of the Passover—uttered by a "modern" scholar—rivalled in ingenuity the most far-fetched efforts of our old Magidim at home; and every point was aimed at one object—to prove that the national idea had never played a rôle in Jewish history. Even the dramatic incident of the Exodus from Egypt was to be accepted only as a symbol. I deliberately turned the conversation toward the reawakening spirit of east-European Jewry, and spoke of the new Hebrew literature that was blossoming in Russia. Dr. Maybaum, anxious to crush me with one *coup de massu*, said sternly: "I do not write Hebrew as a matter of principle." When I asked him why, he answered quietly: "Because I am a German." I let this pass, but a little later in the evening I introduced the subject of the English language, and said, solemnly: "I do not write English as a matter of principle." Dr. Maybaum, failing to understand me, looked at me blankly, and asked: "Why?" I also answered, very quietly: "Because I don't know the language." Dr. Maybaum did not invite me to his house a second time.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RUSSIAN JEWISH SOCIETY

THE Russian student colony in Berlin lived a life apart from the German student body. The contacts between the two were confined to the lecture hall and the laboratory. Nor could there be any social or political contacts, for the two groups of students could never have understood each other. On the one side were the "native sons," deep-rooted in their land, satisfied, proud, convinced that God had created the world in order that Germany might be its leader. On the other side were the homeless aliens, young people uprooted from their native land, haunted by doubts and fears, seeking some sort of economic and social foothold in a world which was not theirs. Their outlook was misty, their plans vague, for not all of them were definitely determined to return to Russia. The old proverb, "The sated man does not understand the hungry man," applies in the psychic sense, too, and runs both ways: the sated man *does not want* to understand the hungry man, the hungry man *cannot* understand the sated man.

Beyond these considerations was the fact that the Russian student was regarded as an ex-officio nihilist, and therefore unfit for society. Besides, ninety per cent. of the Russian students were Jews, and some ninety per cent. of the German students were anti-Semites, or anti-Semitically inclined. The element of anti-Semitism might not have been so decisive if it had not been for the unintentional rôle played

by the German Jewish student. The Russian Jewish student was remote from the German student; and anti-Semitism, like all pure impulses, obeys the law of the inverse square. The German anti-Semite has the deepest and most consistent dislike of the German Jew; and the more distant the Jew is from him, the more human he becomes in his attitude. But here the ancient Teutonic feeling of decency and justice stepped in. The German anti-Semite would not permit himself to treat his fellow countryman, the Jew, any worse than he treated the foreign Jew. So he set out to dislike the Russian Jew as intensely as he did the native Jew.

The Russian Jewish student colony lived an isolated, almost insulated, life, and worked out its own social forms. Physically it lived in Berlin, the capital of the German Empire. Actually it lived on an island, locked in and locked out. But apart from his social life, the Russian Jewish student had before him a world of possibilities, scientific and artistic. Every institute, every museum, stood open to him. To the honour of the German as an individual be it said that his love and respect for art and science frequently overcame his negative attitude toward the Jew and the foreigner, and the Russian Jewish student of genuine talent and authentic will to work was able to find support in his teacher and even in his German fellow student.

The political life of the country, too, was closed to the Russian Jewish student; he could observe it only from a distance. It must be remembered that Germany was not a centre of immigration. The stranger arriving in America regards himself as part of the country the moment he sets foot in it. He can begin to build at once, without fear or afterthought. No wonder that many east-European Jews, setting out for America, provided themselves in advance with American flags. If they had a passport, they would cross the frontier

of their native land by day: if they had no passport, they would—as the strange and characteristic phrase is in Yiddish—*steal* the frontier: in either case, the moment the frontier was behind them they would begin to say: "We Americans."

France and England were not countries of immigration to the same degree as America. But even here the stranger could hope to live himself into the structure of the land. In France the laws of naturalization were somewhat more complicated than in England; but in both countries they were at least regulated. In Germany the alien Jew—especially if he came from the East—had to rely on time. His *children*, perhaps, might become citizens of the country. In France and in Germany the newcomer might work definitely for the realization of his ideal; the very regulations made it possible. And for that reason he could, from the very day of his arrival, take a lively interest in the politics of the country. This was impossible in Germany. Yet the youth, and the Russian youth in particular, were passionately interested in politics and in political movements. This was perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the type. These were young men who could live on dry bread eaten by measure—but could not live without movements and meetings. And one door was open to them. Native and foreigner, Jew and Christian, were always sure of the same warm human welcome in the ranks of the Social Democratic Party. I have already mentioned the fact that when the new restrictions were being worked out in Russia against the Jewish student, a few of the more intelligent statesmen warned the country that they were driving this element into the arms of the Socialist movement. The accuracy of their prognosis can be proved statistically. But statistics are unnecessary. No one with any knowledge of that period and that country

can deny that the narrow spirit of the Russian government led, along these lines, toward self-destruction. The Russian Jewish student was driven into Germany; from Germany he brought back into Russia the seeds of the new movement of the West; and these seeds, widely scattered among Jew and gentile, led in the end to the collapse of the old régime. I will not, here, enter into the question of the *extent* to which the persecuted and extruded Jewish student *hastened* the process. I only wish to point out the inevitable processes of history, the fastening of link to link in the making of the completed chain.

The Jewish Socialist students in Berlin had their own organization, but their situation was none too happy. The shackles of Russia had dropped from our limbs, yet we were far from having achieved real freedom. For instance, it was dangerous to become a subscriber to the German Socialist daily, *Vorwärts*. It might mean a refusal, on the part of the police, to renew the residential permit of the foreigner. Students would therefore receive the paper under their landlady's name; but even then they were not safe from the spies employed by the Russian government and abetted by the Prussian police. It was curious to note how the German police would regard the political activity of the foreign student not as an internal German matter, to be regulated by German law, but purely from the Russian point of view. More than once it would occur that men were punished, of course through the regular administrative channels, for crimes that were not crimes according to German law. In its own inverted way, the Prussian government extended to Russian students in Germany the extraterritorial rights generally reserved for ambassadors and their entourage. And in the German Reichstag German Socialists more than once protested against this incredible compliance on the part

of officials of all ranks—who were motivated by something more than academic interest in Russia's internal affairs. It was to the interest of Germany, or at least of Prussia, that the movement toward freedom in Russia should be nipped in the bud. I mention only a few considerations. Political liberty is, like everything else, relative. Prussia was glad to have a neighbour in comparison with which her own subjects could call themselves free. There were winds of freedom enough blowing upon Germany from the West.

The Jewish nationalist students were much better off. Since the Russian government was not interested in the question of Jewish nationalism, Prussian liberty, unadulterated by Russian influence, sufficed for our purposes. We could found an organization, and hold open meetings, after observing certain easy formalities. I repeat that things were easier, in this respect, for the Jewish nationalists. In another respect they were, consequently, at a disadvantage. Again there was lacking that possibility of the martyr's crown which provokes the action and the admiration of the youth.

In time there was founded the Russian Jewish Scientific Society, which drew into its ranks the ablest of the healthily nationalistic forces among the Jewish student youth, and became a centre of attention for the student body as a whole. The founders of the society were devoted nationalists: some of them were even enthusiastic Choveve Zion. In spite of its name the society was political. It became the arena for the struggles of the two main forces in the Jewish student life of Berlin. One might perhaps say that it took on scientific character from its attitude toward the nationalist question. But at that time the scientific literature of nationalism hardly existed. Socialism, too, was generally approached from the publicistic and journalistic point of view, which

meant a natural opposition to a scientific nationalism. We had to carry on a stern fight against this prejudice; we had to define sharply our differentiation from easy, popular nationalism, which as a rule is nothing better than a low form of chauvinism, that is, a poison within nationalism, and not nationalism itself. We had, in fact, to give new and higher content to the word *nationalism.*

The immediate founders of the society were two young students, so opposite in training and temperament that I am tempted to give them the nicknames of Jacob and Esau. But there is one curious drawback to the parallel. In the biblical story it was Jacob who drew the skin of a kid over his delicate hands to impersonate his brother Esau, the hunter, and delude the blind old father. In this instance, however, a man with the nature of Esau drew over himself the spiritual skin of a Jacob, and for many years deluded his own comrades. These two men were Leo Motzkin and Moses Kreps.

Leo Motzkin, famous in the Jewish world as the president of the Jewish delegation which fought for Jewish rights at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, came from an entirely Jewish world. Moses Kreps came from Kertsch, a forlorn point in southern Russia, on the shores of the Azov Sea: a place from which a Jewish atmosphere—if it ever existed there—had long since disappeared. He came of an assimilated Jewish family, and I doubt whether he knew the Hebrew alphabet at the time when he became co-founder of the Russian Jewish Scientific Society. From his appearance, he could have been taken for a Scandinavian, or a German, but certainly not for a Jew, and not even for a Russian. The German landladies regarded all Russian Jewish students as Russians, and they would always ask, as Kreps moved from place to place, "How does a Russian

come to be so blond?" He lived a joyous life, and was as a matter of fact greatly pleased with his non-Jewish appearance. He was a student of chemistry and, according to his colleagues, immensely ignorant in this subject too. What it was that drove this man to link himself with the Jewish cause remained a mystery to all of us. Neither his upbringing, nor his education, nor his attitude toward Judaism, neither his general attitude toward things, which lacked seriousness, nor yet his intellectual make-up, warranted his joining a society of this kind. That he should have helped to found it was inexplicable. He did more than that. For a time he even maintained himself in the leading place, as chairman, while Motzkin played second fiddle. All of us felt that it was beneath the dignity of our society to permit him to take the chair. But Kreps was a skilful manipulator, and he retained the position for years.

His impudence was hardly short of sublime. On one occasion he undertook to deliver a lecture in our society on the subject of the Kaballah. The lecture was quite a good one, filled with learned citations from the Zohar, but it was as clear as day that it was stolen, that is, obtained to order. Kreps was a cagy customer. He refused to submit the subject to a debate, as was the custom with us. His comrades understood the point and protested vigorously. But Kreps was deaf. Queerly enough he was not blind: he stared his comrades coolly back in the face, and ignored their demands. In later life, Kreps's career was punctuated regularly with marvellous stunts of this kind. With enormous difficulty—and again probably with secret assistance—he managed to graduate from the University, as a chemist. He returned to Russia, and to the stupefaction of all who knew him he became not a regular chemist, but a Rabbi, in the Jewish colonies of the Kherson region. As if this was not

enough, he crowned his career by becoming Rabbi in the great city of Odessa: called to the position not by the Jewish community, but by the Russian government, which appointed him against the protests of the Jews.

