



ISSN: 2158-7051

INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF
RUSSIAN STUDIES

ISSUE NO. 10 (2021/2)

NAPOLEON, THE TZARS, AND THE EMANCIPATION OF JEWRY IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE

MARK GOODMAN*

Summary

Jewish emancipation across Continental Europe was a slow process that happened earlier in some western countries, later in others and only much later in Russia. The Age of Revolution, beginning in the late 18th century, from the moment King Louis XVI was removed by popular uprising and executed in 1789, was a time of political transformation in Western Europe. By and large, the Jews of Continental Western Europe became beneficiaries of this upheaval as nation-states adopted a citizenship model that did not depend on ethnic or religious heritage. This development resulted in the dismantling of ghettos and autonomous Jewish communities and provided pathways to integration into popular society with all the legal (if not always social) rights and privileges of citizenship. Jews within the Russian Empire, on the other hand, did not realize emancipation until the overthrow of the Tzars in 1917. The Tzars never abandoned their policy of containment and ghettoization, and attempted to influence European policies by opposing emancipation. This paper will examine the uneven processes by which Jewish emancipation in Europe and in Russia was initiated.

Key Words: Jew, Jewish, emancipation, Napoleon, Tzars, democracy, citizenship, nation-states.

Introduction

Jewish emancipation across Continental Europe was a slow process that happened earlier in some

western countries, later in others and only much later in Russia. The Age of Revolution, beginning in the late 18th century, set the stage for the political upheaval that would preoccupy and displace European monarchies from the moment King Louis XVI was removed by popular uprising and executed in 1789. By and large, the Jews of Continental Europe became beneficiaries of this upheaval as ghetto life and the autonomous Jewish communities disappeared and gave way to a general integration into popular society with all the rights and privileges of citizenship. The process was neither quick nor clean. Indeed, anti-Jewish sentiment among the masses did not simply disappear in the wake of the upheaval. Certainly, the western and central nations of Europe were more inclined, over time, to consider emancipation as a solution to the Jewish problem. Russia, on the other hand, firmly under the grip of the Romanov tzars, would not yield. It is difficult to pinpoint all the reasons emancipation ultimately prevailed in Western and Central Europe or the goals it was expected to achieve. What can be said is that beginning in 1806, Napoleon's publicly stated goal in emancipating Europe's Jews differed greatly from the goal of the Russian tzars in managing their Jewish populations. Specifically, Napoleon sought emancipation for the Jews by a relinquishment of ethnic status; that is the renunciation of peoplehood. The tzars, beginning with Empress Catherine the Great, had no intention of emancipating the empire's Jews, following, rather, a policy of forced ghettoization and performative abjection, alternating with pressure for assimilation and abandonment of Jewish identity in order to mold them into better subjects of the Russian Empire.

The battle cry of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," was made manifest for French Jews on August 26, 1789 with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen by the French National Assembly. The French Revolution had potentially abolished the different legal statuses of people based on religion or origin that had existed under the French monarchy. After several years of turmoil, the French National Assembly passed a law that (at least theoretically) seemed to give Jews the rights of French citizenship: "All men are born, and remain, free and equal in rights...no person shall be molested for his opinions, even such as are religious, provided that the manifestation of these opinions does not disturb the public order established by law."^[1] Unfortunately, the National Assembly ultimately could not agree on whether the Jews were actually included in this statement. On December 23, 1789, Count Stanislas de Tonnerre gave a speech on the floor of the National Assembly in which he advocated for the Jews to be included as citizens. Among his many arguments, his position that the "Jews should be denied everything as a nation but granted everything as individuals"^[2] became the official position of Napoleon and the French Empire in the years that followed. Indeed, the relinquishment of a national identity would be required for Jews to obtain citizenship as individuals: "French nationalism, as the revolutionaries conceived it, was assimilatory; they wanted the Jews to abandon any sense of belonging to a separate nation that had aspirations for renewed sovereignty in the Land of Israel."^[3]In his rebuttal to Clermont-Tonnerre, Anne-Lois Henry de la Fare, the bishop of Nancy, argued that the Jews were hated by all and that granting them citizenship would "spark and enormous fire."^[4] At that point, the debate remained unsettled.

In January 1790, the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine petitioned the National Assembly for French citizenship. Their petition was denied. The National Assembly had granted citizenship to the Jews of Avignon and the Sephardim on January 28, 1790. The minority Sephardim and Jews of Avignon were the descendants of Conversos who had migrated to France in the 16th century. They spoke French, dressed like French men and women and had business relationships with their Christian neighbors. As such, the National Assembly regarded the Sephardim as having a different social standing from the Ashkenazim and therefore as being distinct among French Jews. It would take another one and a half years to recognize French Ashkenazim. On September 3, 1791, the language

