The Tsar, The Empire, and The Nation

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Published by Central European University Press

Aoshima, Yoko and Darius Staliūnas.
The Tsar, The Empire, and The Nation: Dilemmas of Nationalization in Russia's Western Borderlands, 1905-1915.
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Several academic works have influenced research discourse more because of their impressive titles rather than their content, which is important in its own right.1 One of them is John D. Klier’s study, “Why were Russian Jews not Kaisertreu?” Klier asked why Jews were not loyal subjects of the Russian Empire, like they were in the neighboring German and Austro-Hungarian empires. To answer this question, Klier described how the tsarist regime equated Jews with its enemies, the Poles, and imposed anti-Jewish legislation starting in the 1860s and especially after 1881. Finally, he stated that “the judeophobe mindset of the imperial government created conditions that actively encouraged the movement of Jews into political opposition. . . . It became literally impossible for Jews to join the right-wing of Russian politics.”2

To a large extent, Klier’s conclusion is correct and easily observable. However, in asking a question about Jewish political behavior, Klier was not actually speaking about the Jews, but about the approaches and measures implemented by another actor, the imperial government. In his construction, the Jews are not the subject of politics but an object; their po-

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litical choices are explained as a reaction, not as an action. The aim of this chapter, in contrast, is to examine the attitudes and approaches of Kaiserrettew Jews as political actors in the Russian Empire. While the participation of Jews in the revolutionary movement has been a constant subject of discussion in historiography since the 1900s, and Jewish liberals were added to the discussion starting in the 1980s, Jews with a conservative and monarchist Weltanschauung have been ignored by scholars for a century.

For the sake of this research, I will employ a simplified depiction of the political map of pre-revolutionary Russia, dividing it into two broad categories, the left and the right, therefore disregarding the very significant differences within those camps. While the left sought drastic changes and was commonly defined as “the opposition,” the main prerequisite for belonging to the right was loyalty to the existing regime. The right, or conservative, camp included the extreme right, which believed in unlimited autocracy and opposed capitalism and parliamentarianism, the Russian Nationalists who sought to convert the empire into the national state of the Russian people, the liberal Union of October 17, who preferred constitutional mon-

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Russian Jews and the Russian Right

archy and sought further moderate reform, and a variety of different groups in-between. Loyalty to the tsar and his government and the rejection of revolutionary changes was their common denominator.

Research on Kaisertreu Jews in Russia is not an easy task. Since any political activities were outlawed before the 1905 Revolution, those who wanted to change things—the revolutionaries—quite naturally produced much more written evidence of their ideas and actions than those who were pleased with the existing situation, that is, the loyalists. Thus, we have many more sources, both primary and secondary, on the underground People’s Will (Narodnaia Volia), whose activists assassinated Alexander II in 1881, than on the underground Holy Brotherhood (Sviashchennaiia Druzhina), which appeared in 1881 in order to prevent a future regicide. Baron Horace (Goratsii) Gintsburg (Günzburg), a person who could rightfully be called “the spokesman” of Russian Jewry, might have been one of the members of this Holy Brotherhood. Gintsburg was one of the richest Jewish entrepreneurs of the period and one of the most prominent examples of a Kaisertreu Jew; as such, he will be discussed below. There is no doubt, however, that he was not alone. As the famous economic historian Arcadius Kahan noted, the entrepreneurs would “better be thought to restore equilibrium and promote their own economic and social status that to destroy an order.”

It is hard to define the number of Jewish conservatives who were content with the existing order, but their presence is more than certain. If we

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6 On Gintsburg, see Ilia Vovshin, “Mishpahat gintzburg ve-yetzirat ha-plutokratiyah ha-yehudit ba-imperiyah ha-rusit” (PhD thesis, Haifa University, 2015).
draw a parallel between one’s social-economic status and political views, we may assume that members of the higher status groups were more inclined to conservatism. Arcadius Kahan estimated the size of the Jewish bourgeoisie (defined as hereditary and personal nobility, honorary citizens, and guild merchants) in the Pale of Settlement in 1897 as 16,847 families.9 Since strict adherence to religion—as it will be demonstrated below—might also be considered a sign of conservatism, we may add those 19,127 Jews whom the 1897 census registered as employed in “religious services” in the Pale.10 According to these criteria, approximately 36,000 Jews might have been considered conservatives according to their social status. This number, which is clearly an underestimation, is comparable with the combined membership of 78,000 in four Jewish revolutionary parties at the peak of their popularity, which was obviously inflated for propagandistic reasons.11

The 1905 Revolution made political and societal activities more or less legal; it created the major arena for political action, the elected State Duma; and it removed the majority of restrictions on mass media. The possibilities for the expression of political views multiplied from participation in the Duma elections, to subscribing to and reading various newspapers, and membership in political parties or quasi-political organizations. While left-wing political forces still could not operate freely, the government tolerated and supported right-wing parties, organizations, and newspapers. This chapter examines the strategies conservative Jews employed to express their political views in the last decade of the Russian empire, when the public activities of right-wing forces became widespread. What options were open to them in Russian conservative politics? Which groups in right-wing political circles were willing to accept like-minded Jews? My main argument is that Jews with conservative political convictions attempted to find a common language with some right-wing groups and to cooperate with them on tactical issues. At the same time,

9 Kahan, Essays, 18.
10 Ibid., 55.
11 The Bund claimed around 31,000 members; the Zionist Socialist Workers’ Party around 27,000; the Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party ca. 12,000; and the Poalei Zion between 5,000 and 6,000 members. See Levin, Mi-mahapekhah le-milhamah, 232, 241, 247, 256.
the total rejection of Jews by the right-wing politicians was beginning to show cracks after 1907, and especially during World War I.