Until this day, I confess, I do not understand what it was that impelled Kreps to enter the Rabbinate. In whatever other profession he might have chosen, his nature would have found more room for action, he would have achieved greater material success, and he would have obtained a greater degree of respect. For in the Rabbinic profession he was treated with contempt by the Jews, and practically excluded from decent society. But one thing I can see. Even as a student of chemistry, in Berlin, he was preparing himself for a specifically Jewish career. It is also clear to me that Kreps was a born smuggler, or contrabandist. He could not cross a frontier legally, even when supplied with the proper papers. He had to fool the guards. His lecture on the Kaballah was a *ballon d'essai*. He wanted to find out whether intellectual material could be carried across a frontier against the law. Successful on this occasion, he conceived the idea of transmuting himself into contraband material: he smuggled *himself* across the Jewish frontier.

However, his influence as chairman of the Russian Jewish Scientific Society began to wane. He was soon regarded as an altogether curious phenomenon—baffling but ridiculous. The spiritual leader of the society was always Motzkin. The secretary of the society was Joseph Luria, later editor of *Der Yud*, and at present the director of the school department of the Zionist Executive in Palestine. Luria, who studied together with me in the Hochschule, had received a wholly non-Jewish education. When he came to Berlin, he determined to make good what he lacked in the Jewish field: and he achieved this thanks to his enormous patience and

his chivalrous devotion to his ideal. Luria's nature was as modest as it was clear; if he lived in the shadow, it was by choice. He took his studies at the university—world-history was his subject—very seriously, and was one of the ablest students of his class. The lectures he gave to our society were solid, thorough, without irrelevant ornament: more than anything else, they rested on a real foundation.

The three of us, Motzkin, Luria, and myself, formed a triumvirate in the society. We were drawn to each other instinctively. We made no formal declarations, and took no oath of friendship; but our friendship has lasted some forty years. The cement that has held that friendship together was the Jewish national movement, and our programme in those early days in Berlin was not less Zionist than was that of the World Zionist Organization which Theodore Herzl was to found seven years later. We took the work upon ourselves, and divided it into three sections, according to our abilities. Motzkin was the organizer and logician; Luria was the theoretician and historian; I was the propagandist. I had to be. I knew the Jewish sources better than they; and I was stronger in debate. I was by nature a missionary, and even my logic was fiery. I was not satisfied with cold truths; I wanted truths that blazed and illumined.

The society held its meetings on Saturday nights—but the society alone was only the centre or focus of our work. The mass of the work had to be done daily, continuously—and it was genuine missionary work; the catching of souls, which, when caught, were to be prepared and brought into camp—the society. Not content with "working" the enrolled students, we organized to catch them as they arrived. Every morning the train would bring into Berlin, from the eastern frontiers, new and unsuspecting hordes of students; and Socialists and Nationalists lay in ambush for them. These

newcomers were green; for the most part they did not know where their sympathies lay, and their future would be decided by their first contacts. The competition was fierce. The agents of the two parties would be standing in the station, before sunrise, under the flickering arc-lights. The Jewish student coming from Russia was easily recognizable, if not by his appearance, then by his marvellous collection of bundles and baskets and packages. The scene is still engraved on my mind. The station is either the Friedrichstrasse or the Alexander Platz. From a fourth-class carriage a student creeps out, dragging after him his packages. Two young men detach themselves from the crowd, and make for him; each of them claims the honour of leading the newcomer to his lodgings. There they stand, all three of them gummy-eyed from lack of sleep. The newcomer rubs his eyes; in the land he comes from Jews were accustomed to receiving blows; here he sees people coming to blows over a Jew.

CHAPTER XVIII

BEER AND IDEALS

It was the rule for every student organization to have its regular locale—generally a side-room in a restaurant. The German restaurants were for the greater part beer-halls; they did their chief business on drinks, and the food was an incidental. The proprietor of a German restaurant was not interested in the appetites of his customers; what he wanted to know was whether they were thirsty enough.

Beer-drinking was a German cult—the expression of the early German spirit which had turned heaven itself into a magnificent brewery, with attendant angels in the form of the Walkürie. Every student had his daily ration to consume, and he performed this duty with Teutonic piety and thoroughness. When a German student complained, "I haven't had my beer today," with a slight stress on the "my," he did not mean that he had forgotten to drink that day; had this been what he meant, he would have been sent to a doctor. All he meant was that he had not reached his quota. If he was one short to his fifteen glasses, he went around feeling a strange lack or emptiness. The leading beer drinkers were the Bavarians. The classic riddle in our day was: "What is the difference between a Bavarian student in the morning and in the evening?" The answer was: "In the morning he is a beer-barrel, in the evening, a barrel of beer."

Amongst the students the weak drinker was despised, and

even hated. I remember a famous beer-drinking contest that was arranged between the theological and the medical faculties of the University of Berlin. The interest in the event, inside and outside the university, was enormous. The corridors of the halls buzzed with controversy, and the daily newspapers were full of it. The two faculties chose their most famous topers, and there was a month's intensive training, with close observation and calculation of odds. The event was naturally transported into the realm of the Higher Controversy, and the outcome was seen as a step forward—or backward—in the struggle between Science and Faith. Among the fundamentalists in the college and the public, the medical faculty—the challenging side—was accused of blasphemy, though at the same time the theological faculty was applauded for having taken up the impious challenge. The contest took place in one of the famous beer-halls of Berlin. It was a tense evening. Much the same mood must have reigned among the spectators when the great and stern Elijah faced the prophets of Baal on the summit of Carmel many centuries ago. It was, in both cases, a decisive moment, the only difference being that in the earlier case the contending prophets waited for a divine fire to descend from heaven, and here they prayed for a divine thirst. God recognized his own, and the theological faculty won: and the news of the victory and defeat was wired to every corner of the German Empire.

This question of beer-drinking was a bitter one with the German Jewish students. They were anxious to keep pace with the real Germans, but it was not an easy task. There was a trifling difference between them; the German had to exert all his will power in order to keep away from beer; the Jew had to exert all of his in order to drink an appreciable quantity. The atavisms of the Jews refer back to a land

"flowing with milk and honey"—not with beer. To the honour of the German Jewish students let it be said that they made fantastic efforts, achieved quite a decent reputation as beer-drinkers, and rescued the name of Jew from utter ignominy. A distance still remained between the real Germans and the Jews. The Jews drank respectably enough; but there was a difference in the manner, the tone, the timbre, of the drinking. On the one side it was joyous, enthusiastic, with a pious happiness as of the favourite priest before his god; on the other side it was determined, slightly sour, with too much sense of a duty done.

This question of beer-drinking played an almost fatal rôle in the history of our Russian Jewish Scientific Society. It goes without saying that the moderate success of the German Jewish students, achieved after generations of training and selection, was altogether beyond our reach. We Jews had lived in Russia since time immemorial and had never caught the trick of a manly drink of vodka: how could we be expected to acquire the art of beer-drinking overnight? Our drinks used to be mostly chicory, under the more elegant name of coffee; when we felt riotous, we took a glass of raisin wine—drinks you could order in a German beer-hall only at the peril of your life. Our great trouble rose from the custom of the restaurants in regard to the student societies. A locale was set aside within a restaurant free of charge; the proprietor made his rent on the drinks. Twenty German students could shift, in one evening, between three and four hundred glasses of beer. That was enough. Now our meetings, even at the beginning, would draw a crowd of over a hundred persons. When we informed a proprietor of our numbers, he was eager to offer us a room. But the first meeting sufficed to disillusion him. The more than hundred of us were not worth half a dozen decent

Germans. So we were driven from restaurant to restaurant, from beer-hall to beer-hall. Our society took on the exile-character of the Jewish people. At every meeting Motzkin used to beg the students, almost with tears in his eyes: "Friends, for God's sake drink more beer. Have some consideration for the society." It was useless. A man can bring the great sacrifice once, but few human beings can keep bringing little sacrifices. Not only were we averse to beer but the majority of us were poor. We would order tea, coffee, and even seltzer; and occasionally two and three students would combine to make up a single order. In eating we were as sparing as in drinking—an insult to the waiter, an injury to the proprietor. And not even the generous tips which shame compelled us to leave could quite reinstate us in the eyes of the waiter, who felt the essential difference between us and the German student, and knew that we belonged to a lower cultural level. He liked his tips: but he liked, more than that, to wait on gentlemen. In the end we made up our minds to *pay* for a room, and thus be free from the eternal torment of what and how much to eat and drink.

Our society was probably the only one in Berlin that paid rent for a room in a restaurant; that is to say, it was probably the most primitive organization in regard to eating and drinking. But it made up for this by the wealth of problems that faced it, and the passion of the discussions, which after every lecture would last far, far into the night—not infrequently until the quiet morning star was shining on the roofs of Berlin. This was another source of misunderstanding between the Germans and the Jews. They saw fellow students—the wild "Russians"—who drank neither beer nor wine, but who shouted and argued as if they were half-drunk, while their faces shone and their eyes glittered with

a fierce enthusiasm. Sons of a sated people, they could not understand that for us words were enough to bring on a more lasting intoxication.

Our society was founded by and for the Jewish Nationalists: it became a rallying-centre for the Socialists and anti-Nationalists, who came there to sharpen *their* weapons on us. They attended every debate: and practically every debate, whatever it began with, ended with Socialism versus Nationalism. The Socialists had one advantage over us. Whenever they were short of forces, they could bring to their assistance well-known figures from the Socialist world, to crush us with authority if they could not do it with argument. Our debates became famous, and the number of students present frequently ran into several hundreds. Then the debate was not a discussion, but a genuine battle between two philosophies in the presence of eager and passionate spectators.

