

# Student Migration of Jews from Tsarist Russia to the Universities of Bern and Zürich, 1865-1914.

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“These student colonies were an interesting and characteristic feature of Western Europe in the days of czarist Russia. In Berlin, Berne, Zurich, Geneva, Munich, Paris, Montpellier, Nancy, Heidelberg, young Russian Jews, driven from the land of their birth by persecution, by discrimination and by intellectual starvation, constituted special and identifiable groups.”

(Chaim Weizmann, 1949: 50.)

„Dos is di berner “koloni” mit tswontsik jor tsurik. Hunderter yunge layt, di grester mehrhayt yiden; selten ven m'treft an emes rusishen ponim. Un dos ruv seynen dos meyd lakh. Meydlakh, vos hobn ge'endikt a gymnasie un vil'n weyter shtudir'n, - gevehnlekh oyf a doktor, - in rusland is nito far sey keyn ort, for'n sey in der shvayts [...].“

[Such was the Bern „colony“ of twenty years ago. Rarely did one encounter a genuine Russian face among the hundreds of young persons, the overwhelming majority of whom were Jews. There was a preponderance of girls, girls who had finished the gymnasium and wished to continue their studies – generally medicine – who came to Switzerland because there was no place for them in Russia.]

(Vladimir Medem, 1923: 278 – English translation according to Portnoy 1979.)

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# INTRODUCTION.

## 1 Thematic Prologue.

Prior to World War One, Imperial Russia had been a major country of origin of foreign students at Central and Western European institutions of higher education. Swiss universities attracted the largest share of Russian students, among them a great number of women due to Switzerland's pioneering role in admission of females as regular students. Yet analyses have revealed that the 'Russian' student migrants were seldom Russians *stricto sensu*, but rather members of national minorities suffering from Tsarist oppression and *Russification* politics, that is, Poles, Ukrainians, Armenians, and above all Jews. Indeed, estimates by contemporaries and later by historians confirmed that between 50% and 80% of all these 'Russian' students at French, German and Swiss universities were of Jewish heritage.<sup>1</sup> They were victims of the *Numerus Clausus* established in 1887 which drastically limited the number of Jewish students at universities in Imperial Russia, but also of general political, social and economic discrimination. The outright invasion of the universities of Bern, Geneva, Lausanne and Zürich by Jewish student migrants from the Tsarist Empire in the three decades before the First World War was no coincidence. Rather, an interaction between discriminatory Tsarist politics against non-Russian parts of the population – particularly violent against Jews –, on the one hand, and exceptionally liberal admission policies of Swiss institutions of higher learning, on the other, triggered a systematic mass movement of Jews from Imperial Russia in search of education in Switzerland.

My thesis analyzes the student migration of Jews from Tsarist Russia to the universities of Bern and Zürich in German-speaking Switzerland. The Russian-Jewish students will be studied as a community with shared perspectives, and I will consider numbers, patterns, motives for migration, and life in the Swiss cities, thereby trying to render a more or less complete picture of this particular migration system.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Migration History and Student Migration.

Migration is understood to be any kind of movement of individuals or groups of people which leads to long-term relocation of their place of residence across administrative boundaries. Generally, migration scholars consider any duration of more than 12 months to be long-term, and migration can be temporary or permanent.<sup>3</sup> Motives to move may vary. Traditionally, migration studies have distinguished 'push-' and 'pull-' factors, that is, they have identified reasons for people to emigrate from a particular region (e.g. war, economic hardship), on the one hand, and incentives that render

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ruppin 1905 as only example of a comparative study. While for German institutions, we can rely on statistical material collected by the universities themselves, Swiss and French authorities did not care about religious affiliation or social background of their students; we need to base our estimates on an analysis of names and regional origin.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. chapter 2 for what I mean by 'migration system'.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for example Oltmer 2010: 1, and Kleinschmidt 2002: 13.