**Jews and the Right**

The most obvious choice for Jews who identified themselves with the tsarist regime and the values of the Russian Empire as the state of Russians was to convert to Russian Orthodox Christianity, which meant they stopped being Jews according to the imperial law. Indeed, there were several baptized Jews who became active in Russian right-wing circles, for example Ilia Gurland or Savelii Efron (Litvin). This strategy, however, was very personal and not many individuals were prepared to use it. Those Jews who remained true to the tenets of Judaism but shared conservative political views and wished to participate in political activities had to look for other options. It is possible to speak about three strategies that, at least in theory, were open to conservative Jews after the 1905 Revolution and the emergence of public and parliamentary politics: (1) joining Russian right-wing organizations; (2) establishing Jewish right-wing organizations; and (3) cooperating with the Russian right.

**Joining Russian right-wing organizations**

The option to join right-wing organizations was almost nonexistent for Jews in Russia since all right-wing monarchist organizations explicitly prohibited Jews and baptized Jews from entering their ranks. Those organizations professed strong, sometimes mystical antisemitism, and according
to Semion Goldin, considered Jews to be “the Other” of the Russian state.\(^\text{15}\) They were clearly not interested in mobilizing Jewish support. For example, the head of the Union of the Russian People in Odessa, Count Alexei Konovnitsyn, published an appeal to Jews in August 1907, in which he demanded that Jews reject revolution and express repentance. He also insisted that Jews unite in a union “under the banner of the Union of the Russian People.” This wording made it clear that Konovnitsyn did not want Jews in his Union of the Russian People, but he did encourage them to organize separately under the same slogans.\(^\text{16}\) Joining right-wing organizations or activities could be dangerous for Jews: Ilya Gerasimov described a case in Kazan, when a Jew Kissin participated in the “patriotic” demonstration in October 1905, but ended up as a victim of the anti-Jewish pogrom.\(^\text{17}\)

The only party on the loyalist part of the Russian political spectrum that attempted to attract Jewish followers was the Union of October 17 (the Octobrists). In 1906, a “group of Jews-members” of the Union published a brochure in which they called on “the Russian Jews” to join the party and to support it in the elections to the State Duma.\(^\text{18}\) Notably, the copy of the brochure in the National Library of Israel bears the ex libris of Ahad Ha’am (Asher Zvi Ginsberg), the ideologue of cultural Zionism whose general political views were quite conservative.\(^\text{19}\) The moderate liberal Union of October 17 could hardly be called a genuine right-wing party.\(^\text{20}\) However,

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\(^{16}\) Chernovskii, Soiuz russkogo naroda, 230.


\(^{18}\) Vozzvanie k russkim evreiam ot gruppy chlenov-evreev partii “Soiuza 17-go oktiabria” (Moscow: Tip. Zabaldueva, 1906).

\(^{19}\) On Ahad Ha’am, see Steven J. Zipperstein, Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism (London: Peter Halban, 1993).

from the very beginning it supported the government, and its position regarding the Jewish question was ambiguous. The demand for equal rights for all appeared in its program, but the Octobrists in the Duma never even attempted to put it to a vote; moreover, they often voted for new restrictions on Jews.\footnote{For an analysis of the Octobrists’ position on the “Jewish question,” see Löwe, \textit{The Tsars and the Jews}, 263–67. See also Levin, \textit{Mi-mahapekhah le-milhamah}, 66–67.} The prominent Russian-Jewish socialist Mark Ratner wrote in 1912: “the tendencies to go hand in hand with the Octobrists that appeared in certain circles of bourgeois Jewry, were immediately suppressed when the genuine political mood of this party, [which was] not ready to do anything to establish the equality of nationalities and the removal of the Jewish lack of rights, became clear.”\footnote{M. B. Ratner, “Politicheskie dvizheniia,” \textit{Evreiskaia entsiklopediia}, vol. 13, ed. A. Garkavi and L. Katsenel’son (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvo dlia nauchnykh evreiskikh izdanii and Brokgauz-Efron, 1912), 645.} Indeed, the abovementioned brochure is the only evidence that the Union of October 17 had any Jewish members.