of equality was added to the French constitution: “The Constitution guarantees, as national and civil rights...liberty to every man to exercise the religious worship to which he is attached.”^[5] And twenty-five days later, on September 28, 1791, the Ashkenazim of France were finally granted citizenship: “...every man who, being duly qualified, takes the civic oath, and engages to fulfil all the duties prescribed by the constitution, has a right all the advantages it insures.”^[6] Their new status, however, came with a proviso; that is, the Jews of France had to renounce “all privileges in their favor.” This effectively ended Jewish communal autonomy in France, rendering all Jews the same as Frenchmen and ending their status as a separate people in France. According to Kobler, Napoleon understood the strong connection that Jews felt to both their religion and to the concept of peoplehood. And he understood the primacy of Jewish law in the exercise of daily life. He did not question that French Jews were willing to accede to the requirements of French citizenship. What concerned him was whether Jewish law would interfere with those requirements^[7] But this concern was not realized. Indeed, there was a general feeling that the existence of multiple religions within a single state that would agree to the validity of civil law was both possible and achievable, and for Judaism, in particular, that the granting of civil and political rights to Jews came out of a belief that there were no irreconcilable contradictions between the “spirit” of Judaism and French civilization.^[8]

Napoleon’s Rise and Jewish Emancipation

Napoleon was promoted to captain in the French army in 1792 and then to general in 1795. He installed himself as First Consul in the Coup of 18 Brumaire after the fall of the Directory, a five-member committee that had governed France from November 1795 when it replaced the Committee of Public Safety following the French Revolution and the execution of King Louis XVI. For the next ten years, he led the French army in the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802) to confront Austria and Prussia, who had issued the Declaration of Pillnitz in August 1791, declaring a willingness to use force, if necessary, to protect King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the sister of the then Austrian emperor, Leopold II. The Austrian and Prussian monarchies looked with outrage on the events of the French revolution and sought to support Louis XVI. To that end, they invaded northeast France in August 1792 but were repelled at the Battle of Valmy in September, 1792.

During the Italian campaign, Napoleon’s army marched through 19 cities starting on April 12th, 1796 with the battle of Montenotte in Northwestern Italy and culminating in the battle of Tarvis on March 23rd, 1797. Along the way, as he marched eastward, the Jews of the Netherlands would be one of the first Jewish communities to enjoy emancipation.

In 1795 The Netherlands was invaded and conquered by France. Napoleon Bonaparte set up a republic called “Revolutionary Netherlands” but he still thought he did not have enough control over the Dutch. The Batavian Republic, which existed from 1795-1806, became the Kingdom of Holland under Napoleon's younger brother Louis (1806-1810) and after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, The United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Batavian National Convention conferred the rights of citizenship on Jews on September 9, 1796: “No Jew shall be excluded from exercising any rights or advantages which are attached to Batavian citizen rights and which he might wish to enjoy...”^[9]

Napoleon became emperor of France in 1804 following a coup which he did not instigate but did take full advantage of in order to change the constitution of France and have himself declared emperor. As he led the French army to victory throughout Europe, Napoleon emancipated Jews in the countries he conquered, including Western Germany, abolishing laws that restricted them to living in ghettos. Although they were suspended a short time thereafter, Napoleon further granted political rights to Jews living in the Duchy of Warsaw on July 22, 1807: “All religious worship is free

and public” (Art. 2) and “All citizens are equal before the eyes of the law” (Art. 3) In addition, following several years of debate, he designated Judaism an official religion of France in 1807.

The Jews of Padua, Italy also gained partial emancipation through Napoleon’s short-lived victory. Padua became part of the Venetian Republic in 1405. During the 15th and 16th century, Jews were subjected to discrimination most notably riots in 1475 that followed rumors of Blood Libel. In 1601 Jews were restricted to a ghetto similar to those in Rome and Venice. On April 29, 1797, French troops entered Padua and on May 12, 1797, the Venetian Republic fell.

By August 28, the Central Government of Padua ordered the abolition of the Padua ghetto, declaring “the Hebrews are at liberty to live in any street they please” and the “name of Ghetto...shall be substituted by that of *Via Libera*.”^[10] The walls were taken down two weeks later on September 15 so that “no vestige shall remain of the ancient separation from other neighboring streets.”^[11] Although the Jews of Padua did not immediately gain civil rights (that would not happen until 1866), they were, in fact, emancipated from the ghetto of Padua. After Padua, the Jews of Rome were emancipated in February 1799: “Jews who meet all conditions prescribed for the acquisition of Roman citizenship shall be subject solely to the laws common to all citizens of the Roman Republic.”^[12] All the Jews of Italy would not gain full emancipation until October 13, 1870 under the United Kingdom of Italy by King Victor Emanuel II: “...all inequalities shall cease amongst citizens regardless of the religion which they profess, concerning the enjoyment and exercise of civil and political rights and competence to hold public offices.”^[13]