immigration to a certain territory attractive (e.g. freedom of religion, political stability), on the other. In the majority of cases, both ‘push-‘ and ‘pull-‘ mechanisms are at work. Contemporary scholarship has distanced itself from such one-dimensional views and portrays the decision of people to move to a certain place at a particular point in time as result of a set of cultural, political, ideological, gender- and class-specific factors and processes. Nonetheless, the classical ‘push- and pull-‘ conception can be useful to capture and weigh the different forces determining a migration stream in a simplified model – provided one considers the influence of additional social factors such as existing links to a destination or reliable information paths.<sup>4</sup>

If the movement of a considerable number of people from a defined region to a certain place is empirically verifiable for a longer period of time, it can be classified as a migration system, according to Dirk Hoerder, Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen.<sup>5</sup> The student migration of Jews from the Tsarist Empire to Swiss university towns, I believe, constitutes such a system. The numerical prominence of Russian-Jewish students in Swiss university towns over half a century, the specific structural determinants leading to the emigration of Jewish students from Imperial Russia, and the development of Russian-Jewish student colonies abroad into an actual cohesive community of shared understanding justify treating this phenomenon as an independent migration system. But just as essential are the strong links between sending (Russia) and receiving (Switzerland) countries established over time; personal and impersonal information paths and networks, as well as the fact that students returned during summer break and after their studies, guaranteed that news of living conditions and opportunities in Swiss university towns continually reached Jewish youth in Russia. Such knowledge triggered ever greater movement of Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire to Switzerland and links the few early Russian-Jewish student migrants of the 1860s to the mass phenomenon of the 1900s.<sup>6</sup>

Generally, one distinguishes various modes of migration such as labor migration, forced migration (in the case of refugees), or migration for the sake of education – the German term *Bildungsmigration* nicely captures the phenomenon of young people who move in order to get better education, or just to mature by travelling. A uniform, standard typology of modes of migration does not exist, neither across the disciplines nor in migration history itself.<sup>7</sup> For the present purpose, I am distinguishing between a) motives for movement, b) duration of stay and c) composition of the migrating group.<sup>8</sup> For student migration (the English translation of *Bildungsmigration*) as a specific type of movement of Jews from the Tsarist Empire, the following parameters apply: Among the main motives for migration are the limitations concerning enrolment at institutions of higher learning for students of Jewish origin in Russia, general social and economic disadvantages in Russia, political

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Oltmer 2010: 4-5, Harzig/ Hoerder 2009: 1-7, 66-69, Hoerder et al. 2007: 32-36, and Kleinschmidt 2002: 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hoerder et al. 2007: 45-46.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Han 2010: 14, Oltmer 2010: 1-9, Hoerder et al. 2007: 45-46, and Godfrind 2007: 333.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Oltmer 2010: 61-66, and Harzig/ Hoerder 2009: 72-73.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hoerder et al. 2007: 36-39, for a typology of migration (processes) based on motives, distance, direction, duration, socio-economic space, and sector. I took my inspiration from their table.

activity, and liberal admission policies of Swiss universities. We are talking about temporary migration, often of only few years – the students move to Switzerland explicitly for the purpose of studying and with the firm intention to return to Eastern Europe afterwards. And finally, the group is composed of only one generation but of both males and females, and it is more or less homogenous in its ethnic,<sup>9</sup> social and regional background. The Russian-Jewish student group which is the object of my analysis, based on the characteristics just enumerated, is a typical example of migrants who show strong tendency towards segregation (or self-imposed isolation) in their temporary place of residence, since they have planned to stay only for a short time period and remain focused on their country of origin.<sup>10</sup>