Establishing Jewish right-wing organizations

While Jews could not join right-wing unions, they could, theoretically, establish their own right-wing organizations. However, we know about only one such organization, founded in Odessa in 1910–11. Its name was “The Society of Jews Praying for the Wellbeing of the Tsar and the Government” (\textit{Hevrat mitpalelim li-sheloma shel malkhat}), and its aim was to disseminate among Jews “the importance of belief in God and of the devotion to the autocracy and government.” Odessa’s governor, Ivan Tolmachiov, one of the few high-ranking administrators who clearly distinguished between the loyal “Jewish masses” and the “harmful” Jewish intelligentsia, supported this society.\footnote{On Tolmachiov’s attitude to Jewish religious Orthodoxy, see Vladimir Levin, “Orthodox Jewry and the Russian Government: An Attempt at Rapprochement, 1907–1914,” \textit{East European Jewish Affairs} 39, no. 2 (2009): 192–93.} The bylaws of the “Society of Jews Praying for the Government” were approved not at the provincial level, as could have been done according to the 1906 law on public associations, but by the deputy minister of the interior, Sergei Kryzhanovskii. Newspapers, however, ridiculed the establishment of the society and described it as a trick by a certain \textit{melamed}
(a teacher in a private one-room Jewish religious school), Lev (or Moisei) Kenis, to get permission for opening a private synagogue in his apartment.  

It is not accidental that the only Jewish right-wing society was a religious one, “praying for the tsar,” and not, for example, one that promoted street demonstrations. Jewish monarchism was very often (but not always) closely connected to religion. Religious orthodoxy was the most conservative force on the “Jewish street,” and it always stressed that deep devotion to religious observance includes loyalty towards the existing regime and fierce opposition to revolutionary movements. Ilia Lurie has already pointed out the amazing similarity between the anti-modernist views of Rabbi Sholom Duber Schneersohn of Lubavitch and the conservative thinking of the highest Russian officials of the late nineteenth century, like, for instance, Konstantin Pobedonostsev.  

The opposition of orthodox rabbis to Jewish revolutionaries before 1905 has been discussed by several scholars, and recently David Fishman researched the Orthodox rabbis’ display of loyalty in 1901–04. The loyalist and monarchist views of these rabbis were expressed in their speeches and writings on particular occasions, while attempts to found an organization were unsuccessful. Some Orthodox leaders tried to create an organization “Mahzikei Ha-Dat” in 1901–03, but their plans failed. Some leading rabbis might have been involved in discussions regarding the idea of a con-

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servative political party of orthodox Jews, formulated by Faivel Meir Gets, which apparently took place in 1903. The aim of the party was to oppose antisemites on the one hand and the Jewish revolutionaries on the other. The existence of such a party would have been enough, according to Gets, to remove “the responsibility for rebels” from “all Jews of our country.” At the same time, notwithstanding his proclaimed conservatism and loyalty to the regime, Gets stressed that the party must strive for the full emancipation of Jews, but not through violence and rebellion.29 In other words, Jewish conservatives could support the existing regime but not in the issue of Jewish civil equality.

Only after the subduing of the revolutionary turmoil did some prominent orthodox leaders begin working on the creation of an orthodox political party. After several preparatory steps undertaken during 1907, the “Knesset Israel” society was officially announced in January 1908.30 The governor of Vil’na Dmitrii Liubimov approved the bylaws of the new organization, regarding it as having “a pure conservative character without anti-governmental aims,” that aroused opposition from the “Jewish youth and progressive-minded Jews.”31 However, neither the bylaws of Knesset Israel nor its public charter written by Rabbi Haim Ozer Grodzensky included any reference to conservatism or loyalty to the regime. In fact, both documents contained direct references to the legal equality of Jews.32 The authorities used this demand for emancipation in the bylaws to ban Knesset Israel in 1911.33 However, the activities of Knesset Israel had already ceased

29 The text was published in Hebrew in 1907, Dr F. M-r [Faivel Meir Gets], Ad matai tahrishu! Kol kore le-shlumei emunei israel (Vilna, 1907) and printed again as the last chapter of a Russian brochure, M.B. [Faivel Meir Gets], V svete pravdy (Moscow, 1908). In the Russian brochure (p. 3), Gets claimed that the text was prepared in 1903. For the discussion of Gets’s plans, see Levin, “Knesset israel,” 58–39.
31 Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA), f. 821, op. 9, d. 63, l. 31–36.
two years earlier, in the winter of 1908–09, when its founders abandoned their attempts to create a viable organization and joined the discussion with German Orthodox rabbis over the establishment of Agudat Israel. On the one hand, the first attempt to establish an orthodox political organization failed since the traditional values Jewish orthodox leaders wished to preserve did not include mass political activities. On the other hand, politics during the 1905 Revolution, which served as the reference point for the founders of Knesset Israel, were so anti-government that even the most conservative Jewish leaders refrained from expressing their conservatism. They did not dare using monarchist rhetoric in their public appeals, and many of them probably sincerely believed that the discrimination against Jews should be eliminated from Russian legal codes.