One of the deadliest debaters on the Socialist side was Parvus, who had even in those days achieved a considerable reputation as a Marxist theoretician. He was present at almost every meeting. In debate he was swift and merciless; and his vocabulary, unfortunately, was more fitted for the bar-room than for a Scientific Society. He always spoke not as if he were discussing theoretical matters, but with a terrific immediacy, as though the barricades were rising in the streets of Berlin, and the mortal struggle of the classes had opened. I remember one of his addresses at a meeting of the society: the picture comes back to me across more than forty years. Parvus was thundering—as only he could—against the meaninglessness of nationalism. He cited Marx, history, and philosophy, and then, feeling that these arguments were too vague and academic, he grabbed hold of his own coat and roared: "The wool in this coat was taken from

sheep which were pastured in Angora; it was spun in England, it was woven in Lodz; the buttons come from Germany, the thread from Austria: is it not clear to you that this world of ours is *inter*national, and even a miserable thing like a coat is made up of the labour of ten different races?"

The argument and, still more, the illustration, was effective. You could almost *feel* the stream of intellectual sympathy turning in Parvus's direction. Hands were lifted to applaud—and then something unexpected happened. Parvus's coat was too small for him. In the fury of gesticulation, and while he pulled his coat about to illustrate his argument, he had ripped the right elbow, which now showed a stretch of white shirt. Right opposite Parvus sat Nachman Syrkin, whose eyes burned with rage and contempt. Just at the moment when Parvus had completed his argument, Syrkin, unable to contain himself, rose to his feet and shouted: "And the rip in your sleeve comes from the pogrom of Kiev!" The effect of that interjection was marvellous. Parvus had worked an hour to come to his climax of the international coat. Syrkin had undone him with a sentence. The hands that were lifted to applaud Parvus seemed to swing over. You *knew* they were applauding Syrkin now. A fearful tumult rose in the hall. Idiotically, Parvus roared that he had never been in Kiev, and that at the time of the famous pogrom he had been in the Baltic countries. Nobody cared where he had been. For that evening, at least, he was undone.

There were other figures in our meetings who were destined to rise to prominence. Tugan Baranovski, the Russian economist, was one of us; Berdiaiev the mystic and Peter Struve, already a scholar, were also there. I did not know then, of course, that in later years I would be together with Struve in one of the parties in the Russian Duma. I had

not changed—but he had. Originally one of the most brilliant Marxist theoreticians, he later became a liberal, a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party, called the Cadets—and a leader of its *right* wing. I shall have much to tell of him. For he was a leader among those who helped to prepare the Russian Revolution of 1905, and a powerful personality first in the Social Democratic and later in the Constitutional Democratic movement.

The year 1891 was marked by an incident which created—or revealed—a profound crisis in the history of the Jews of Russia, and shook world-Jewry to its foundations: I allude to the celebrated "Expulsion from Moscow." This incredibly infamous act of the Russian government, more cruel—because calculated with more refinement—than the more famous expulsion from Spain, four hundred years before, made clear to all of humanity that the five million Jews of Russia were outcasts and outlaws. The pogroms left the government with an excuse: "These were outbursts of elemental hatred, a folk-movement which has grown up through the centuries." In this case not the folk were responsible, but the government; and the driving out of the Jews was affected on a scale which only a modern government could achieve.

The plans were laid in St. Petersburg, by a general staff under the direction of Von Plehve and Pobedonostzev. Their plans were large—Moscow was only the first trial. Their intention was to make the life of Russian Jewry literally intolerable. Moscow was being prepared to receive its new governor, the Grand Duke Sergei, the brother of the Czar, and, in his own right, a degenerate, a reactionary, and a bitter Jew-hater. It was for his visit that Moscow, the city of "forty times forty churches," "Moscow the White," the

ancient capital, was to be cleansed of its Jews. Thousands of Jewish families that had been living in Moscow for decades were suddenly arrested, dragged out of their houses, and transported, under police guard, to remote corners of Russia—to the "pale," to villages which could not receive them or nourish them. They travelled by stages, from filthy prison to filthy prison, until they arrived at their destination. At their destination they were free—to starve.

The order was carried out on a bitter cold night. When the word came round, thousands tried to flee, to hide. Men, women, and children, the sick and the pregnant, took refuge —in the vain hope of escaping the net—in cemeteries and even in brothels. But the search was long, systematic, and unrelenting. They were dragged out from their corners, and not a day's extension was given. The mass brutality of the action is probably something beyond the comprehension of modern Western readers. But even Russian Jewry, which had resigned itself to the pogroms as regular periodic events, was thrown into a horrible panic. The faint glimmer of hope that the Russian government would put an end to the horrors of the pogroms now died—and the second wave of emigration broke out with elemental fury. In the year 1891-1892 a quarter of a million Jews, most of them from Russia, crossed the ocean from the Old to the New World—two hundred and fifty thousand bewildered and oppressed human beings on the lookout for new homes.

They set forth, these hundreds of thousands, at a day's notice; they sold the last of their possessions under the pressure of the moment; with the meagre returns they bought fourth-class tickets, and, unorganized, unprotected, they took to the open road once more. World-Jewry had not even that degree of organization which it has today. West-European Jewry was still absorbed in its own problems of con-

struction, in its local institutions, spiritual and philanthropic—mostly the latter. The Jewish world was not prepared to meet a *national* catastrophe. It stood by helpless and watched the swollen torrent. The famous Alliance Israélite Universelle was able to play the rôle of the *Shtadtlan*, the benevolent, influential force, putting in a good word with governments and rulers: but that was about all. Baron Hirsch, the supreme Jewish philanthropist, was only just beginning his negotiations with the Russian government. In Germany there was not the first sign of a Jewish organization of international significance or scope. The little philanthropic institutions created by German Jewry could as easily cope with the new situation as a garden hose with an erupting volcano.

The path of the emigrants lay across Germany. From the German border there streamed toward Berlin a furious stream of emigrant trains, packed close with hungry wanderers: sometimes as many as two thousand emigrants a day. The railroad officials treated the emigrants with the same honour that was accorded many years later to Lenin, when he was being conducted back to the frontiers of Russia: the doors of the emigrant trains were locked and guarded. The Prussian government was anxious that every emigrant should arrive safely in America, and not a single one of them be dropped on the way—least of all on German territory. But all the emigrants had to pass through Berlin, the connecting centre for Bremen and Hamburg, the principal ports.

German Jewry suddenly came to itself. Philosophies, rationalizations, theologies, were thrown overboard; no one asked whether the Jews are a nation or a religious sect; the folk instinct leapt into conscious action. . . . The Jews are here—the time for talk is over. No one else will take care

of them; ours is the task. And it is proper to record here that no one who was a witness of the swift reaction of German Jewry to this overwhelming situation, can describe it as anything short of wonderful. They forgot the carefully guarded abyss between East and West, they forgot "prestige"; they remembered only that these were fellow Jews, to be treated like unfortunate brothers. In the frontier towns, in Berlin and Hamburg, the stations were staked out among committees composed of members of wealthy and influential Jewish families. Money began to flow in for the work from every corner of Germany; and committees of distinguished and refined women sprang up to take over the actual labour at the stations.

And now the opportunity presented itself to *our* society—the one organized section of the Russian Jewish nationalist youth. At first we were drawn into the work as interpreters and negotiators between the emigrants and the committees. The emigrants were speechless as well as helpless. We students, with the impudence of our years, had always assumed that we were masters of German—even when we had just arrived in the country. The emigrants had not the luxury even of this illusion. They were terrorized. In every person who approached them they suspected one of those infamous "agents"—they were without number—who sprang up at that time to prey on these wretched wanderers, the poorest of humanity. The emigrants were afraid even to confide their troubles to a stranger, lest that be made the subject of a charge or a deal. It was inevitable, then, that the position of intermediary should fall to our society. Motzkin as inevitably became the organizer of the work. More than one hundred of us placed ourselves at the service of the committee—more accurately, at the service of the emigrants. The chief work fell on my shoulders. It was the first oppor-

tunity given us to become more closely acquainted with the German Jews—and many of my prejudices vanished for ever. I saw that deeper than all theories and pretences lay the immovable instinct of the race; blood was stronger than ideology. The work of many generations, the labour of an immemorial history, cannot be blown away by the talk of a single age.

A special station was organized by the railroad officials, for the use of the emigrants. It was located in Charlottenburg, then one of the finest sections of Berlin. At five o'clock every morning we were there, to receive the emigrants—the average number was some eight hundred—with bread and coffee. When their ravenous hunger had been partly satisfied, there began the great job of washing the children: this fell to a special committee of women.

I shall never forget, I think, one woman—among the richest and most distinguished in Berlin—with whom this work brought me in contact: Frau Reichenheim. She was an elderly, grey-haired lady. The whole of that period, from the spring to the summer, she would be seen arriving in the grey hours of the morning, at the same time as the young students. She came in her smart equipage, accompanied by her husband. The latter, quite helpless otherwise, would simply start distributing money among the emigrants. But Frau Reichenheim had organized a regular toilet department. And she herself slaved for hours washing the children, and putting new clothes on them. She did this with a marvellous naturalness and sweetness and modesty, as though she had been born for it. There was no touch of pride or charity in her actions. Her comb and soap and towels put to shame the gold of her husband. Later on I became more intimately acquainted with the Reichenheim family. They

lived in one of the handsomest villas in Berlin, on the Thiergartenstrasse. They invited me frequently to afternoon tea, and on one occasion they arranged a meeting for me in their home, where I was to speak on the life of the Jews of Russia. It was my first lecture in German—and my German was weak. But my nerve was not.