The Revolutions of 1848 had brought political upheaval throughout Europe advocating for democratic reforms and the removal of old monarchical structures. These revolutions were generally quickly suppressed; however, they resulted in the Edict of March 29, 1848, signed by Carlo Alberto, King of Sardinia, which held “The Jews of the Kingdom will enjoy, as of the date of this decree, all civil rights and the possibility of pursuing academic degrees. Nothing is changed regarding their cult and the schools run by them. All laws contrary to the present one are abrogated.” On Sept 20, 1870 Italian troops entered Rome. Having unified the Italian states, Victor Emmanuel II, King of Italy, signed a royal decree on Oct 13, 1870 that extended to the city of Rome the benefits of the Edict of March 29, 1848.^[14]

Emancipation for Jews living in the German states would be a long and uneven process: “The definitions of German identity had no room for people who might aspire to their own sense of peoplehood.”^[15]

As he moved eastward, Napoleon emancipated areas of the Rhineland in 1808, but full emancipation for German Jews would not take place until much later, following the unification of German states, now the German Reich, under Prussian leadership on April 22, 1871: “From the day on which the present law goes into effect the following shall be in force: the law of July 3, 1869, concerning the equality of confessions with respect to civil and political rights.”^[16]

Napoleon’s Policies Toward the Jews

Napoleon had called for an assembly of Jewish notables on May 30, 1806 in order to revive “among individuals of the Jewish persuasion residing in our dominions, sentiments of civil morality, which, unfortunately, have been stifled in many of them by the abject state in which they have long languished, and which it is not our intention either to maintain or to renew.”^[17] Demonstrating at once a superficial knowledge of Jewish history and an obtuseness regarding Diasporic Jewish tradition, he followed this assembly by convening a handpicked “Great Sanhedrin,” of Jewish religious leaders, a group whom he counted on to lead the Jews under his rule to citizenship and

assimilation. The Sanhedrin was reconvened on January 31, 1807, and after two months of deliberation, Judaism became an officially recognized religion within French territory.

The Sanhedrin, citing the rabbinic principle of *dina de-malchuta dina* (the law of the land is the law) acceded to Napoleon's demand to renounce the Jewish claim to nationhood and to pledge their allegiance to France. The Sanhedrin affirmed that it was "commendable" for Jews to become tradesmen or farmers, to give up professions (money lending and specifically usury, the collection of excessive interest attendant to it) that caused their fellow citizens to despise them, and to give up the claim of a national homeland. Napoleon adopted the Sanhedrin's plan and enacted it as law on March 17, 1808.^[18]

Napoleon's project of emancipation faced opposition. Tzar Alexander I of Russia, among others, protested vehemently to Napoleon's intentions of emancipating French Jews. The Russian Czar Alexander I objected to the precedent created by Napoleon's emancipation of the Jews and establishment of the Great Sanhedrin, regarding Napoleon's example as a threat to his own policies.

On the day that Judaism was recognized as a French religion, Napoleon, succumbing to the intense criticism from Tzar Alexander I along with numerous others, enacted the *Decret Infame*, the Infamous Decree, as it is known, which restricted Jewish money lending, canceled all debts owed to Jews by gentile debtors, and limited business activity within the Jewish community, forcing Jews to work in agriculture and craftsmanship.^[19] While the decree largely reiterated the decision of the Sanhedrin, the annulment of all debts owed to Jewish creditors was particularly painful to the Jewish community which had adopted the practice of money lending both out of convenience as well as necessity for centuries. Jews had been barred from land ownership and from most professional guilds. Moneylending and trade had become one of their few sources of sustenance. While emancipation did offer them opportunities to find new ways of earning their living, the sudden seizure of wealth represented by the *Decret Infame* was a blow to their communal prosperity.^[20]

Napoleon signed the *Decret Infame* in order to appease the Tzar for political reasons.^[21] Three months later, Napoleon effectively cancelled the decree by allowing local authorities to implement his earlier reforms. More than half of the French departments restored citizens' guaranteed freedoms to the Jews.

Napoleon's attitude toward the Jews is at best unclear. During his reign he made a number of conflicting statements about his real intentions. It would seem that his official statements supported a benevolent interpretation of his motives while his private statements indicated a much more subversive intention. Napoleon's outward tolerance and fairness toward Jews was actually based upon his grand plan to have them disappear entirely by means of total assimilation, intermarriage, and conversion.^[22] Indeed, Paula Hyman notes that Napoleon expressed "his confidence in the efficacy of social engineering through law, expressing the hope that at the end of the ten-year period, 'there would no longer be any difference between [the Jews] and the other citizens of our empire.'"^[23]

On July 23, 1806, at a public meeting of Jewish Elders in Paris, Napoleon stated that his intention was to make Jews equal citizens who enjoyed all the benefits of being Frenchmen: "My desire is to make Jews equal citizens in France, have a conciliation between their religion and their responsibilities in becoming French, and to answer all the accusations made against them. I want all people living in France to be equal citizens and benefit from our laws."^[24] Yet, His letter to Champagne, Minister of the Interior, dated November 29, 1806, presents a less benevolent view:

[It is necessary to] reduce, if not destroy, the tendency of Jewish people to practice a very great number of activities that are harmful to civilization and to public order in society in all the countries of the world. It is necessary to stop the harm by preventing it; to prevent it, it is

necessary to change the Jews. [...] Once part of their youth will take its place in our armies, they will cease to have Jewish interests and sentiments; their interests and sentiments will be French. Similarly, his disdain for Jews can be seen quite clearly in a private letter to his brother Jerome Napoleon, dated March 6, 1808: "I have undertaken to reform the Jews, but I have not endeavored to draw more of them into my realm. Far from that, I have avoided doing anything which could show any esteem for the most despicable of mankind."^[25]

Yet a year and a half following his defeat at Waterloo in June 1815, in a conversation with his personal physician, Dr. O'Meara, on November 10, 1816, Napoleon struck a much more conciliatory tone regarding the Jews. It is reported that Napoleon answered O'Meara's question about why he was so sympathetic to the Jews with the following: "My primary desire was to liberate the Jews and make them full citizens. I wanted to confer upon them all the legal rights of equality, liberty and fraternity as was enjoyed by the Catholics and Protestants. It is my wish that the Jews be treated like brothers as if we were all part of Judaism..."^[26] And in another conversation with O'Meara, Napoleon is reported to have expressed similar sentiments: "I wanted to make them leave off usury, and become like other men. There were a great many Jews in the countries I reigned over; by removing their disabilities, and by putting them upon an equality with Catholics, Protestants and others. I hoped to make them to become good citizens, and conduct themselves like the rest of the community"^[27] Clearly, Napoleon's view, here, reflects his earlier attitude toward Jews before he met with the Assembly of Notables back in 1806.^[28] Perhaps, Napoleon was reflecting on his legacy and how he wanted to be remembered by history when he struck this significantly more tolerant and welcoming tone early in his second reign.

Eastern Europe and Forced Marginalization

While the Jews of Western and Central Europe were, over time, able to gain citizenship in the various countries in which they lived, the same cannot be said for the Jews of Eastern Europe and Russia. During the 19th century, their status would sometimes allow them a manageable existence, and, at other times, thrust them into unbearably difficult situations.

During the 15th century the nobles of Poland enticed Jews fleeing the waves of persecution and expulsion in Western Europe that had begun with the crusades to come to what would become the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (est. 1569) in order to help transform the region from an agricultural economy into a mercantile economy. By 1600, after having been, within western Europe, precluded in many cases from economic life save for money lending, Jews living in the newly established Commonwealth were able to thrive.^[29] Indeed, it has been estimated that by the middle of the 16th century, nearly three-fourths of world Jewry lived in the Commonwealth.^[30] After the Partitions of Poland in 1795, Jews of the Commonwealth found themselves under three different rulers depending on the region of the Commonwealth in which they lived. Jews living in the southwestern part of the Commonwealth suddenly found themselves living in the newly created territory of Galicia under the rule of Habsburg Empress Maria-Theresa. Jews living in the northwestern part of the Commonwealth suddenly found themselves subjects of the Prussian King Frederick II, and the vast majority of Jews in the Commonwealth became subjects of the Russian Empire under Catherine the Great.

Although Frederick II was considered more tolerant of Jews and Catholics (Protestantism was the dominant religion of Prussia) than many of the German states, his tolerance was based more on the utilitarian value of the Jewish community rather than any notion of fairness:

We have too many Jews in the towns. They are needed on the Polish border because in these

areas Hebrews alone perform trade. As soon as you get away from the frontier, the Jews become a disadvantage, they form cliques, they deal in contraband and get up to all manner of rascally tricks which are detrimental to Christian burghers and merchants. I have never persecuted anyone from this or any other sect; I think, however, it would be prudent to pay attention, so that their numbers do not increase.”^[31]

Ultimately it would be his son, Frederick III, who would emancipate the Jews of the kingdom. Indeed, following the loss of over half of his territory to Napoleon in 1806, Frederick III undertook a number of reforms to solidify his power including extending citizenship to Prussian Jews in 1812 in the hope of securing their loyalty.^[32] Article 1 of his proclamation proclaimed Jews citizens and set the stage for a total of 39 new privileges to be extended to Jews living in the Prussian kingdom: “Jews and their families domiciled at present in Our States, provided with general privileges, patent letters of naturalization, letters of protection and concessions, are to be considered as natives and as Prussian state citizens.”^[33]

When Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa inherited the Commonwealth’s Jews in 1772, Galicia had between 150,000 and 200,000 Jews living in within its borders. The Jewish community was run by a national directorate composed of twelve elders lead by the crown land rabbi of Galicia. Maria Theresa paid little attention to this newly absorbed population except as a source of taxation. As well as a tax on Jewish marriage registration, she instituted a “tolerance tax” which Jews were required to pay on pain of expulsion. When Joseph II became emperor in 1780, he abolished the policies of his mother including the national directorate, the position of crown land rabbi as well as the authority of the rabbinic courts within its system. Joseph’s aim was to weaken the communal connections within the Jewish communities in order that Jews would begin to assimilate: “The primary objective [in abolishing his mother’s policies] was to abrogate the corporate status of the Jewish community and to integrate Jews in the general population.”^[34] Joseph issued the Edict of Toleration in 1789 which, although short of full emancipation, extended a number of rights to the Jewish community including the right to vote and to be elected to municipal office, the right to live anywhere within the borders without restriction, and the right to purchase property and engage in crafts and industry.