Student migration – like temporary migration at large – has been neglected as an area of research in migration studies; the quintessential migration experience is still understood to be permanent settlement in a new environment.<sup>11</sup> Unquestionably, the proportion of student migrants among all moving individuals is marginal. But the limited interest in student migration also has its roots in the development of the discipline itself. A first instance of scholarly preoccupation with migration arose in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a branch of demographics, and it was above all concerned with the consequences of labor migration in the age of industrialization. Research in population movement was tightly connected with the political goal of securing a uniform ‘nation’, or with identifying migration as a phenomenon that works according to rules and thus can be controlled. Sociological and ethnological studies in migration gathered momentum in the interwar period and were essentially a North American trend. The *Chicago School* and other sociologists studied the assimilation of different immigrant groups in the United States; and in the 1960s, new models of assimilation and counter models of cultural pluralism were propagated. In postwar Europe, too, against the background of increasing labor migration from south to north, attention has centered on political and social aspects of immigration and integration of guest workers and their families.<sup>12</sup> Hence, until the 1970s, the concern of different scholarly disciplines such as economics, ethnology, history, sociology and law with the phenomenon of migration was essentially characterized by singular application-oriented studies bound to contemporary challenges. The actual beginnings of a comprehensive and more interdisciplinary field of migration studies can be traced only to the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the process of immigration and permanent settlement, as well as its consequences for the receiving society and the migrants themselves, still seems to be the dominant research interest. By force of present-day political issues and current debates, scholarly discussion now focuses on the emergence of ‘diaspora communities’, transnational networks (sets of

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<sup>9</sup> The terms ‘ethnicity’ or ‘ethnic’ are sensitive concepts. By labeling the Jews of the Tsarist Empire as an ‘ethnicity’, I am trying to subsume in one word elements such as religion, culture, language, an (imagined) common history and the group’s own definition of belonging. By using the term ‘ethnicity’ I can also evade the label of ‘nation’, which would indeed correspond to the identity of Russian Jews in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but might evoke wrong images in the eyes of a contemporary reader.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Hoerder et al. 2007: 49.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Oltmer 2010: 62, and Hoerder et al. 2007: 38.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Oltmer 2010: 62-66, Harzig/ Hoerder 2009: 53-72, Bade 2004: 37-43, and Kleinschmidt 2002: 21-28.

interpersonal relations linking migrants with people back home) and social spaces, as well as on the development of ‘hybrid’ identities. Often, studies still adopt the perspective of the state because such developments are said to undermine the national state and the ideal of society underlying its existence.<sup>13</sup>

Owing to scholars’ major interest in labor migration and integration, student migration – albeit an old phenomenon dating back to the establishment of the first universities in medieval times – has not received much attention. There is no body of literature that would systematically capture the phenomenon of student migration in a theoretical framework. The last few years have seen the production of studies on contemporary student exchange and on the internationalization of higher education. Yet these reflections are hardly useful for guiding my research in student migration of Jews from Imperial Russia, since they are mostly concerned with national policies to attract foreign students, with the value of Western university degrees for the elite of developing countries, or with the expanding movement of highly-skilled professionals. Another strand of literature that has emerged only recently is concerned with the increasing importance of expatriate communities and transnational elites. The term ‘expatriate’ usually denotes highly-skilled employees of international corporations living outside their home country for a certain time, but it can also be used to label diplomats and academics who reside in a foreign country. These ‘elite migrants’ associate exclusively with their kind and seldom integrate into the host society. As regards segregation, the Russian-Jewish students in Bern and Zürich are comparable to expatriates. But the latter are generally qualified, upper-class individuals and thus hardly seen as a problem but rather as enrichment for the local economy and culture, while the poor students from the Tsarist Empire were perceived as uncivilized, ill-mannered and grubby by the Swiss population.<sup>14</sup>

### **3 State of the Art: Student Migration of Jews from Imperial Russia.**

The contemporary public was well aware of the many ‘Russians’ at institutions of higher learning in Central and Western Europe; their visible presence repeatedly led to controversies over the “Russenproblem” at Swiss universities or the “akademische Ausländerfrage” in Germany.<sup>15</sup> Even though the number of ‘Russian’ students – as measured by native residents – was much higher in Switzerland, the discourse here was not nearly as xenophobic, or even anti-Semitic<sup>16</sup>, as the heated debate in Imperial Germany; it was characterized more by a concern on the part of Swiss students and the educational establishments with the impact of the predominance of ‘Russians’ on the quality of

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Oltmer 2010: 62, Arango 2004: 27-29, and Lucassen/ Lucassen 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Von Dobeneck 2010: 13-69, Oltmer 2010: 92, Aits 2008: 48-53, Iredale 2001 on expats and elite migrants.

<sup>15</sup> For the Swiss debate, see Neumann 1987: 93-117; for the German situation I am referring to Peter 2001: 11-13 and Wertheimer 1982.