The first years after the end of the 1905 revolution were marked by the high hopes of Jewish orthodoxy to cooperate with the government. I have discussed this attempt at cooperation elsewhere; here I would like to stress only one aspect of Orthodox activity. In the years 1907–10, countless texts produced by leading rabbis reiterated the idea that the strict adherence to the values of Judaism demanded loyalty to the tsar and the state. This was the main argument of Orthodoxy in its search for support from the government of Petr Stolypin. On several occasions, orthodox leaders adopted the mode of behavior specific to Russian monarchist unions. For example, the assembly of orthodox rabbis in Warsaw opened on December 30, 1908 with a prayer for the tsar, the singing of the Russian imperial anthem, and the sending of a telegram to the tsar through Stolypin. The next day, the rabbis cabled new year greetings to Stolypin, the Governor General of Poland, the Governor of Warsaw, and the governors of their provinces. The assembly of orthodox rabbis in Vilna in April 1909 also prayed for the tsar and thanked the Ministry of Interior, the Governor General and the polizeimeister. Nonetheless, the efforts of Ortho-

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34 Levin, “Orthodox Jewry and the Russian Government.”
37 Ibid., 195.
doxy in 1909–10 were fruitless and did not garner any flexibility in the government attitude toward their case. In subsequent years, the hopes for cooperation with the government disappeared and disillusioned orthodox leaders became less effusive in expressing their monarchism.  

Cooperation with the Russian right

While those Jews who professed rightist and monarchist views could not join Russian organizations and did not succeed in establishing parallel Jewish ones, they could try to cooperate with right-wing parties on tactical issues. Since all right-wing organizations opposed the very idea of Jewish equality, the prerequisite for such cooperation was pushing the issue of full emancipation aside.

This was the politics conducted by one of the two Jewish members of the Third Duma, Lazar Nisselovich. Nisselovich believed that there were among the Octobrists and the rightists “honest, goodhearted people with a decent soul,” whose antisemitism was due to a lack of knowledge about the Jewish question. In November 1907, he told a Jewish newspaper that “we can—in private talks and constant meetings—show them their error and prove their injustice toward and abuse of Jews in order to destroy [their] prejudice against us and turn their hearts to our good.” In April 1908, Nisselovich indeed spoke with the heads of the non-oppositional factions in the Duma about the introduction of a bill on Jewish emancipation. He received promises from the leader of the Right Faction Count Alexei Bobrinskii, the head of the Moderate Right Faction Count Vladimir Bobrinskii, and the leader of the Octobrists Aleksandr Guchkov that they would not oppose the transfer of the bill to the commission. This move, however, did not materialize, and from then on, Nisselovich no longer counted on the support of the moderate and extreme right. His most important initiative in the Duma, the bill on the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, was introduced in

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38 Ibid., 196–98.
1910 with the signatures of 166 Octobrists (in addition to all oppositional Duma members). The Octobrists, however, also made sure that the bill was never discussed in the parliamentary commission, and that it “died” there.41

Nisselovich’s attempts to cooperate with pro-government forces and even with antisemites were not fruitful. Nonetheless, similar tactics were proposed during the elections to the Fourth Duma in 1912.42 For example, the crown rabbi of Pavlograd in Ekaterinoslav province, Elyakim Belen’kii, suggested that one half of Jewish voters should vote for the opposition and the other half for right-wing parties.43 Genrikh Sliozberg, one of the most prominent Jewish activists, said in 1912 that there is a difference between the extreme right faction, which is “pointedly antisemitic” and the Nationalist faction, “which has a political program, it stands on the basis of the Manifesto of 17 October, and deals not only with the Jewish question but has other goals as well.” Sliozberg hoped it would be possible to make arrangements with the Nationalists since “they are our old acquaintances.”44 Indeed, the majority of the Nationalist faction leaders were gentry from the southwestern region—the traditional area of Jewish settlement since the sixteenth century.45 The only immediate result of Sliozberg’s statement was that his political adversaries did not miss the opportunity to accuse him of shtadlanut—the traditional practice of lobbying for Jewish interests through personal intercession, which was considered to be self-humiliating by proponents of mass politics. Taking into account that the idea of making arrangements with the Nationalists was

41 On the episode with the bill, see Levin, Mi-mahapekhah le-milhamah, 75–91.
42 On Jewish participation in the elections to the Fourth Duma, see Levin, Mi-mahapekhah le-milhamah, 97–112.
expressed in the framework of Sliozberg’s electoral campaign in Odessa, it is logical to suppose that he hoped to attract affluent Jews, who comprised 45 percent of voters in the first curia in that city.46

All in all, attempts to cooperate with right-wing organizations did not bring about the expected results. The expectations of conservative Jews did not coincide with the attitudes of Russian right-wing politicians.

**Jews on the Right**

In his seminal work *On Modern Jewish Politics*, Ezra Mendelsohn stated that “the Jewish right is more difficult to define than the Jewish left.”47 Speaking about the interwar period, he singled out Agudat Israel and Revisionist Zionism as the Jewish right. However, while this distinction works in the framework of Jewish politics, it does not translate well to the general political spectrum that existed in “the officially antisemitic empire.”48 The above description of attempts to find a common language with the Russian right mentions several Jewish activists who could be defined as potentially *Kaisertreu*. The analysis of their *Weltanschauung* shows, however, a major difference between them and their Russian loyalist counterparts, notably their demand for Jewish emancipation.