The task of the students as intermediaries lay in the preparation of case-reports for the committee. And certain cases were eminently curious. We came across one woman with six children who had arrived in Berlin literally without a penny. The father was already in America; wife and children had set out to join him. I took the woman in to the committee, and she was asked how she had dared to set out with just enough money to carry her to Berlin. The unhappy woman explained that she had started with means enough—several hundred roubles—but that the money had disappeared piecemeal by the way, chiefly when she had to steal, with her six little ones, across the Russian frontier. The committee asked, incredulously, why she had not obtained a passport in the regular way; it would have been much cheaper. Indignantly, the woman produced a passport, properly stamped, for herself and her numerous children. This was beyond the German Jews. Why had she, then, stolen across the frontier? The woman looked at them in solemn and wordless astonishment. Passport or no passport, was it not necessary for a Jew to *steal* across a frontier? Could a Jew, under any circumstances, travel openly, just like a non-Jew? I had the hardest task persuading the committee that this woman was thoroughly honest. She was a mental not less than a physical victim of the Russian system of persecution. She had lost her human status in her own eyes. She was only hoping that what her husband had

written her about America was the absolute truth: that in that fabulous country Jews could live, move about, breathe, just as others did in her native country.

During the first period of the work, when money rained in, the committee was generous; it asked few questions, and it gave liberally. Later the stream of donations shrank, and the committee became cautious. Then the task of the intermediaries—the students—became more difficult. The committee finally resolved to help with money only those emigrants who had been *driven* out of Russia. Voluntary emigrants had to look after themselves. It seemed impossible at first to explain to the committee that there was no such thing as a *voluntary* emigrant. Technical distinctions were impossible. The Russian government had set out, deliberately, carefully, to make the life of the Jew intolerable; and not one of these victims was making the journey to America *pour le plaisir*. The committee still insisted that we make inquiries and divide the emigrants into the two classes. We students, acquainted with conditions in Russia, found the task impossible. We knew the meaninglessness of the distinction between those who had been driven from their homes and those who were being asphyxiated in their homes. We therefore adopted the method that Jacob, in the Bible, adopted for his father-in-law, Laban. "Is it speckled sheep you want? Here they are. Is it ring-straked sheep you want? Here they are." Suddenly all our emigrants became driven emigrants. And the committee became suspicious. Called before it, I explained, with much heat, the absurdity of the distinction they had tried to set up. It was inhumanly artificial. Here and there a case might be found to suit the committee. But this was a national problem, not a problem of individuals. Either my arguments, or my passion, made an impression. The committee sent out a second appeal for

funds, and the decision to discriminate among the wanderers was rescinded.

One of the members of the committee was a young grandson-in-law of Frau Reichenheim, Hugo Preuss, a lecturer in statistics in the University of Berlin. He later on became very popular as a reformer in the city administration of Berlin, and in 1918 it was his privilege to work out the constitution of the new republic. Preuss, while active on the committee, also undertook to work out the statistics of the situation. After he had heard my speech he took me aside, and made a special personal plea: "Mr. Levin, your point of view does honour to your human feelings. But what is going to happen to my statistics?" He said this with the despair of a man who sees the foundations of his world crumbling. But I had no alternative. I had to choose between emigrants and statistics, and the statistics were sacrificed.

CHAPTER XIX

WE FIGHT BARON HIRSCH

CONTACT and co-operation with the Immigration Relief Committee strengthened the position of our society, and gave it genuine public standing. A larger public became interested in its work. The language of the society still remained for the most part Russian; but now its theories and views had cut direct across a living problem. Hundreds of thousands of emigrants had given point to our contentions; and the German Jews realized that we were not simply babblers, but were concerned with the foundations of a problem which even they had not been able to avoid, at least in its direct, mass manifestations. Had Palestine, in those days, been a possible centre of immigration, we could easily have persuaded the German Jewish Committee to divert part of the stream of emigrants into that country. Among the emigrants there were many who fled blindly; the problem was not whither, but whence: out of Russia. And there were some who actually asked to be sent to Palestine.

At that time, however, the little new settlement in Palestine was passing through a crisis. The representative of the Odessa Committee (that was the name of the directive body of the Chibath Zion movement) was Vladimir Tiomkin. He lived in Jaffa, and directed the affairs of the Palestine Jewish Settlement to the extent that the Odessa Committee could participate in them. Tiomkin was an extraordinary figure. He was a technologist by training. But in his youth

he showed an unusual capacity for public work on a grand scale. Born in an assimilated environment, he left it for the Jewish national movement, and became one of its most influential leaders. From 1889 to 1891 the Chibath Zion movement moved powerfully upward. The pull toward Palestine took on the character of a genuine folk-movement among the Jews. Tiomkin represented the movement in Jaffa. But he was unable to cope with it, for he lacked the right kind of training, and so did his assistants. Neither he nor they knew much about the country, its possibilities and its laws. They did not realize that as an immigration centre Palestine would have to be developed; it could not be exploited at once. Tiomkin's appetite outran his intelligence. And before long the situation had become almost catastrophic. It was impossible, in 1891, the year of the Expulsion from Moscow, to make use of Palestine for our emigrants.

The circumstances were worse than depressing. It proved to all of us that the Chibath Zion movement was too small in scope; it could not respond to the magnitude of the historic task. And at this point there arose, on the horizon, a star of hope.

In those days Baron Hirsch was in the midst of his negotiations with the Russian government. First he worked out a plan for the improvement of the condition of the Jews by founding a far-flung net of Jewish trade schools and agricultural colonies. He had, for this purpose, set aside a fund of fifty million francs, as far back as 1888. But the Russian government was not particularly overjoyed by his plans. Its object was not to better the condition of the Jews, but to get rid of them. It therefore made a counter-proposition to the Baron. It was prepared to sacrifice itself to the extent of accepting his fifty million francs, but on one condition: it alone should have the direction of the fund. Baron

Hirsch refused this condition, and the plan fell through.

At this point I ought to mention a fact that was widely known to the Jews of Russia, and one which the historian Dubnow has thought important enough to record because it illumines so clearly the character of the two sides to the afore-mentioned proposed contract. When the representatives of Baron Hirsch realized that they could do nothing with the Russian government, they determined to bribe the Grand Inquisitor, Pobedonostzev, and gave him a million francs for his Church schools, with which he was waging a bitter fight against the secular schools. The bribe fell short; Pobedonostzev took the money—but he did nothing for the Jews.

After this incident Baron Hirsch saw that there was nothing to hope for within Russia. He believed that the Jewish problem could be solved only through a powerful stream of emigration, and he therefore founded the J.C.A., the famous Jewish Colonization Association. The purpose of this society was to regulate Jewish migration. Baron Hirsch and his advisers chose the Argentine as the centre of immigration. The plan found the support of nearly all the rich Jews of Russia, and of a part of the intellectual group: that is, of those elements which, being assimilationist, bitterly opposed Palestine and the Chibath Zion movement, as a threat to their ideology. The Argentine meant nothing to the Jews as an idea: it was therefore ideal for immigration.

Overnight there sprang up an "Argentinian" movement, as opposition to Palestine. Baron Hirsch was proclaimed the new Jewish Messiah, in contradistinction to Baron Rothschild, who was the main support of Palestinian colonization. The Jewish world was divided into two camps. The antagonism between "Argentine" and "Palestine" grew

from day to day, and the Jewish world was filled with bitterness and hate.

That antagonism penetrated to our society, where the enemies of Jewish nationalism—the Socialists—suddenly found new and practical support for their views in the will of a Jewish multi-millionaire. We nationalists accepted the challenge. We were prepared to show the world that if the Jewish masses were given a free choice, they themselves would choose not the Argentine, but Palestine. We took it upon ourselves to use the free summer months for the carrying out of a plebiscite among the Jews of Russia. We would use the result of this plebiscite as public pressure against Baron Hirsch and his advisers and satellites. We were not by any means convinced that the pressure would have any effect; but we would demonstrate that the Jewish people was doubly in slavery—among other nations, and amongst its millionaires.

Between the making of that resolution and its carrying out months were yet to pass. And it was during this period that I made my first attempt to associate myself organically with a scholar's career. I had, fortunately, a rare capacity for work; I could go months on an allowance of three hours' sleep nightly. And I worked at night—for my days and evenings were given steadily to exciting publicistic work. The theme I chose for my first treatise was *Metamorphosis of Concepts*—an investigation in the field of folk-psychology—a subject which has always had, and still has, an extreme fascination for me. I completed my treatise in a few months: I brought it to Professor Steinthal, and I awaited his verdict. It was brief and effective. He called me in one day, told me that my work showed ability for research, then took down a book from a shelf and informed

me that my work had been wasted. This aspect of the subject had already been covered by a scholar of the name of Karl Abel!

The disillusionment was bitter in the extreme. I should of course have known about this work. And the fact that I did not, showed the incompleteness of my devotion to my studies. This incident was perhaps the chief single influence in my choice of a career. It became clear to me that two such exacting rôles as the scholar and the warrior could not be played by any one man. Scholarship is a jealous profession; so is that of the fighter for a people's liberty.

I did not realize this at once, of course. I continued my studies. I attended the lectures of Zeller, Dilthey, Paulsen, and Lazarus. In particular I was fascinated, however, by the lectures of Georg Simmel, who dealt with various philosophical problems. Simmel was a Jew, and it was widely believed that he would long ago have become a full-fledged professor if he had been anything but a Jew. What attracted me in Simmel was not so much the substance as the manner of his lectures. It was that of the typical Jewish scholar-genius. I heard in him the echo of the generations of Talmudic scholars, their manner of illustrating points, their manner of clinching an argument. Simmel was widely known at that time as a leading philosopher and sociologist; but it was only in his latter years that he rose from a lectureship to a professorship, in the University of Bonn.

There were many Jewish professors in Berlin, in my time; but none of them were full-fledged, that is, professors in ordinary. Even such famous men as Senator and Henach remained shut out. Henach was a world-figure by virtue of his pioneer work in children's diseases. Such was his fame that he was able to see a monument raised to him during his lifetime. But he never became professor in ordinary. The

excuse was that there was no regular chair in the medical faculty for children's diseases. The chair was founded the day after Henach died.

There did happen to be one Jew who was professor in ordinary—but under circumstances which will appear shortly. This was the famous mathematician Leopold Croniker. Motzkin was a student of his, and was inordinately proud of him. In 1891, when Croniker died, the Jewish Burial Society sent its hearse for him—and found the field in the possession of the Protestant pastor, who was at the moment in the midst of his prayers for the dead. From 1883 to 1891 Croniker had continued paying his dues quietly to the Jewish community; but he had privately accepted the Protestant faith, and had been ashamed to make it known. He paid for his professorship with his Jewishness, and for his Protestantism with his taxes to the Jewish community.