<sup>16</sup> See chapter 5 for a discussion of anti-Semitism relating to the Russian-Jewish students. Student migrants from the Tsarist Empire residing in Switzerland were generally perceived as ‘Russians’ and not as Jews, hence agitation against ‘Russian’ students could hardly be called anti-Semitic.

instruction. And to be sure, the concentration of the rather poor and mostly female Slavic faces in certain streets and quarters of Bern and Zürich occasionally disconcerted the local population.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this contemporary unease with the invasion of 'Russians', the scholarly interest in student migration from Tsarist Russia has remained scanty, and above all, one-sided. For a long time, the 'Russian' students at universities in France, Germany, and Switzerland have been studied mainly with regard to their political activism. The Russian student colonies were considered as a place where revolutionary parties recruited politically interested young people from the Tsarist Empire, and where opposing political ideas were debated during nocturnal gatherings in pubs and private houses.<sup>18</sup> This perception is certainly justified, since political motives for emigration from the Russian Empire were frequent among students at Western universities, as will be elaborated in part I, and since students' political activity might have even gained momentum in the colonies abroad. But the average 'Russian' student migrant resided in the West primarily to pursue an academic education. The somewhat narrow focus on the political elements can be explained partly with a dominating interest in the history of Russian political revolutionaries and their activities abroad, particularly among Marxist historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it is essentially also owing to the contemporary concern of authorities in Germany and France with the alleged political danger emanating from the Russian student youth residing in their countries. In both states, historians can draw on an enormous arsenal of records produced by large-scale police surveillance. In Switzerland, the federal and cantonal authorities were hardly interested in the activities of foreign students, but the country has nevertheless drawn attention from scholars as the center of Russian revolutionary organizations in exile and as site of numerous international conventions. Considering the amount of source material documenting the political involvements of 'Russian' students abroad and the lack of other records it is hardly surprising that they have been remembered mainly for these aspects.<sup>19</sup>

Only in the 1990s has the phenomenon of student migration from the Tsarist Empire been reconsidered as a more comprehensive issue. It is above all thanks to Claudie Weill, who has documented the Russian student migration to Germany, that the topic has gained quality and popularity and is now studied in more general terms and from innovative perspectives.<sup>20</sup> Hartmut R. Peter merits mention for bringing together academics from Central, Eastern and Western Europe in order to discuss the migration of students from Eastern Europe to the West as a multifaceted historical phenomenon.<sup>21</sup> There is also valuable contribution on the Belgian situation by Vinciane Godfrind; she addresses the issue of how and to what extent it makes sense to treat the 'Russian' students as a particular migrant group.<sup>22</sup> In Switzerland, unfortunately, the new interest has not yet really gained

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Tikhonov 2003(b): 167-169, Neumann 1987: 110-117, 163-182, and Feller 1935: 387-388, 442.

<sup>18</sup> Examples of such analyses are Meijer 1955, Senn 1971, Mysyrowicz 1975, and Bankowski-Züllig 1991. Cf. also Peter 2001: 13-18 for the one-sided interest in historiography.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Peter 2001: 13-23.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Weill 1996, 2001 and 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Peter 2001 and 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Godfrind 2007.

ground. Apart from extensive studies of the notorious first Russian colony of Zürich (1871-73), where underage girls were drawn into the fervid disputes between Russian populists, a detailed analysis of the student migration from Tsarist Russia to German- and French-speaking universities is still missing. Russian females have received considerable attention on the part of Swiss women historians as pioneers concerning the admission of women as regular students (*Frauenstudium* is the more precise term in German) in Bern, Geneva and Zürich<sup>23</sup>; but their arrival in even greater numbers after 1873 was overlooked just as were their male counterparts.