It is hard to define the views of Lazar Nisselovich, which seem to be quite eclectic. He belonged to the faction of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets) in the Third Duma, but severely criticized the faction and its leader Pavel Miliukov for their tactics regarding the Jewish question. His attempt to enlist the support of Rabbi Sholom Duber Schneersohn of Lubavitch in the electoral campaign for the Fourth Duma may testify to the closeness of his views with those of one of the most conservative Orthodox leaders in the empire, but there is no way to confirm this assumption.49

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46 On the elections to the Fourth Duma in Odessa, see Levin, *Mi-mahapekhah le-milhamah*, 100–102.
48 Ibid., 60.
Genrikh Sliozberg, in contrast, was known for his conservative outlook. In his memoirs, completed in Paris in 1933, he stressed that he did not join any party in 1905–06 although the majority of Jews supported the Kadets. According to Sliozberg,

It was impossible for Jews to support the candidates of the extreme right-wing parties and even Octobrists... Not because the Jews were of a radical disposition in the general political sense and accepted all points of the Kadet program, including the autonomy of Poland (one of the major differences between the Kadets and the Octobrists), emancipation of women etc. But the Party of People’s Liberty [Kadets] was the only one besides the revolutionary parties that openly included in its program the equalization of Jewish rights with those of other populations. The Octobrists did not dare to do this, in my mind, not because of antisemitism and not because of the lack of understanding of the necessity for equality of all citizens before the law in a constitutional state, but out of tactical considerations. In this respect, they wanted to go hand in hand with the right and reactionary elements and not to differ significantly from the mood of the government, whose support they sought.

This description reveals a very positive approach to the Octobrists. According to Sliozberg, they were neither antisemites nor anti-constitutionalists, but their tactic was to follow the government, and therefore, they did not support Jews.

In his other works written after the 1917 revolution, Sliozberg expressed even more right-wing views. For example, he wrote that the “granting of the constitution in 1905 was a little bit premature,” since the reforms proclaimed on December 12, 1904 “improved the regime and gradually in-

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50 On Sliozberg’s Weltanschauung, see Brian Horowitz, “Genrikh Sliozberg: shtrikhi k politicheskomu portretu,” Vestnik Evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve 2(15) (1997): 186–205, although the author does not discuss Sliozberg’s general political views.
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introduced the expansion of liberties.” He also clearly preferred the State Council to the State Duma since it had no extreme politicians on either the right or left. One may consider these views to be a result of the revolution and emigration, but it seems that Sliozberg was always a conservative who cooperated with the Kadets simply because of their position on the Jewish question. According to his memoirs, after the publication of the October Manifesto in 1905, he left a meeting of the Union of Unions with the words “the struggle for the change of the regime is accomplished.” Sliozberg even wrote that he was known as an “antirevolutionary conservative activist,” and this was how others remembered him. It seems that if not for the Jewish question, Sliozberg clearly could have been a member of the Octobrist party or even of the moderate wing of the Union of Russian Nationalists.

Sliozberg’s conservative political views found expression in his praise of the loyalty of Baron Horace Gintsburg, under whose auspices Sliozberg began his carrier as the defender of Jewish interests in the courts and governmental agencies. As early as 1910, Sliozberg stressed that “the main instrument” of Gintsburg’s struggle for Jewish rights “was his absolute and complete loyalty.” In the 1930s, he wrote that Gintsburg’s “loyalty was preserved even after the revolutionary storm of 1905, notwithstanding the bad period of the pogroms that marked the victory of that revolution, and the sympathy of the tsar for the Union of the Russian People, which organized those pogroms.” In another place, Sliozberg mentioned “the deep loyalty [of Gintsburg] to the government and the dynasty.”

Baron Horace Gintsburg was not the only Jewish notable to remain loyal to the regime in all matters except for the issue of Jewish equality. It

52 Genrikh Sliozberg, Dorevoliutsionnyi stroi Rossii (Paris, 1933), 120.
53 Ibid., 116–17.
54 Sliozberg, Dela minuvshikh dni, 3: 175–76.
55 Ibid., 3: 176.
57 On Sliozberg’s activities, see Benjamin Nathans, Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 325–14.
seems that all his sons, as well as other prominent families such as the Brodskii in Kiev and the Vysotskii in Moscow had a very conservative Weltanschauung. The Jewish nouveaux riche also followed suit. For example, Moses Ginsburg, who made a fortune from supplying the Russian Pacific Fleet and the Port Arthur fortress, and who virtually replaced the Gintsburgs as the main benefactor of the St. Petersburg Jewish community, was described by the emigrant antisemitic newspaper Chasovoi in 1936 as “a great Russian patriot,” who was “at the same time a devoted monarchist and pious Jew.”