Among the Russian Jewish students there were also some who had been baptized. The baptism had occurred in Russia, where they had hoped, through this act, to be permitted to enter a Russian University. They failed on other grounds. In Berlin they avoided us, and particularly the Russian Jewish Society. They were made aware that by their baptism they had repudiated not only a religion, but their own people. It was a national as well as a religious apostasy. But there was one student who waited till he got to Germany before he was baptized. He had formerly been a brilliant Talmudic student. He was under Professor Strak, a non-Jewish scholar in Jewish matters. Strak was at the head of a special missionary seminar, which trained men in the art of hunting Jewish souls. I used to attend the general lectures of Strak, and on one occasion went to hear him speak on the Talmudic tractate called *Idolatry*. It was there that I met the apostate, the one-time Talmudic student. All eyes

were directed at him during the lecture. The glances expressed curiosity—not respect. There was a question, too, in these glances: "For what reasons has this man left his own and come to join us? What has he to give us? Does he want to be a perpetual reminder in our midst of the race which gave us our Redeemer? Or has he truly overcome the stiff-neckedness of his people? Does the leopard change his spots?"

Late in the summer of 1891 we returned in a stream to our homes in Russia—prepared to launch the mass-movement against the Argentine and prove to the world that Baron Hirsch was trampling on the will and interests of his own people. It is a remarkable thing to note: in spite of the tremendous philanthropic gift of the Baron, in spite of the efforts of his agents and the consistent material and moral support of the rich Jews of Russia, the Jews who reported for Argentinian immigration were few in number. The great mass streamed toward the United States.

Several reasons, however, explain this curious fact. The United States was, of course, much nearer "home" than the Argentine. And then, there already were considerable numbers of east-European Jews there, and the newcomer did not feel himself so helpless, so utterly alone, as when he went to the Argentine. The third reason was the most important. Hirsch wanted agricultural colonizers. Among the disfranchized Jews to whom he appealed, there were few who were prepared to change not only their country, but their entire mode of life, their very approach to the structure of their being. Baron Hirsch's promise to the Russian government, that within twenty-five years he would relieve the country of three million Jews, was shown to be an exaggeration within the first year of operations.

A steady stream, wide, deep, and powerful, went toward

the United States; drops of it were diverted from time to time toward the Argentine. And yet the nationalist element among the Jews was terrified, not by the stream toward the United States, but by the drops which fell on Argentinian soil. The reason is plain: emigration toward the Argentine was bound up with an idea. There was even talk of an autonomous Jewish settlement, a new attempt to bind the Jew to a soil—and not his own. Even today we do not quite know whether Baron Hirsch was merely a great philanthropist or a man with a vast dream of a Jewish national construction. But even in those days the proponents of the Argentine plan used the Argentine as their most effective weapon against Palestine. On purely tactical grounds they used the Baron's millions in an attempt to stifle the national movement among the masses of the Jews.

This was, in fact, the first Territorialist movement, without the official title. The name Territorialism emerged only many years later, at the time of the Uganda conflict, to indicate a Jewish *national* movement toward a soil other than that of Palestine. But Russian Jewry was agog with the possibilities of the plan, and the Russian government even gave it legal status and permitted the founding of committees to further its realization.

We could fight the plan only with the power of the idea. While still in Berlin, we had drawn up a petition to Baron Hirsch. Here, in the politest terminology, we begged the Baron not to rely upon his assimilatory advisers, but, in this vast plan which might affect the destiny of the Jewish people, to turn to the masses of the Jews for their counsel. We told him that it now lay within his power to write his name large in one of the most important chapters in Jewish history, but only on one condition. His gift was generous—almost without parallel. But he had to abandon the position

of the millionaire relative who stands off from his poor kinsfolk, and lets his alms pass through the hands of others. Instead of seeking to settle his brothers on an alien soil, he should consult their will, which was, if possible, to return to the land with which their consciousness of their classic past was bound, and which the memories of countless martyrs through the ages had made doubly dear to them.

It was in this petition that we first developed the thought —later proved to be so effectively true—that no matter what our personal relationship might be to the idea of Palestine, we had to recognize that *as a sentiment* it was a powerful positive force, capable—as no other sentiment was—of endowing Jews with the strength and endurance needed for so bitter, so difficult, a task as the change from the uprooted city dweller to the tiller of the soil. Such a change was not only a physical, but a moral, miracle. And it was doubtful whether the miracle could take place elsewhere than in Palestine. The will of the individual could not suffice here; it had to be backed by the will of a nation and a tradition.

This was the substance of the petition. Now came the getting of signatures. We wanted the signatures of the masses, of the plain Jews. It goes without saying that it would not do simply to read the petition out and ask for signatures. That would never work. There had to be explanations, proofs, appeals. There had to be demonstration of the likelihood that such a petition, properly supported, might change the Baron's plans. Yet I, for one, did not believe that we would have much difficulty in obtaining the signatures. Least of all did I expect to meet with opposition in my native village of Swislowitz.

It soon appeared that I had underrated the critical faculties of the ordinary Jew when it comes to world-problems.

I thought that *my* Jews would give me the signatures without argument—and rely wholly on me. But they argued. Some of them said: "Don't you think it would be rather unwise to make the Baron angry? He might be terribly offended to have us village Jews trying to interfere in his affairs." Others said: "Don't you think that if God gave the Baron so many millions, he also gave him some intelligence? What business have we little folk trying to advise him?" And others failed to get the point of the petition. "Are we short of Jews?" they asked. "There are enough Jews for the Argentine *and* for Palestine—and plenty to spare."

I worked as I had seldom worked before. I called meetings and I argued with individuals. And in the end I got all the signatures obtainable in Swislowitz, from the Rav to the water-carrier.

The job was more difficult in Bobrusk, where my comrades had organized the work, and whither I went to help along. We gathered the signatures in the Synagogues, where, often enough, we ran up against ideological opponents. Yet in Bobrusk too we were successful. We obtained three thousand signatures to the petition.

When we gathered again in Berlin, that autumn, we discovered that this handful of students had gathered over forty thousand signatures to the petition. Considering the difficulties of the situation and the paucity of our numbers we were entitled, I think, to a feeling of pride and satisfaction. We made this feeling the subject—and cause—of several meetings.

One thing we had expected from our petitionary efforts: we would silence our anti-nationalist opponents in the meetings of the society. They had always accused us of speaking in the name of a non-existent Jewish national will, and of a long-dead Jewish national hope. But even this half-practical

result was denied us. They conceded the signatures, admitted them to be authentic—but fell back on the ignorance of the masses. The masses were not ripe politically. The signatures meant nothing. This was the most anti-democratic sort of attitude. I knew well that if the subject had been Socialism instead of Zionism, and if the signatures had been those of ignorant Russian peasants, they would suddenly have become valid and significant. The ripeness or unripeness of the masses would never have been mentioned. But this bigotry I was destined often to meet in Russia, in Germany, and in America.

Our famous petition was finally despatched. I need hardly add that this was the last we heard of it. Possibly a future Jewish historian, digging through the archives of the first Jewish Colonization Association, will bring it once more to the light of day.

CHAPTER XX

INTERLUDE OF DEATH

My brother Mordecai, two years younger than myself, was closer to me than all the others. He went to the same Rebbi as myself, Judah Artzer, and Judah had always held me up to him as the model of the Jewish student. My poor brother was unable—probably through his physical disabilities—to keep up the pace. He grew too quickly, was pigeon-chested and a weakling.

Once, when he was twelve years old, we went down to the Swisla to watch the raft-binders at work. The waters were covered with the logs, but these were not yet bound together, and one had to be sure and swift of foot to make one's way across the river. You had to move from log to log so rapidly that the log had no time to turn under your foot. The Swislowitz boys were acrobats: it was the rarest thing for any of them to get a ducking. No grave accident ever happened, I believe, for all of us were swimmers from our earliest years.

On that day Mordecai and I went hopping across the river in approved style, when suddenly I heard, not far from me, a fall. I turned round. All I could see of my brother was his head, bobbing in the water and going under. A shiver went through me. I had to turn and reach him before it was too late. It lasted only a few seconds, but they were enough to unfold before me the entire picture: a dead brother, a family plunged into mourning, my father, my mother, my sisters, in tears. . . . And then the eternal re-

proach directed wordlessly toward me. I had not looked after my younger brother. I hardly knew then what I was doing, but I found myself in the water beside my brother, holding him—whether dead or alive, I could not tell. I had him by the hair of his head. But we had been seen on the instant, for a whole army of raft-binders came hopping across the river like a flock of grotesque birds, and before long we were safely out. It took quite a time before they could get my right hand out of his hair, for it had become rigid with horror. The shock of fear and of the cold water had a bad result; my brother, weak as he was, fell sick.

From that time on my brother became more tied to me than ever. I had saved his life—alas, a very short one. He lived another twelve years, all of them years of sickness, and he spent them wandering from one health resort to another.

My brother felt early that he was not destined to achieve anything; and in this realization he bound himself closer to me. He felt me to be the sturdiest tree in the family, and he clung to me like a helpless plant. Whenever he could, he followed me around, and his eyes were fixed steadfastly on mine. In them was a look of resignation and of adoration.

I suffered deeply, with him. Pity is not a comfortable feeling. It is a tickling feeling, like the scratching of a wound. But pity toward a brother, and a beloved brother, has not even a tickling in it. It irritates and it burns. I could not bear to feel pity for my own brother. I wanted to return love for love, show him that we were equals, if not in body, at least in spirit; and if not in that, at least in our love for each other. But my brother would not let this be. He did not want equality. He wanted to serve me with all that he had—his love. And he would not have felt that he was serving me, if his love was not greater than mine. And because I could not see him suffer, I let him *serve* me with his love, permit-

ted him to be more affectionate than myself. And I hardly know now who was to be pitied more, my brother or I.