Joseph’s goal was to “transform Jews into productive citizens according to contemporary conceptions.”^[35] To that end, in addition to the rights extended to Jews, he placed restrictions on their living in rural areas other than for agricultural purposes, he required Jewish children to attend German Jewish schools before pursuing a traditional Jewish education, he required Jews to adopt surnames and forbade the use of Yiddish or Hebrew for official documents, he required them to perform modified military service that allowed them to practice their religion, and he levied new taxes on them to support the Jewish educational fund and kosher meat all while keeping in place the Tolerance Tax enacted during his mother’s reign.^[36]

The Austrian Revolution of 1848-1849 paved the way for later Jewish emancipation in Austria-Hungary, forcing the government to approve a “liberal” constitution which included freedom of worship, and equality under the law regardless of religion.^[37] Austria-Hungary was formed during the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and the new constitution, issued in December 1867, emancipated Jews fully, abolishing all restrictions that had been placed on religious observance, making Jews equal in status before the law, and granting freedom of religion:^[38] “Full freedom of religion and of conscience is guaranteed to all. The enjoyment of civil and political rights is independent of religious belief; however, religious belief shall in no way interfere with the performance of civil duties.”^[39]

Tzarist Policies Toward the Jews

Unlike their counterparts in Prussia and Galicia who were emancipated in 1812 and 1867 respectively, Russian Jews would not be emancipated by Catherine the Great or by the final five tzars of the Russian Empire. Indeed, Katz notes “in this empire the great events of the [19th] century caused some political and social repercussions, but no new social order emerged from them.”^[40] It would take the Russian Revolution of 1917 and end of the Russian monarchy for Russian Jews to be emancipated.

Before the Partitions of Poland, Russia did not allow any Jewish settlement in its European land.^[41] However, by far, the largest number of Eastern European Jews living in the Commonwealth found themselves under the rule of Catherine the Great and Tzarist Russia following its split. Catherine the Great confined Jews to an area which has become known as the Pale of Settlement which consisted of 25 provinces including the territory the Russia annexed from the Commonwealth. In addition, Catherine expelled the Jews who were living in Moscow and St. Petersburg and forced them to live in the Pale as well.^[42] At its peak, the Pale of Settlement was home to an estimated seven million Jews.^[43] Following the Partitions of Poland, Catherine the Great found herself in the unenviable position of having simultaneously inherited large tracts of uninhabited or sparsely inhabited land in Crimea which she had annexed from Turkey in June, 1787 during the Russo-Turkish War and of having recently inherited a sizeable population of Jews from the Commonwealth. Catherine needed to both establish population centers near the Black Sea to establish commercial control of new territory as well as prevent the newly absorbed Jewish population from integrating into the larger Russian population as Russian merchants feared competition from the business savvy Jews. Her solution to both problems was to restrict Jews to the Pale of Settlement (which included the newly annexed territory of Crimea), effectively populating Crimea and keeping Jews from entering into the general Russian population.^[44]

Although Catherine was not friendly to the Jews, she certainly treated them better than many Western European rulers had. Yet she had no interest in emancipating the Jews of the realm. Her general goal, which would endure under subsequent tzars, was to isolate all visible or observant Jews and assimilate those she could in order for them to become better citizens of the empire: “Tzarist Russia, an autocratic state in which political liberalism could not flourish, did not emancipate the Jews or even consider the possibility of Western-style emancipation at all. Yet Russia did want to integrate the Jews in some into its society.”^[45]

Following Catherine’s death in 1796, her only son Paul became tzar. His reign was short-lived as he was assassinated in 1801. Paul’s son Alexander was crowned tzar in 1801 and reigned until his death in 1825. While Alexander I continued many of the policies of his grandmother, he sought a “humane” solution to Russia’s Jewish problem. To that end, Alexander established a Committee for the Amelioration of the Jews in 1802 to study the problem and make recommendations.^[46] The committee recommended that Jews continue to be restricted from living in Russia proper, continue to be excluded from owning land generally as well as selling liquor the “predatory” Jewish tavern owner being a common trope in Slavic popular culture, a stereotype which the Committee seemed to endorse with its recommendation.^[47]

Alexander I’s commission did recommend that Jewish children have access to public schools and universities. Also that the Jews could establish their own schools but must teach Russian, Polish or German, and all legal documents were to be written in the aforementioned languages only. Each community could elect its rabbis and collect its taxes, and Jews could buy unoccupied land in

specific regions of the Pale on the sole condition that they were farmers in order to bring about the aforementioned goal of populating the newly acquired territory.^[48] Some Jews were ready and willing to embrace a life in agriculture. Other Jewish leaders recognized the difficulties involved in a mass resettlement of people and the chaos it would create for existing Jewish communities.^[49]

Alexander I adopted the commission's recommendations and formalized them on December 9, 1804 in the enactment of the Statutes Concerning the Organization of Jews.^[50] Although Jews gained some advantages in the deal, Alexander enacted further restrictions in January 1808, restricting Jews from holding leases on any land, from keeping taverns, saloons or inns, to live in any villages or sell wine in any villages. Thus Jews could reside in cities, towns or villages only. The effect of these restrictions was to decimate the economies of these villages for both Jews and Gentiles.