Pious Jews, like the Russian monarchists, used to quote a verse from Proverbs 24:21, “My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change” as proof that Jewish Orthodoxy was devoted to the throne. David Fishman’s research of the Orthodox display of loyalty in 1901–04 demonstrates that “some rabbis were ideological—even theological—monarchists; others believed that loyalty to the state was a religious duty; still others believed that the profession of loyalty and gratitude toward the tsar was prudent realpolitik for the vulnerable Jewish minority.” Some Orthodox Jews opposed the idea of emancipation. Thus, in December 1906, a certain Peretz Zilberberg asked the ministers of the Interior and Finances not to grant Jews equal rights because it would be harmful for Jews and the state. Another anonymous petition stated that the “genuine Jews” do not need emancipation since their religion does not allow them to serve in the army and governmental offices. Such views characterized only extreme Orthodoxy, and only the most conservative rabbis could ignore the anti-Jewish politics of the Russian state. The mainstream of Orthodox leaders considered emancipation a legitimate political goal as the examples of Knesset Israel and the party proposed by Faivel Meir Gets have shown.

61 On the political loyalty of the Gintsburg family, see Vovshin, “Mishpahat ginzburg,” 140.
64 Fishman, “The Kingdom on Earth Is Like the Kingdom in Heaven” 258.
Faivel Meir Gets, who formulated the idea of the conservative party, was an interesting figure who belonged to several camps simultaneously and, therefore, has not attracted sufficient scholarly attention. He was a Talmudic scholar who studied at the university (a fairly common occurrence) but did not abandon religious observance (not very common). He served as the learned Jew of the Vil’na educational district (i.e., he was a state official) and, at the same time, maintained close ties to orthodox rabbinical leaders, participated in the Russian and German Jewish press, and was a friend of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov’ev. As one of the last maskilim, Gets was at home in German-Jewish culture and probably was influenced by the example of German-Jewish conservative politicians like Gabriel Riesser, who combined German patriotism with the struggle for Jewish emancipation. Similarly, the conservative political views of Gets included emancipation of the Jews, as seen in the program discussed above.

In addition to notables and pious Jews, some Zionists might have shared conservative views, or at least understood the feelings of Russian nationalists, and been indifferent to the future of Russia. Indeed, the Zionist movement in Russia carefully avoided interference in Russian politics before the 1905 Revolution; however, this was not a matter of principle but rather behavior that enabled its semi-legal existence and its avoidance of police repression. When the Zionists entered politics in 1905 and converted their organization into a political party at the Helsingfors Conference in November 1906, they adopted the demands of emancipation and national rights for Jews. This clearly

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placed them in the oppositional segment of Russian politics. An attempt by Zeev Jabotinsky, a young and charismatic Zionist leader, to conclude an electoral agreement with right-wing landowners in the elections to the Second Duma in the province of Volhynia was driven not by ideological affinity but by rational calculation. Jabotinsky thought that such an agreement might bring about the election of several “progressive” members of the Duma, Jews among them. 68 After the failure of this combination, the Zionists never again tried to cooperate with the Russian right. Some of them fiercely criticized the Kadets but did so from the position of Jewish civil and national equality. 69

Despite discrimination and the intensification of state anti-Jewish politics before 1914, the beginning of World War I caused an outburst of patriotic feelings among the empire’s Jews. Their expressions were very similar to those of other Russian subjects. In St. Petersburg for example, the festive prayer for the well-being of the imperial family and the victory of Russian arms was held in the Choral Synagogue, and a telegram expressing loyalty was sent to the tsar. Then a demonstration of Jews bearing portraits of the tsar and national flags marched to the office of the city governor and to the Winter Palace. At the Palace Square, the participants kneeled and sang the national anthem three times. They continued on to Anichkov Palace, the home of the dowager empress, and sang the anthem there too. On their way back to the synagogue, they again sang the anthem in front of the provincial governor’s office and the barracks of the military fleet. 70 Similar prayers for the victory of Russian arms in synagogues were accompanied by street demonstrations that included displaying the tsar’s portrait, flying flags, and singing the national anthem in many Russian cities and towns, starting with Odessa and ending with small shtetls like Ovruch and Brichtany. 71 Some of those prayers took place on the birthday of the heir to the

69 On the political activities of the Russian Zionists in 1907–1914, see Levin, Mi-mahapekhah le-milhamah, 181–209.
70 Nozyi Vokhod 29 (July 24, 1914): 11; Hatzfirah 177 (August 3 [16], 1914): 2.
71 For the description of the prayer in the Great Synagogue of Odessa, which was followed by a demonstration with the emperor’s portrait and for the prayer in the Brody Synagogue, see Hatzfirah 180 (August 6
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Russian throne, Alexis, on 30 July/12 August, which strengthened the display of dynastic loyalty. We do not know who organized those demonstrations or who participated in them, but their broad geographical spread and their similarity to spontaneous displays of non-Jews (and their typological likeness to the usual behavior of the monarchists’ unions) enable us to speak about sincere expressions of loyalty. The demonstration of loyalty to the tsar was an accepted form for the expression of patriotism and loyalty to the country that did not involve the profession of monarchism or Russian nationalism. However, it is hard to imagine liberals or radicals kneeling in front of the emperor’s palace.