That summer when I went around collecting signatures my brother was already very sick. His cheeks had fallen in, and a veil was drawn across his eyes: the clear signs of tuberculosis in its advanced stages. My mother would be cheerful in his presence; but whenever he was out of the room her tears would flow freely. My father went around grim-visaged and silent. I left, at that time, for Bobrusk, on the work of the petition; also I wanted to visit a friend of mine, a fellow student, home like myself for the vacation, one Abraham Rosenberg. I had known him years before, in my soldier days. Then he had been among my opponents, a bitter enemy of the nationalist idea. All my eager efforts—I liked him greatly and respected him no less—to convert him had failed. But what I could not do our Russian Jewish Society in Berlin had done. At the time of the Expulsion from Moscow Rosenberg became an enthusiastic nationalist, and like all converts was the fieriest of zealots. He went so far that I had to restrain him, lest the impulse of his new-found nationalism carry him into the ranks of the chauvinists. He became a closer friend of mine, as though anxious to repay me now for the efforts I had spent on his conversion in years past.

When I arrived in Bobrusk I found him sick. He had just come through a bad attack of typhoid. I spent two days at his bedside. We said nothing about his sickness. Still running a temperature, he kept rehearsing the last debates in the society, when he had been accepted as a member. Then I left him, and returned to my sick brother in Swislowitz.

I came in the wagon down the street in which we lived—and I saw that the path in front of our house was covered

with straw. I understood at once. In my brother's room was an empty bed, and my parents, my brothers and sisters, were sitting on the floor of the living-room in their stockinged feet—the week of mourning. They told me how my brother had called for me over and over again before he died.

When the week of mourning was over I returned to Bobrusk. But I saw my friend no more. He was dead. And they told me that in the delirium of his last moments he had called frequently on my name.

I was still young, and I could not look easily on the greatest of human mysteries, death. That double catastrophe, the death of my brother-friend and my friend-brother, worked heavily on me, and for weeks I went around like a shadow. I was frightened; and for the first time I brooded on death, and on its significance. Was death indeed a leap into nothingness? Was there no way back? Or was it only a step forward into the unknown? Old and primitive questions, such as our ancestors dwelt on in the early, barbarian days: the thoughts that will probably always occupy, with the same helpless repetition, the greatest of all human minds, the leaders of human thought. Not all the brilliant gifts of the most brilliant sons of men have yet shot one ray of light into that darkness without moon or stars.

I have said that I was young, that my attitude toward death was, in those days, a tragic one. Has my attitude changed since then? My answer must be, yes. If my own experience has taught me anything it is that, in the second half of our lives, when the slope leads downward, we begin to make our peace with the inevitable. Except in catastrophic cases, dying becomes a process, softening with time. Death becomes familiar. At first he is an unexpected thief; as we grow older, he becomes more impudent—he never was a gentleman. And in the end he installs himself permanently,

insolently, in our minds, takes the first place there, and gradually elbows us out. We argue; we protest. It is useless. We begin to beg, and finally offer all sorts of compromises. We will make him owner, and take the place of tolerated tenant. And the gentler we become, the more brutal he becomes, like a usurer with whom every argument means only a passing of time and an increase of the debt. At this point we pass through a crisis, and we no longer recognize which of us is which, death and we. Then death ceases to be a mystery, having become a commonplace. And our thoughts, baffled, fly to the other end of the thread, and it is the mystery of birth that occupies us. Our longings, denied here, return to the first source, and we dream of our youth. The future is not in us any more; we harp on the future that used to be in us.

Is it not a commonplace folly that we should be occupied with the mystery of death, as if momentary living were not the first supreme mystery? But the folly is comprehensible. It is the wholeness of the mystery of being that escapes us. The *act* of death presents something more compact, and the imagination is taken captive by it. But it is impossible to think of concepts without counter-concepts. Without the night the day would not be longer; it would cease to exist. And concept and counter-concept are one; lock and key are one piece. But we are deceived by localisms and the accidental. Day is not less mysterious than night, being part of it. But because we live through most of the day, we fasten our wonderment on night. Because most of the great poets have been men, it is women that have been thought to be the mystery. But Adam is not less a riddle than Eve; though the poets accept him as a self-evident thing. It is not the riddle of Eve that will be solved, but the Adam-Eve riddle. So a time may come when we shall cease to ponder on

the problem of life and the problem of death, and think instead of the death-life problem. Then things will perhaps become clearer to us, and we shall move nearer the solution of many other problems.

CHAPTER XXI

LAST STUDENT DAYS IN BERLIN

In the year 1891 the periodical *Hamagid*, the Hebrew organ of the Chibath Zion movement, edited by the devoted and energetic David Gorden, moved its headquarters to Berlin. The editor was Jacob Fuchs, a young man, born in Bialistock and now half Germanified. Fuchs was simultaneously editor, chief (and assistant) article- and news-writer, publisher, and errand boy. His great ambition had always been to be a publisher, but this ambition was backed by neither material nor intellectual resources. The only faculty which he did possess—and this to a marvellous degree—was the faculty of being hungry. It was by starving, in fact, that he kept the *Hamagid* going. Unfortunately Fuchs's needs were small; so that if he did save on food and clothing, it amounted to little. It was far from enough to keep a weekly going; and Fuchs was always in difficulties. He was forever borrowing, and his loans were small: ten marks, fifteen, twenty . . . all of them levied on the lovers of Hebrew and the devotees of the movement. He also borrowed from students. The loans were known technically as the minimum-maximum loans: the minimum he could do with, the maximum we could offer. We also called them Internal Loans.

I still cannot understand the origin of Fuchs's desire to be the publisher of his own paper. But in later years I found—especially in Hebrew circles—many publishers of their own

papers, people of Fuchs's type. It was a sort of disease with them. They just had to have an organ of their own, but whether this disease can be called organic is not clear. Most of these men had not a shadow of editorial or literary ability. Any man who could write a line of Hebrew felt himself called upon to bestow a periodical on the Hebrew world. The truth is that this disease is common in Hebrew circles down to our own times.

A story is told of a poor half-wit who was befriended by a millionaire lover of music. The magnate happened to have a private orchestra. One day the half-wit came to his benefactor and asked for a position in his orchestra. Astonished, the rich man said: "I had no idea you could play an instrument." "I can't," the other answered. "But I see you have a man there who does nothing but wave a stick around while the others play. I could handle that job." This half-wit's concept of the rôle of conductor applies excellently to the idea that many Hebrew editors had—and still have—concerning the editorial function.

Fuchs extended to me an invitation to become a contributor to the *Hamagid*, and I accepted. He promised me payment for my articles, and on the strength of the honorarium for the first article, made a loan from me. But if Fuchs had only known how eager I was to be printed, he need not have promised me any honorarium, and he could have obtained a much bigger loan into the bargain. One day Fuchs brought me an English Jewish periodical in which one of my articles—something on the Exodus from Egypt, with obvious allusion to the flight from Russia—had appeared in translation. I was enormously impressed. I became more important in my own eyes: so did the English language. In gratitude to England, I determined at once to learn the language spoken there. And I began on the spot.

Meanwhile, until I had mastered it, I spelled out my article word by word until I had learned the English translation by heart. However, my determination to learn the English language was not carried out until some decades later.

I produced an article for the *Hamagid* practically every week. This was in 1891, when I was occupied with many other things. But there is the old proverb: If you want something done, go to the busy man. I found much joy in my Hebrew writing. I speak not of the content, but of the language. The mere use of the Hebrew was a delight to me. I remember once translating a scientific article of Steinthal's for the *Hamagid:* and I remember the delight that rewarded me when, from some obscure corner of the language, I managed to fish out an almost forgotten expression which just coincided with the German. I think that in this delight there was more than mere artistic joy. When we use an alien language we feel ourselves its slaves: we lose our independence of thought. We are bound to a chariot going on unknown ways. In our own language we seem to be masters, at least, of our thought processes. And to take an alien chariot captive, is to achieve some sort of liberation.

Because of the lack of economic status attaching in those days to the craft of the Hebrew writer, not one of my fellow students was preparing for that "profession." One student had already come to the university as an accredited Russian writer: he was Arcadi Kornfeld. But Kornfeld did not join our society—he only attended its meetings. Kornfeld came to Berlin as a pupil of Potebnya, the gifted Russian teacher of languages and race-psychology. In Berlin he became a pupil of Steinthal and Lazarus. Kornfeld was an aesthete in the full sense of the word. Literature was for him an aesthetic exercise. In later years he became one of the profoundest and most important of the Russian literary critics.

Personally I have much to be grateful for to Kornfeld. It was through him that I became acquainted with the writings of Aksakov, Gradovski, Vladimir Soloviov, and Potebnya and his school; from these men I learned much concerning the national problem, not on its political side, but from the point of view of its aesthetic, artistic, and literary significance. I thus became acquainted with the spiritual tendencies in Russian literature, tendencies which might be compared with Achad Ha-Amism in Hebrew literature. Kornfeld never became a comrade in the movement; but I felt a close spiritual kinship with him, and I followed his career closely.

In addition to our larger Russian Jewish Scientific Society, we had a sort of salon, for more intimate debates. This was conducted in the home of one of our technical-school students, one Joseph Salkind. But not for his sake: rather for the sake of his wife, Nadeszda Grigorievna. Even in Russia she had already been known as one of the best-educated and most emancipated women of her time. She was, on her scale, a miniature Cleopatra and Madame de Staël. It was she who founded the salon for us, and we spent many nights there, in fierce discussion. Nadeszda Grigorievna made it her task to keep spirits running high, which she did by having on hand a plentiful supply of fresh bread, herring and tea. When times were a trifle hard at the Salkinds', the bread would not be so fresh, for then it was cheaper and did not fly so fast. On such occasions some of the students would feel vaguely disappointed, and the debates did not reach the proper degree of enthusiasm. During the debates Nadeszda Grigorievna would try to maintain everything on a high, scientific level. She would quote from important works by heart—whole pages at a time. Sometimes the quotations were relevant, sometimes not

quite. Salkind himself was a pure technician; speech was hard for him. So he was mostly silent. There would sometimes be present at these debates a colleague of Salkind's, Grigori Wilbushevitch—more adept at silence than even Salkind. I am convinced that Wilbushevitch saw us all—as he saw the whole world, man and nature—as active triangles and polygons. If he had to define an idea, he would call it a pyramid; a movement was a locomotive, logic was a hammer (its purpose being to hit your opponent on the head), a compromise was a wedge, and a joke was a corkscrew.