Although, his policies extended the rights of Jews within the Pale of Settlement, it would be a mistake to think that Alexander I was sympathetic to Jewish emancipation. On the contrary, it was Alexander's goal, following his grandmother, and followed to both greater and lesser degree by the final four tzars, that over the course of time, the Jews fit in to Russian society in a way that would benefit Russians. Indeed, Alexander's Minister of Justice, Gabriel Romanovich Derzhavin, clarified that policy in his report from 1800, "An Opinion on How to Avert the Scarcity of Food in White Russia through the Curbing of the Jews' Avaricious Occupations, Their Reformation and Other Matters":

Since Providence, for the realization of some unknown purpose, has left this dangerous people on the face of the earth and has not destroyed it, the governments under whose rule it lives ought to tolerate it. It is also their duty to take care of them in such a manner that the Jews be useful to themselves to society at large in whose midst they live.^[51]

Following Prussia's 1813 campaign against Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), Prussia agreed to Russian rule over the Duchy of Warsaw, renamed the Congress of Poland, in exchange for control over Saxony. Having now acquired new territory from what had been Prussian land after the Partitions of Poland back in 1772-1795, Alexander I acquired new communities of Jews living in that territory. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815 and the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of *Aix-la-Chapelle* met in 1818 to plan the withdrawal of the army from France and to negotiate reparations. During the Congress, Alexander I brought up the question of the Jews. He opposed Napoleon's emancipation of the Jews in Western Europe and subsequent to the Congress evidently had a change of heart regarding Russia's Jews.

In the following years, Alexander I would enact new restrictions beginning on May 4, 1820 that forbade Jews from keeping Christian servants. In 1821, he re-enacted segregation measures further restricting Jews from specific areas in Warsaw and other cities within the Congress of Poland. These measures led to "Jewish only" populated areas, Jewish quarters, and sometimes ghettos. On Aug 10, 1824, he prohibited non-Russian Jews from residing permanently in Russia, and on January 13, 1825, shortly before his death, he removed Jews from villages and relocated them to cities and towns. Evidently, there had been some concern for years at the highest levels of the monarchy that the Jews might try to convert Christians. Prince Adam Czartoryski had written to Alexander in 1817:

The Jews are a chief cause of the wretchedness of the country. Your majesty, out of piety and wisdom, has wished to convert them to Christianity. But that notion must be the Government's secret...otherwise this fine, holy idea cannot succeed. It must be hidden from the Jews; a beginning must be made by administrative directives, in preparing them for conversion; they must first be made Christian culturally. One could not busy oneself enough nor too soon with this, whether it is considered as a matter of humanity or of politics or of

religion.^[52]

Following Alexander's death, his younger brother Nicholas became czar of Russia. Nicholas I would enact the most stringent of anti-Jewish laws among the last czars. On August 26, 1827, Nicholas I issued what have become known as the Cantonist Decrees. The Statutes regarding the military service of Jews outlined the forced conscription into the Russian military of Jewish boys between the ages of 12 and 25.^[53] Jewish communities were required to fill a quota of boys qualified for military service and Jews who were willing to work in agriculture in southern Russia were exempt. These young men were required to serve in the Imperial Russian army for 25 years and were indoctrinated into Christianity. Nicholas' decree caused immediate tensions within Jewish communities as many Jewish young men of draft age fled into the forests, mutilated their bodies or engaged in other acts in order to avoid the draft.^[54] In addition, some wealthy Jews bribed their way out of having their children drafted. Like that of his brother, Alexander I, Nicholas' clear intention was the assimilation of Russian Jewry. Indeed, the Czar wrote in a confidential memorandum "the chief benefit to be derived from the drafting of Jews is the certainty that it will move them most effectively to change their religion."^[55] Further attempts at assimilation came in 1844 when Nicholas I set up a network of schools for Jews paid for by Jews in the form of a special tax, the Candle Tax. The decree ordering the establishment of these schools required the teachers be made up of both Christians and Jews such that "the purpose of the education of the Jews is to bring them nearer to the Christians and to uproot their harmful beliefs which are influenced by the Talmud."^[56] In 1851, Nicholas I issued a decree dividing Jews into two groups—"useful" and "non-useful."^[57] Merchants, craftsmen, and farmers were designated "useful" and avoided conscription while small tradesmen and poor Jews were designated "non-useful" and were threatened with conscription.