While many of the historians concerned with one or the other aspect of Russian student migration to Switzerland prior to the First World War have stressed the large percentage of Jews among these ‘Russians’, hardly anyone has made the effort to verify the claim. Estimates have shown that between 50% and 80% of all ‘Russian’ students at French, German and Swiss universities were of Jewish heritage. Besides, records in the university archives of Bern and Zürich, as well as newspaper articles of the period, suggest that contemporaries were quite aware of the large proportion of Jews among the ‘Russians’. The Jewish character of many students from the Tsarist Empire seems to have added to their strangeness in the eyes of the Swiss population.<sup>24</sup> Memoirs published by Russian-Jewish activists, too, suggest that the vast majority of residents in the Russian colonies were Jewish, but their works have not been studied regarding this particular aspect. Historians studying the Russian-Jewish political modernization probably have had no interest in the identity as students of these politicized men and women, and those interested in the history of Swiss universities did not care about the Jewish aspect of the “*Russenproblem*”. As is the case with studies on Russian students in general, the only fragmentary analyses of Russian-Jewish students at Swiss universities I am familiar with – at most a few pages per book – are either concerned with their political involvement with the *Algemeiner Yidisher Arbeyterbund* (short: *Bund*), Zionism or general Russian revolutionary movements, or else with the female individuals. That is, no historian has shown interest in the overall picture of the migration of Russian-Jewish students to Switzerland *qua students and Jews*.

#### **4 Relevance, Innovation, Research Questions.**

The thesis at hand is an effort to address the academic void identified above. As elaborated in chapter two, I consider the student migration of Jews from Tsarist Russia to the universities of Bern and Zürich prior to the First World War to be an independent migration system which has not yet been recognized and studied as such. The two universities were chosen because they were the major institutions to attract foreign students in German-speaking Switzerland. Only Geneva and Lausanne have been targets for a similar number of ‘Russian’ students, but including them in as limited a research project as mine was not realistic. Besides, as Natalia Tikhonov rightly emphasized, inter-

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. for instance Rogger/ Bankowski 2010, Brügger 1996, and Neumann 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Gagliardi 1938: 629.

university movement in the Swiss context was remarkable but took place mostly between institutions of the same linguistic area; I am concerned with the Bern-Zürich axis.<sup>25</sup>

A first level I take into account pertains to the structural determinants which triggered the migration of the Russian-Jewish student youth to Bern and Zürich. If the Jewish students started to leave the Tsarist Empire in great numbers at a particular point in time, and if so many of them chose to enrol at the universities of Bern and Zürich, this must have had palpable reasons. The ‘push-‘ and ‘pull-‘ factors purportedly determining the movement of Russian-Jewish students have been identified by several scholars and I could thus rely on a range of studies. Yet a comparison of these claims with my statistical investigations and with archival records revealed discrepancies with regard to onset and reasons for migration which I want to put straight; as Harald Kleinschmidt confirms, motives for migration are often assumed from theoretical knowledge but not verified.<sup>26</sup> The main part of my research, however, involves the scrutiny of the Russian-Jewish student group once they get to Switzerland. The actual number of Jewish students from Tsarist Russia, their regional origins, the choice of faculty and the average duration of studies, as well as the students’ living situation in Bern and Zürich will be determined and compared for both target institutions. But I also consider the Russian-Jewish student group in Switzerland as an actual cohesive community based on a common commitment to the future of (Russian) Jewry. Marked differences between Bern and Zürich or striking changes regarding the composition of the student body in one or both institutions will be accounted for as far as possible. The literature suggests that – apart from isolated earlier cases – Russians started to enrol at Swiss universities around 1865, and I will thus begin to study enrolment figures and statistics at that point. World War One, on the other end, marks the abrupt ending of the ‘Russian invasion’ and is also taken as the upper time limit for my research.

The most challenging task certainly is to ascertain the Jewish identity of a student from Imperial Russia listed in the enrolment catalog. Unlike the German universities, Swiss institutions did not require information on a student’s religious affiliation. Establishment of a student’s Jewish background involves comparison of the place of origin in the *Pale of Settlement* with first and family name. And allowedly, this entails toil and a great deal of uncertainty. I am familiar with only two estimates on how many ‘Russians’ at Swiss universities were Jewish – Arthur Ruppin’s general assessment of Russian-Jewish students in Europe and Daniela Neumann’s estimates for the University of Zürich. They present similar numbers between 50% and 80%. But both Neumann and Ruppin do not explain how they determined a student’s Jewish background; information that would be crucial in order to rely on their estimates. In any case, their numbers are not very helpful for my work. Ruppin, in 1905, indicated between 850 and 1270 Jewish students for *all* universities in Switzerland together<sup>27</sup>, which does not allow for any qualified statement about one particular institution. Neumann only studied the female students and just *assumed* that among the males, the percentage of Jews was a bit