For all our differences, we felt completely at home there. We stood, all of us, on the threshold of life. One ideal held us together. In that limited, inner world, conflicts and contracts were simple and friendly. We still believed in ourselves; and in that atmosphere of idealism every man felt that he was in this world in order to perform some great service for the benefit of mankind.

In the matter of the companionship of women the Russian student in Berlin was much worse off than his comrade in France—which meant principally Paris—or in Switzerland—that is, Berne—the two other centres of the Russian student youth. The German universities were still closed to women, and Jewish girls who sought an education turned to France or to Switzerland, where they had the same rights and possibilities as men. In the matter of freedom, too, France and Switzerland had the advantage over Germany in general and Prussia in particular. For this reason the student youth, which had strongly Socialist leanings, preferred the two former countries.

It was thus that Berne and Zürich became the most important centres of Russian revolutionary activity. When,

after the World War, the legend became current of the German government's transporting Lenin in a sealed train from the Swiss to the Russian border, the justification lay not in the individual instance so much as in general historic reality. Germany was merely *distance* between Switzerland and Russia. The things transported (they were ideas, not men) travelled not on the surface, in sealed or unsealed cars, but underground. An invisible tunnel ran from Switzerland to Russia, a tunnel with many ramifications at both ends, particularly in Russia, where it opened into all the principal cities of the empire. At each end of the tunnel a certain Nicholas was master; at one end Nicholas Romanoff, ruler by the grace of God over one hundred and fifty million human beings, a man of soft mind and weak will, a tool of dark forces, a companion of magicians and epileptics. At the other end, one of the hundred and fifty million, Nicholas Lenin (that was his *nom de guerre:* his real name was Vladimir Uljanov), an involuntary émigré, exiled forever from Russia; a brain of iron, a will of steel, white-hot with the enthusiasm of an apostle. *He* commanded a small young army, ready to go through fire and water for its ideas.

It was Nicholas Romanoff himself who had exiled this army of the youth to the small country with the tremendous hills. He at his end, they at theirs, dug the tunnel from Switzerland to Russia. And digging on Swiss soil they sang a song like that of the weavers of Silesia, with its Old Testament flavour and its touch of doom: "Not weavers of cloth, but diggers of graves: Old Germany, thine is the grave we are digging. Old Russia, yours is the grave we are digging."

We passed the year 1892 in intensive propaganda work. The word Zionism was still unknown to us. It was first used by Nathan Birnbaum, who founded the Jewish student organization Kadimah in Vienna, some time in the eighties.

The name Lovers of Zion we did not like. It sounded too sickly sweet; it suited a lodge rather than a daring political movement. We therefore called ourselves Nationalists. But our program was not less sweeping than the one which was formulated by the first Zionist Congress of Basle in the year 1897. Our practical scope was smaller, of course: our political ambitions were full grown.

Nachman Syrkin even permitted himself a political jest. Without consulting any one of us, he calmly went to the Turkish Ambassador in Berlin, and proposed the purchase of Palestine, naming one hundred million francs as the sum. The Ambassador listened earnestly, and counselled Syrkin to apply to the Grand Vizier in Constantinople. Syrkin was lucky; the Ambassador might have taken him too seriously and asked him for a deposit, much to his embarrassment—for all he possessed in the world then was, possibly, two or three marks. But Syrkin, even in later years, always did like big, sweeping propositions. "Money," he used to say, "is a purely technical question."

I have already said that we had no relations with the political life of Germany; neither were we close to the Jewish life of that country. We were in Germany only for a time; some of us would return, some of us would go further, across the Channel or across the Atlantic. Only one thing brought us closer to the German Jew: it was the stream of anti-Semitism that issued from the universities and at last flooded the street, and made no distinction between the Russian Jew and the German Jew. Treitschke and Wagner, from the height of their academic positions, thundered against the Jewish spirit and its carriers. From his holy eminence Stöcker, the preacher, helped them to rain poison upon the masses; and Hermann Alward, the half-lunatic school-

teacher, became the most popular saviour of his people from the Jews, who had penetrated Germany with the Mephistophelian idea of destroying the Aryan world from within. In the street it was Alward and his henchmen who ruled—and their method was, to make things miserable for the Jew at every step. At central points in Berlin, in the Friedrichstrasse, the Leipzigerstrasse, and Unter den Linden, groups would be stationed; their job was to insult the Jewish passer-by. For quite a time they would thrust into the hand of every Jewish-looking passer-by an imitation steamship ticket: "One-way passage to Palestine: charge to the German people." In certain of the German Jewish periodicals they accused us, the protagonists of the national idea, of having provoked these anti-Semitic demonstrations. Had it not been for us the anti-Semites would long ago have forgotten the existence of Palestine, and would never have dreamed of distributing these cards. The assimilated German Jews seem to have forgotten that many hundred years ago Luther had translated the Bible into German, and had given all our secrets away—down to our connection with Palestine.

Once, in the summer of 1892, the anti-Semitic party arranged a masquerade ball, at which Alward himself was to appear. The masqueraders had to appear in Jewish masks and Jewish dress. Many of the members of our society were anxious to be present at this ball, but none of us wanted to put on a mask. A friend of mine, Tamarchenko by name, who looked as Jewish as if he had just come from Ur of the Chaldees, had a startling proposition for himself and me. Like himself, I could never have been mistaken for anything but a grandson of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He proposed, therefore, that the two of us should attend the ball, but unmasked. It would never occur to any one, he said, that two such Jews had had the nerve to come to the

ball—unmasked. I liked the idea. As vengeance, it fell rather short of Samson's last retort to the Philistines; but it was an intellectual revenge of a kind. We actually went; and for half an hour we were able to watch the antics of the anti-Semites, barbarous, cynical, and obscene. How it happened I do not know, but we were discovered, and we were pitched gloriously out of the hall. We were thrown first from one group to another, and were immensely relieved when at last we saw the sky over our heads. The two of us got a good laugh out of it. From then on I took a vow never again to use my Jewish face as a mask.

I spent the summer vacation of 1892 in the house of my parents, in Swislowitz. My father's affairs were going well again, and a feeling of quiet security reigned in the house. My older brother Meyer, a paterfamilias with several little children, carried on the business. My two younger brothers, Joshua and Eliezer, were developing normally, and both the Rebbi, Judah Artzer, and my parents were satisfied with them. Joshua had acquired a high reputation as a specialist in both the Bible and the Talmud. But he lacked the energy to break through to something new. He spent many years afterwards in the Talmudic college of Volozhin, and then tried his hand at writing, but without much success. In the end he became a dentist: he always sought the line of least resistance.

The darling of the family was my youngest brother, Eliezer. From earliest childhood he was possessed of a gentle, peaceful, and loving nature. He could never harbour anger against any one, and he never abused the love that was showered on him from all sides.

My older brother-in-law, Asher Shafrai, the husband of the one sister left to me, still sat at his studies. He was a

good Talmudist, keen-witted and able, but absolutely useless for practical matters. Whatever he took up he mismanaged; he touched money only to lose it. He tried the rafts, he tried transport boats on the Beresina, and he tried water-mills—all to the same effect. In the end my father decided it would be cheaper to keep him out of business than in it.

To some Jews of the western world that traditional figure of east-European Jewry will still be familiar: the scholarly son-in-law who was supported for a time by his father-in-law, while he did nothing but study the Talmud. Occasionally one would meet with the eternal type of student son-in-law, a sort of perpetual scholarship endowment. And among such men there would be examples of rare, able, powerful minds. Properly trained, these men could have been of some account in the world; but the eternal absorption in the Talmud, the exclusive occupation with an ancient and vanished world, and the lack of contact with realities sapped their vitality, undermined their energy, and turned them into helpless and useless human beings, unfit for any worldly occupation.

That same summer my friend Anna Rosenblum married: not the man she loved, but the man who loved her. That is often the way of women; if they cannot get their ideal, they accept the man for whom they, at least, are the ideal. It is always better, they reckon, than a marriage by arrangement. I doubt whether the compromise is sensible; better a marriage arranged from both sides than a marriage which is one-half love, one-half arrangement. For the fact is that the relationship between man and woman, being a whole and not a dual thing, should be homogeneous in structure, either all love or all common sense. Love on one side, common sense on the other, builds up an intolerable burden.

At the wedding of Anna Rosenblum I met again my first love, Anna Lozinsky. She was already the mother of two children. We spent many hours together; we went for walks, we talked, and we did not notice how the time was flying. It was only at the parting that we suddenly became self-conscious. Our words, which had flown evenly, stuck; we spoke in half-phrases. We realized that we had talked and talked and had not said anything to the point. And the thing was unsaid when I left her.

When I got back home I was laid up for several days. The doctor was sent for, but his diagnosis revealed nothing. The only person in the house who had some idea of what was the matter with me was my old-fashioned, God-fearing mother. She said at once: "I suppose you've met Anna Lozinsky." My mother fondled me as if I were a little child. She comforted me: "Child, you are young. You will yet love."

And now my friend Anna Rosenblum began to talk marriage to me; she had, she said, the very person. She did not mean this to be a marriage by arrangement. What she meant was that she had found the person I was sure to fall in love with. A younger sister of Anna's was a student in the gymnasium at Romni, and had become acquainted with a girl by the name of Helena Conheim. And this was the girl Anna wanted me to fall in love with. I saw Helena once, and she made no special impression on me. But I had heard so many fine things told about her by Anna Rosenblum and her sister Paula that I interested myself in her. At that time Helena Conheim was in Königsberg, where her mother's family lived. Anna tried hard to persuade me to leave Berlin and continue my studies in Königsberg. And she succeeded in the end. I left Berlin for Königsberg. My intentions were not those that Anna sought to implant in

me. The University of Königsberg was widely known and highly praised, and I wanted the change. Such, at least, were my thoughts. But no man knows the devious way his own destiny follows. I had a genuine excuse, for myself, my friends, and for my parents. Life in Berlin was too exciting, too tumultuous, for a man of my temperament. I needed a quieter centre for the continuation of my studies. Such a centre, I believed, was Königsberg.