Following Nicholas' death in 1855, his son Alexander II became czar. Alexander II was more tolerant of Russia's Jews than previous czars had been. He abolished the Cantonist policies of forced conscription and he allowed rich, educated Jews to move outside the Pale of Settlement establishing Jewish communities in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Even Kiev, which had been officially closed to Jews was open to the Jewish upper class.^[58] Unfortunately for the Jews, the reign of Alexander II was cut short by his assassination in 1881.

If Alexander II's reign was marked by a more tolerant attitude toward the realm's Jews, certainly his son, Alexander III, did not carry on his father's legacy. Indeed, pogroms ensued following Alexander II's assassination as the masses falsely blamed the Jews for having participated in the murder. Alexander III focused that anger against the Jews in order to divert attention away from his repressive regime. Alexander III organized one pogrom after another to keep the attention of the masses on the Jews and off his government: "Expulsions, deportations, arrests, and beatings became the daily lot of the Jews, not only of their lower class, but even of the middle class and the Jewish intelligentsia. The government of Alexander III waged a campaign of war against its Jewish inhabitants... The Jews were driven and hounded, and emigration appeared to be the only escape from the terrible tyranny of the Romanovs."^[59] In addition, Alexander III instituted the May Laws on May 3, 1882 which officially blamed the Jews for the assassination of Alexander II, restricted Jews to living in towns and cities, halted the registration and administration of property and mortgages in the names of Jews, and forbade Jews from engaging in commerce on Sundays and Christian holy days.^[60] Finally in 1891, Alexander III expelled the Jews from Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Khar'kov.^[61] Like the czars who preceded him, Alexander's answer to Russia's problem of Jewry was attrition and assimilation as evidenced by the stated aim of his minister Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev: "One third will die out, one third will leave the country and one third will be completely dissolved in the surrounding population."^[62]

When Alexander III died in 1894, he was succeeded by his son, Nicholas II, who would be the last czar of the Romanov dynasty. Nicholas II, who had been educated by the aforementioned minister Pobedonostsev, continued the anti-Semitic policies of his father and encouraged crimes against his Jewish subjects.^[63] The Kishinev pogrom which took place on April 6-7, 1903 at the behest of the Tzarist government looked to refocus political revolutionary tension in the masses against the Jews and away from the government. Like his father, Alexander III, Nicholas II encouraged the slaughter of Jews in order to deflect rising dissatisfaction among the Russian people with the monarchy by turning their attention onto the helpless Jews. On April 28, the New York Times reprinted a Yiddish Daily News Report that had been smuggled out of Russia:

The mob was led by priests, and the general cry, "Kill the Jews", was taken-up all over the city. The Jews were taken wholly unaware and were slaughtered like sheep. The dead number 120 and the injured about 500. The scenes of horror attending this massacre are beyond description. Babes were literally torn to pieces by the frenzied and bloodthirsty mob. The local police made no attempt to check the reign of terror. At sunset the streets were piled with corpses and wounded. Those who could make their escape fled in terror, and the city is now practically deserted of Jews.^[64]

When it was all over, 118 men, women and children had been killed; 800 Jewish houses had been demolished, and over 4000 Jewish families had been made homeless and destitute.^[65] After two days of slaughter, Nicholas II was reported to have said, "I had expected that a much greater number of Jews would perish."^[66]

Finally, Nicholas II and Tzarist officials made sure that Mendel Beilis, a Russian Jew accused of ritual murder, would not be fully acquitted in his blood libel trial in Kiev, which took place from September 25 through October 28, 1913.^[67] The result of a guilty charge on any of the accounts would lead to a new wave of persecutions of the Jew as the Tzar could "divert the attention of the masses from their genuine grievances to the Jewish scapegoat" once again.^[68] As things turned out, the jury voted that the crime had been committed as the state had described it but found Beilis not guilty of having done it.

Nicholas II and his family would be executed shortly thereafter during the Russian Revolution of March 1917 at which time (April 2) the Provisional Government extended citizenship to Russia's Jews, issuing a decree abolishing "all restrictions on the rights of Russian citizens which had been enacted by existing laws on account of their belonging to any creed, confession or nationality."^[69]

Conclusion

Thus, the emancipation of Jews in Continental Europe was a slow and uneven process. Napoleon's goal of emancipating European Jewry by insisting on the renunciation of attachment to peoplehood contrasted with the tzars who, having no intention of emancipating Russian Jews, attempted to either isolate them as scapegoated targets of popular anger or to assimilate them.

The French Revolution and subsequent political upheavals of the 19th and early 20th Centuries ushered in a new chapter in the history of European Jewry. The wheels of change had been set in motion. The long history of marginalization and discrimination of Jews by Medieval European rulers would eventually come to an end, and although anti-Semitism would clearly not disappear, the future for European Jewry looked better than it had for the previous centuries.

[1]Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz(Eds.). 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen' *The Jew in the Modern World*, New York: Oxford University Press, (1995)., 114.

[2]Debate on the Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 114.

[3] Marsha I. Rozenblit, "European Jewry: 1800-1933" in *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture*, Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, Eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 171.

[4]'Debate on the Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship,' *The Jew in the Modern World*, 114-116.