Public expressions of Jewish loyalty to the tsarist regime became more common after the Revolutions of 1917 and the Civil War. Probably the best known figure was the prominent Zionist publicist Daniel Pasmanik who proclaimed his monarchism and Russian nationalism in the 1920s, as recently discussed by Taro Tsurumi. But he was not alone. For example, one of the participants of a Russian-Jewish meeting in Berlin in 1923 said that, “9 out of 10 Jews miss the tsar.” There is no reason to suspect that such feelings were not sincere. In contrast to the expressions of loyalty made while the regime was alive, there were no benefits to be derived from such statements in the 1920s. In fact, quite the opposite was true: Pasmanik was ostracized by the Zionist movement for his Russian nationalism. However, the views

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[72] On ceremonies and demonstrations in August 1914, see Boris Kolonitskii, “Tragicheskaia erotika”: obrazy imperatorskoi sem’i v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (Moscow: NLO, 2010), 73–98.
[73] For the discussion of Jewish soldiers’ patriotism and the desire to defend the Fatherland against the enemy, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, Jews in the Russian Army, 1827–1917: Drafted into Modernity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 159–64.
expressed in the 1920s could have not reflected opinions from before the
revolution. It is logical to suppose that the antisemitic tsarist regime might
have looked less bad after the Bolshevik revolution, the Civil War, and emi-
gregation. Nonetheless, it is not very common for people to completely change
their political outlooks. Therefore, the sympathy expressed in the 1920s for
the fallen tsarist regime is an indicator that such sympathy was—or could
have been—in existence, in one form or another, before 1917.

The Right and the Jews

Jews eager to cooperate with the right were usually antagonized by its an-
tisemitism, but the right was by no means homogeneous or static. Without
delving deeply into the issue of the rightist Weltanschauung and its trans-
formation, I intend here to recall changes in attitudes towards Jews that
might have permitted, in theory, the possibility of cooperation between
conservative Jews and Russian monarchists and rightists.

While during the 1905 Revolution the hierarchy of hostile ethnic groups
and nationalities was very clear for right-wing politicians, and the Jews were
viewed as the major danger, the pacification of the country and routine po-
litical activities after 1907 made this hierarchy less unambiguous than be-
fore. If the attempts of Jewish politicians to find a common language with
the right began in 1907, it took more time for the rightist politicians to
change their views on the Jews. In 1911, Vladimir Krupenskii and his fol-
lowers left the Nationalist faction in the Duma and established a new fac-
tion of Independent Nationalists. The ideology behind the split was the
differentiated view of non-Russians put forth by Krupenskii. He claimed
that certain groups of inorodtsy—Germans, Tatars, Armenians, Greeks,
and Moldovans (Krupenskii came from Bessarabia where Moldovans were
the majority)—were capable of assimilation into the Russian people and
therefore should be emancipated; however, Finns, Poles, and Jews could not
be assimilated. In spite of his vision of Jews as incapable of assimilation,
Krupenskii proposed an electoral agreement to the Jews of Bessarabia in 1912. In exchange for the support of his party against the group of Vladimir Purishkevich, he offered the Jews representation in the Duma in the form of one seat from the province of Bessarabia. In the context of Russian right-wing antisemitism, which viewed Jews as a mystical body primordially hostile to Holy Russia, Krupenskii’s proposal was not simply a technical electoral alliance. It was a kind of legitimization of Jews, a redefinition of them in political terms, a recognition of their position as voters. In other words, Krupenskii did not become a philosemite, but he did begin to view the Jews as legitimate partners in Russian politics.

We can view as a similar statement the article about the Beilis Affair written by a prominent leader of the Russian Nationalist Party, Vasilii Shulgin and published in 1913. Contrary to all right-wing activists who fiercely supported the accusation of Mendel Beilis as guilty of ritual murder, Shulgin, claimed that there was no evidence of the ritual character of the murder and Beilis’ guilt. As his long political career shows, Shulgin also did not become a philosemite, but he saw no need for artificially invented assaults on the humanity of Jews. Krupenskii and Shulgin could be described as “rationalistic” antisemites who did not invest Jews with “supernatural” qualities but treated them as one among many groups of Russian subjects.

The beginning of World War I intensified this tendency. Jewish newspapers in August 1914 quoted the most prominent Russian antisemites, Vladimir Purishkevich and Alexei Shmakov. The former said that the Jews are Russian citizens and ready to protect the country with their lives, and the latter welcomed the patriotism of Jews. The change in Purishkevich’s attitude toward the Jews and its numerous public expressions caused con-
fusion among extreme rightists. This sudden benevolence was an indicator of a rearrangement of the hierarchy of enemies. Germans held the first place, thus making the others look less threatening.

In spring 1915, one of the key monarchist activists in Moscow Vasilii Orlov began to speak about abolition of the Pale of Settlement and even about civil equality for Jews. In June 1915, Orlov established a new right-wing monarchist organization, the Motherland’s Patriotic Union (Otechestvennyi patrioticheskii soiuz), the bylaws of which did not include the clause prohibiting Jews from becoming members but did explicitly prohibit Germans from joining. The theoretical possibility that Jews might become members of the Union triggered loud protests and ostracism by other right-wing organizations.