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Tikhonov 2003(b): 162.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Kleinschmidt 2002: 17-18.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ruppin 1905.

lower.<sup>28</sup> For the University of Bern, there is no estimate, at all. I agree with Victor Karady and Tikhonov, though, that more precision regarding the ethnic background of the ‘Russian’ students in the West is crucial for establishing the real determinants for their migration; in the case of Jewish students, these were certainly very distinctive.<sup>29</sup>

A major part of my energy and time thus went into determining students’ Jewish heritage. For this purpose, I resorted to various tools. As a first point of reference, I took Witold Molik’s criteria developed to assess the nationality of students from the Tsarist Empire based on religious affiliation, name, place of origin, and profession of the father. Even though information on religious affiliation and social background is not available for Swiss universities, Molik’s illustrations proved helpful.<sup>30</sup> Further, I availed myself of onomastics. Indication of characteristically Polish endings of family names (-ski and -cki) taken from Molik and a guide to usual Russian family names in the *Langenscheidt* Russian Dictionary were considered for presumably non-Jewish identities.<sup>31</sup> But Alexander Beider’s *Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire* presented the greatest help for defining whether a name indicated Jewish heritage or not. A guide to the most common Jewish surnames in the Russian Empire around 1900 for all districts with a sizeable Jewish population taken from Beider is included in the appendix. Beider also presents a typology of Jewish surnames in Tsarist Russia and has compiled a set of surnames borne by Jews only.<sup>32</sup> As for given (=first) names, most male Jews used their sacred name (biblical, or derived from the Hebrew/ Aramaic lexicons) or a vernacular name which often presented a Yiddish or Slavic calque of the first, or indeed a combination of both. Sometimes Slavic suffixes were added to Hebrew/ Aramaic names. For females, differentiation from non-Jews is more difficult because they quite often used Slavic/ German given names.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, names are no guarantee; many Jews were in a process of *Russification* or *Polonization* and also bore typical Polish or Russian names.<sup>34</sup> But a lineup of first name, family name and place of origin in the *Pale of Settlement* allows for some certainty. In many cases either given or family name made determination easy; for a man called Benzion Tschleneff, the given name leaves no doubt, and for a woman named Amalia Rosenfeld, it is the surname that points towards Jewish identity. Moreover, they came from Poltowa and Lublin, respectively – both cities had a sizeable Jewish population at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Names such as Ruvim Grossmann, Mendel Rosenbaum or Tauba Weller are unmistakably Jewish.

My research entailed a lot of work and could not avoid guesstimates. But it is to be hoped that the study fills parts of a rather large information gap and contributes to a better understanding of the dimension and patterns of Jewish student migration from the Tsarist Empire to Switzerland. I attempt

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Neumann 1987: 51, 82.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Karady 2003: 17-19, and Tikhonov 2003(a): 51.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Molik 2001: 61-69.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Molik 2001: 63-64, and *Schulwörterbuch Russisch* 2002: 953-960.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Beider 1993: 1-70. For notes of mine concerning typology, patterns, typical names and suffixes, as well as the use of certain surnames by Jews and non-Jews, see the appendix.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Beider 1993: 1-6, 35-36.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Avrutin 2010: 148-179.

to grasp the phenomenon in its entirety and to explain a particular migration system. Many aspects such as material circumstances, social life, political struggles, as well as academic performance of the students can only be touched on. In this sense, the thesis at hand should be understood as laying the groundwork and is intended to encourage further and more qualitative research into specific facets of the established migration system. My guiding questions are: Why do large numbers of Russian Jews migrate to the universities of Bern and Zürich before 1914? When and why does their exodus from the Tsarist Empire set in? Where do the students come from and what do they study? For how long and in what patterns do they settle here? In how far can the Russian-Jewish student youth in Switzerland be considered a cohesive group and what distinguishes this particular migration system from others?