[5]'The Constitution of France', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 117.

[6]'The Emancipation of the Jews of France', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 118.

[7] Franz Kobler, *Napoleon and the Jews*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 144.

[8] Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 192.

[9]'Decree Concerning Equality of Jews with All Other Citizens of Batavia, Passed Unanimously', *Jewish Emancipation* Raphael Mahler, Ed., (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1941), 30.

[10] 'Abolition of the Ghetto in Padua', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 122.

[11] 'Destruction of the Ghetto Walls in Padua', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 123.

[12]First Emancipation in Rome', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 121-122

[13]'Final Emancipation' *Jewish Emancipation*, Raphael Mahler, Ed., (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1941), 59.

[14] *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Indiana University Press, Apr., 1953), pp. 126-134

[15] Rozenblit, 175.

[16] 'Law Concerning the Introduction in Bavaria of Laws of the North German Confederation', *Jewish Emancipation*, Raphael Mahler, Ed., (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1941), 58.

[17]'Imperial Decree Calling for an Assembly of Jewish Notables', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 123.

[18] 'The Infamous Decree', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 139-141.

[19] Ibid

[20] Shulamit S. Magnus *Jewish Emancipation in a German City: Cologne, 1798-1871*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997

[21] Benjamin Ivry, "The Secret Jewish History of Napoleon Bonaparte" *The Forward* August 15, 2019

[22] Berel Wein, *Triumph and Survival*, (New York: Sharr Press, 1990), 71.

[23] Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, University of California Press; Berkeley, December 22, 1998

[24] Ben Weider. "Napoleon and the Jews." *Napoleonic Scholarship: The Journal of the International Napoleonic Society*, Volume 1, Number 2, 1998.

[25] *New Letters of Napoleon I*, Edited by M. Leon Lecestre 2nd edition (New York: D. Appleton and Company), 71.

[26] Weider, "Napoleon and the Jews"

[27] Kobler, 174.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 151-152.

[30] George Sanford, *Historical Dictionary of Poland* (2nd ed.) (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), 79.

[31] Giles MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great: a life in deed and letters* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin), 347.

[32] Gil Graff, "Modernity, Judaism, and the Jews", in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Jewish Studies*, Dean Phillip Bell, Ed., (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 186.

[33] 'Emancipation in Prussia', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 141.

[34] Rachel Manekin, "Galicia." *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* 2 November 2010. 20 February 2021
<https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Galicia>

[35] Ibid

[36] Ibid

[37] Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 198.

[38] Manekin, "Galicia"

[39] Mahler, 57.

[40] Jacob Katz, *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 4.

[41] Rozenblit, 184.

[42] Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 25

[43] Richard H. Rowland, "Geographical Patterns of the Jewish Population in the Pale of Settlement of Late Nineteenth Century Russia", *Jewish Social Studies* 48 (3/4) 1986.

[44]"Pale of Settlement, Jewish." Britannica Student Encyclopedia. 2021. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 20 Feb. 2021
<http://www.search.eb.com/ebi/article-9332366>.

[45] Rozenblit, 185.

[46]'Statutes Concerning the Organization of Jews', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 377

[47]Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire*, Indiana University Press; Illustrated edition Bloomington, 2009, 170

[48] Baron, 24

[49] Baron, 25

[50]'Statutes Concerning the Organization of Jews', *The Jew in the Modern World*, 375

[51] Baron, 23

[52] D. Beauvois, "Polish-Jewish Relations in the Territories Annexed by the Russian Empire in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in Abramsky, Jachimczyk, Polonsky (eds): *The Jews in Poland* (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986), 82

[53]'Statutes Regarding the Military Service of Jews' *The Jew in the Modern World*, 377-378.

[54]Baron, 36

[55] Baron, 35

[56]Harriet N. Kruman, *The Huddled Masses* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2008), 99

[57] Kruman, 99

[58] Baron, 47

[59] Berel Wein, *Triumph and Survival*, (New York: Sharr Press, 1990), 173.

[60] ‘The May Laws’, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 380.

[61] Heinz-Dietrich Lowe, *The Tsars and the Jews* (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), 70

[62] A. Dirk Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 364.

[63] Baron, 67

[64] “Jewish Massacre Denounced” *The New York Times*, April 28, 1903, 6.

[65] N. Tchaykovsky, ‘*The Massacre of Jews at Kishinev*’ *The Jew in the Modern World*, 409.

[66] Baron, 67-68

[67] Edmund Levin, (2013, October 8) “The Last Blood Libel Trial” Retrieved from <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2013/10/mendel-beilis-and-blood-libel-the-1913-trial-in-kiev-russia.html>

[68] Baron, 75

[69] ‘*Emancipation by the March Revolution*’ *The Jew in the Modern World*, 432-433.

***Mark S. Goodman** - Rabbi and Cantor of Valley Beth Israel, Sun Valley, CA., Instructor for the Whizin Center at the American Jewish University, Doctoral student at Spertus College, Executive Director of Landmark Opera e-mail: marksgoodman@yahoo.com