In August 1915, two other important developments took place. The first was the partial abolition of the Pale of Settlement by the Russian government. This drastic step was taken under pressure from the Allies after the mass expulsions of Jews from the front areas by the Russian army, but it also shows that the conservative ministers assumed the Jewish danger to be less serious than before. The second development was the establishment of the Progressive Bloc in the Duma and State Council. The Bloc included the majority of factions in the Duma, among them Krupenskii’s Independent Nationalists and Shulgin’s Progressive Nationalists, who also split off from the Nationalist faction. The Bloc’s program demanded “an entrance to the path of abolishing restrictions on the rights of Jews.”87 While for the Ka-

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82 Ivanov, Pravye v russkom parlamente, 337–41.
83 Iu. I. Kir’ianov, Pravye partii v Rossii, 1911–1917 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), 219–21. The leader of the “Right Group” in the State Council, Count Alexei Bobrinskii, also spoke in favor of the abolition of the Pale of Settlement. See Ivanov, Pravye v russkom parlamente, 175.
84 The founder of the Union, Vasilii Orlov, was not unambiguous about the matter and stated in a private letter, “we just temporarily remained silent about them [the Jews], that’s all” and called it “necessary, reasonable tactics.” See Chernovskii, Soiuz russkogo naroda, 188.
85 Kir’ianov, Pravye partii, 225.
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dets such an ambiguous formula was a betrayal of their principle of equality for all, it satisfied Russian nationalists. Though it did not promise emancipation, the program nonetheless recognized that the rights of Jews should be increased, contrary to the numerous statements of the Nationalists in previous years.

All this demonstrates that the reading of the imperial Russian ethno-political map by right-wing forces was changing. Starting in the 1870s and especially during the 1905 Revolution, the Jews were seen as the most dangerous enemy Russia faced. As time passed, the Jewish danger was perceived as less threatening, and some right-wing politicians began to distinguish between individual Jews and the collective Jew. They began to view Jews as a national collective, hostile like the Polish nation, for example, but not a mystic entity striving to destroy Holy Russia. With the start of World War I, the Germans became the omnipotent mystical enemy.88 Even those who continued to persecute Jews blamed them for being German supporters, that is, not for being the archenemy of Russia, but for being collaborators.

There were many common features of the older hatred of Jews and the newly developed hatred of Germans. Eric Lohr stated that “for extreme right-wing organizations ... traditional anti-Semitic and anti-Polish themes merged seamlessly with new anti-German themes.”89 However, the appearance of the German archenemy led to a reappraisal of the place of the Jews. According to Mikhail Lykosov, “German imperialism temporarily replaced the Kahal” in rightists’ rhetoric.90 The antisemitism of the right-wing by

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89 Lohr, Nationalizing the Russian Empire, 24.

90 Cited in: Ivanov, Pravye v russkom parlamente, 207. Cf. also the opinion of Aleksandr Repnikov: “World War I made the Jewish question less relevant in comparison with the question regarding ‘the German domination [zasil’]”, A.V. Repnikov, Konservativnye kontseptsii pereurostvov Rossi (Moscow: Academia, 2007), 316.
no means disappeared, but the importance of Jews as a hostile group diminished.91 Thus, discussions about the abolition of the Pale of Settlement contained the idea that Russia could not fight with Germany and the Jews at the same time.92 Some right-wing leaders preferred to concentrate on the fight against Germany and reach a kind of “peace” or “truce” with the Jews. Instead of the complete exclusion professed earlier, they now adopted a policy of including the Jews in the ranks of those citizens fighting against Germany (but decidedly not of Jews’ integration into the Russian people). The Germans became “the Other” of Russian right-wing politicians during World War I.

Conclusions

As the discussion above has demonstrated, there were groups among Russian Jewry who were loyal to the monarchy and professed conservatism in varying degrees. However, their acceptance of the existing order did not include discrimination against the Jews, and despite their conservative political views, they strived to improve the situation of the Jews in Russia and to win full emancipation for them. Only very marginal groups voiced anti-emancipation demands.

Notwithstanding the full endorsement of discriminatory politics by the right-wing politicians, there were Kaisertreu Jewish activists who attempted to find common ground with them. Many others, it might be supposed, were eager to do so, but were antagonized by the virulent antisemitism of the monarchists, Russian nationalists, and even right-wing liberals.

The antisemitism of the right, however, underwent changes after the end of the 1905 Revolution and especially after the outbreak of World War I. Had this change among some of the right-wing politicians been persistent, it might have enabled right-wing Jews to take a more active stance in Russian conservative politics. The Bolshevik takeover in 1917 and the

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91 For similar statements, see Goldin, Russkaja armia i evrei, 361–62.
Civil War that followed, however, reversed this tenuous trend in favor of the “normalization” of the perception of Jews in the eyes of the Russian right. The association between the Bolsheviks and the Jews intensified antisemitism and once again, those Jews who were willing to fight the Bolsheviks were prevented from joining the White Russian armies. Thus, hatred of Jews barred any sort of genuine cooperation between Russian and Jewish conservatives.

93 On the Jews and the Jewish question during the revolution and the Civil War, see, e.g., Budnitskii, Rossiiskie evre i mezhdu krasnymi i belymi.