CHAPTER XXII

FAREWELL TO YOUTH

THE Jewish community of Königsberg was highly heterogeneous. It was composed more of foreigners—mostly Russians—than of native Jews, and the foreigners were chiefly the intermediaries for the huge grain-trade between Russia and Germany. Many of them had become rich and occupied a high place in communal life—something which would have been impossible in Berlin, where the newcomer could never have broken into the ranks of local Jewish society. The local authorities were friendly in their attitude toward the strangers. And though this was a time of intensive anti-Semitism in all Germany, the local government in Königsberg urged the newcomers to become German citizens. Few of them took advantage of this friendliness. The attitude of the local government was determined by purely economic motives: without the Jews the trade with Russia could never have developed as it did, for the Russians themselves were too clumsy and unadaptable for the purpose.

I should mention that there was one other respect in which the Jews of Königsberg served the locality. The University of Königsberg had an excellent medical faculty with professors of wide repute. And these professors attracted the Jewish sick from every part of Russian Poland and Lithuania. Jews—as is widely known—are fond of taking cures, and nothing satisfies them but the best specialists. The result was that in the early summer months Königsberg had the

appearance of a Jewish city. All the medical professors in Königsberg, even the Christians, spoke a little Yiddish, and since we know that the Germans are not particularly gifted in philology, we can easily form an idea of the numbers of the Jewish patients that must have come to them.

There were few foreign students in Königsberg. Some Russians came to study medicine, but I was the only Russian Jew in the department of philosophy. As usual, the German Jewish students kept to themselves; they were even haughtier and more exclusive than the Christians. But there was compensation in the local society of modern Hebraists, the Maskilim, who held regular meetings and conducted debates. Once more the lectures and debates carried the names of "scientific discussion." And once more they centred, without exception, around the burning questions of the day.

The chairman of the society at that time was one Max Minkowsky. One of his brothers was a famous medical authority; a second brother was Hermann Minkowsky, one of the greatest mathematicians of all time. Both of these brothers became professors in ordinary—a very rare honour for Jews in Germany, still rarer among foreign Jews. But the medical man had to sacrifice his Judaism for his promotion. The mathematician was, however, so important that the government had to sacrifice its anti-Semitism. Hermann Minkowsky provided the purely mathematical basis for Einstein's later work; and to this same Minkowsky belongs that famous "command," issued at a scientific convention in Bonn: "From now on, Space and Time, you cease to exist as separate entities: it is only in one unified whole that your existence is justified." It was a command issued with the same imperious certainty as marked the command of his distant forebear, Joshua ben Nun, when he spoke to the sun and moon over the valley of Ajalon. Max Minkowsky, the

president of the society, had become, and remained, a merchant; but he was a man of high intelligence, and no disgrace to that decent Jewish family of Kovno.

It was in this society, which I joined shortly after my arrival in Königsberg, that I became acquainted for the first time with that curious phenomenon in Jewish life which I have called "life in second translation." The membership was composed mostly of Hebraists and good middle-class Jews of the older school. The only "Germans" were Rabbi Bamberger and the cantor, Birnbaum, and the latter was only a naturalized German. It did not occur to me that this society could harbour a strong assimilatory movement. Yet it did. There were Jews in it who wanted to become Teutonized—and did not come in contact with Teutons. They met only Germanified Jews. And these became their models. To me the man who lives a natural national life in the midst of his own group lives an "original" or authentic life. An outsider who imitates him is living in a first translation, and a third party who imitates the second is living in a second translation. It is a Russian Jew imitating a German Jew who is imitating a German.

Two decisive and symbolic events, belonging to the Königsberg days, closed as with a double lock the first two periods of my life and left me facing my full manhood. In Königsberg I "ended" my education and took my degree: and there too I married.

I became acquainted there, at first hand, with the German student, and learned to know him as an insider; I broke through the noisy, boisterous front and discovered the core of serious, almost sombre, purposefulness in the German youth. The outsider was frequently puzzled by a seeming paradox. In the university the ideal was (so it appeared)

drinking and duelling. The scarred face was the badge of honour; the greater the number of scars, the higher the rating. The German student's face became an Assyrian inscription; the more numerous the cuneiforms, the more significant the content. A student who neither drank nor duelled was a rank "outsider." Whence then, the foreigner might ask, Germany's achievements in learning and science? If this was truly the student youth, a miracle would have to explain the sober creativeness of the country. But there was no miracle. Students were wont to give their *first* year to sowing their wild oats and acquiring their student status. Thereafter the period of quiet and thorough work set in. The attention of the bystander is attracted to the riotous expressions of student life: the quiet labourers in the laboratory, the seminary, and the library remain unnoticed. Their impression is made in later years, in more enduring fashion.

I became acquainted with the German specializing student—perhaps the extreme of that type. Specialization was something almost unknown to the Jewish student: he was too eager for everything, too uncertain of his future, to be able to concentrate with such minuteness and obduracy. To the Jewish student this absorption in a tiny, apparently insignificant, branch of knowledge looked like a fantastic, meaningless discipline; to the German student the fierce appetite of the Jew was even more unnatural. One German colleague of mine had specialized in the life of the worm. When I asked him whether he never intended to move on to the higher forms of life, he answered sadly that life was too short even for a thorough study of the worm. He had a friend, however, who was specializing on the elephant—and friends in between who specialized on other forms of animal life, so that no animal could feel itself slighted in Germany.

He was amused, in his serious way, by the naïveté of my question.

I became acquainted too with the German equivalent of our Jewish Talmud student—the half-starving, dedicated religious soul. I formed a friendship with a theological student and became his teacher in Hebrew. Like all of his class he prepared himself for the Church solely out of a deep inclination. Worldly returns were not to be expected. The German pastor could look forward to a life of labour, of poverty—and of little worldly distinction. Nothing but an unconquerable instinct could keep him at this task. My friend studied with the devotion and selflessness of a true Yeshivah student; and when I had left Königsberg, I received from him, the German, letters written in Hebrew and steeped in the spirit of the Prophets who had become his models.

I prepared for my doctorate examination in three subjects: Semitics (Hebrew, Arabic, and Syrian), philosophy, and German literature. The calculations with which I had left Berlin were in large part justified. With the exception of the little society of which I have spoken, Königsberg offered me little distraction. I formed no intimate friendships. My social life was set in a little group: Helena Conheim (for whose sake my friend Anna Rosenblum and her sister Paula of Bobrusk had wanted me to go to Königsberg), Simon Fleishman, a Jewish student who had dedicated himself wholly and unchangeably to the Socialist ideal, Fleishman's fiancée, Martha Brill, and a young girl, Jennie Ettinger, also in love with Fleishman. Fleishman and I did form a friendship which outlasted our Königsberg days and survived even our unalterable difference of view: but we never worked together in a movement, and I cannot com-

pare this friendship with the deep and significant attachments that I had formed in the University of Berlin. Helena Conheim and I became engaged shortly after my graduation. And I felt now that the decisive moment had been reached in my life.

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William James, after much observation and thought, has stated that it is between his twenty-fifth and his thirtieth year that a man becomes mentally adult—that is to say, some years after he has become physically adult. For me the completion of the process took place during my last days in Königsberg. I felt it abruptly. It was not the Doctorate of Philosophy—a degree which had become almost commonplace even in those days—that made me so sharply conscious of an ending and a beginning. I knew that in effect my education had only just begun. It was not even my approaching marriage which affected me. It was simply the ripening process brought to a certain point. I have no other explanation.

For a time I was too much with myself. My thoughts, which had till then belonged to the living world around me, changed in complexion, and I was invaded by a dolorous sense of the lost years and of my irretrievable youth. In retrospect, at least, it was a marvellous, golden youth, filled with joyous moments, many high hopes, and a measure of labour. The direct manifestation of the change in me was my mourning for the days that were gone.

The time of my marriage drew nearer. Helena's parents were both dead. Her oldest brother, Hermann Conheim, was a business man in America, and her two younger brothers, Max and Felix, were clerks, also in America. She was five years younger than myself. The difference in years, small as it was, sufficed to awaken in me a feeling of protectiveness

and responsibility toward her. There was no reason to delay the marriage, and every good reason to settle matters. And so the marriage took place quietly, in Kranz, a summer resort near Königsberg. The guests were few. My father and my mother came from Swislowitz, and Hermann Conheim came from America. The two families were strange to each other; the relationship was courteous, formal. And after the wedding ceremony the group scattered again, almost to the ends of the world.

Heine says somewhere that he who loves for the first time is a god, he who loves for the second time is a fool. The bitter wit of the remark hides the taste of the deeper truth which it carries. It is a rare thing in life for a man to be content with loving once: hence the proportion of gods to fools is minute—for every god a host of fools. But we should note that our first love is not a matter of chronology. Life does not proceed chronologically; events of different psychological epochs occur in the same time-stratum. Sometimes a man will anticipate himself. When one of Chekhov's characters says that his first love-affair came second, he is speaking chronological but not psychological nonsense. Indeed, his first love-affair might have come third or fourth or fifth. The only question is: How shall we recognize love, in what shading and degree of strength? What are its unmistakable marks?

There is an old Jewish legend that forty days before a boy or girl is born, a Voice is heard in heaven, crying: "This man belongs to that woman, this woman to that man." The souls are paired off, every Adam to every Eve. Maeterlinck has expressed the same idea. He describes a charming little Eve who wanders about in heaven. When she is asked how old she is, she answers: "I have yet to be born." In other words, she is minus so many years of age. But her Adam is

now being born, is being let down onto the earth, and little Eve clings to him, for before her birth she belongs to him. She is separated from him by force, and he goes down alone. Such is the decree. Adam and Eve must be separated, and must find each other again.

It is a beautiful interpretation of the Adam and Eve problem: but the great question remains unanswered. By what signs shall Eve recognize her Adam, Adam his Eve? Neither the antique nor the modern artist makes reply. Science is as silent on this point as intuition. Probably to the end of all time every man and woman will have to make answer according to an obscure personal impulse. And few will ever know whether the impulse led them to the truth.