## 5 Methods and Approach.

Migration is a complex phenomenon; various disciplines have produced their specific perspectives on, and interpretations of, population movement. Studies in historical science range from political history of immigration regimes to oral history projects on cultures of remembrance among descendants of migrants, from macro to micro studies.<sup>35</sup> I am especially thankful to an approach recently developed by Klaus J. Bade, a research perspective he calls *Sozialhistorische Migrationsforschung*.<sup>36</sup> The purpose of this particular approach is to understand migration as a multi-dimensional and multi-causal social process in its historical extent; the statistical analysis of the movement of small groups of people and the identification of determinants and interdependencies of migration systems are its main activities. *Sozialhistorische Migrationsforschung* can be labelled structural history because it a) asks about magnitude and patterns of migration processes; b) identifies determinants of migration specific to particular groups and conditions that promote or constrain decisions to move; c) tries to locate specific migration streams in the political, socio-economic and cultural history of sending and receiving regions. Yet, as Bade rightly stresses, a structural history approach does not exclude the importance of individuals and individual decision-making:

[Sozialgeschichte als Strukturgeschichte betreiben heisst] lediglich der Einsicht in die Geschichtsmächtigkeit von überindividuellen Wirkungszusammenhängen und Bestimmungsfaktoren Raum geben im Blick auf jene materiellen (Wirtschaftsstruktur, Sozialverfassung, Institutionengefüge u.a.) und immateriellen 'Strukturen' (Wertsysteme, Kollektivmentalitäten, Bedürfnisstrukturen, u.a.), ohne deren Berücksichtigung soziale Kollektivphänomene historisch nicht zureichend erfasst, interpretiert und, im Rahmen des Möglichen, erklärt werden können.<sup>37</sup>

*Sozialhistorische Migrationsforschung* combines quantitative and qualitative analysis of why, how, and where people move; it considers all kinds of conditions and factors determining a migration decision and involves various levels of analysis.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Bade 2004: 13, 27-30, and Kleinschmidt 2002: 9-11, 26-38.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bade 2004: 13-30. The explanation of Bade's approach given in the text is taken from these pages.

<sup>37</sup> Bade 2004: 15. Abbreviations and markers in the original.

I describe my work as corresponding to Bade's social history approach for several reasons. First of all, I am interested in the student migration of Russian Jews as a social group that shares age, background, and aims. I am treating them as a collective that can be distinguished from other migrating groups based on both the impact of extrinsic pressures and internal cohesion. Social groups are the classical object of social history analysis. Secondly, I am conducting a quantitative study in order to find out at what point in time the movement of Jewish students to the universities of Bern and Zürich really begins, and to identify changes in migration patterns over time. Quantitative analysis, as Bade elaborates, is necessary in order to account for a scholar's decision to treat a movement of people as a migration system and to prove one's claims about this migrating group. But of course, statements about the magnitude and course of a population movement do not tell us everything; the question of why a certain migration starts, accelerates, alters its appearance at an identified point in time, and why it takes place, at all, is likewise central to my research and cannot be answered solely with numbers.<sup>38</sup> A third point which justifies the classification of my study as social history is that I endeavor to identify structural determinants responsible for the emergence of this particular migration and for its course – that is, 'push-' and 'pull-' factors –, and lastly to explain the phenomenon of large-scale Russian-Jewish student migration to Switzerland by considering political and socio-economic conditions in both sending and receiving country. The political and legal framework as a macro-level, and the meso-level of regional socio-economic and cultural structures and information paths, certainly receive more attention than the micro-level of individual decision-making, but as far as my sources allow for it, I will try to include this as well.

The statistical ascertainment of Russian-Jewish student migration to Bern and Zürich forms the foundation of my work, and the structural determinants I could identify may account for emergence and patterns of the movement; but my focus lies on "migration on site", that is, on the effects and arrangements at destination.<sup>39</sup> By trying to grasp the internal dynamics, political struggles, and identity negotiation of the group of Jewish students from Tsarist Russia at one particular moment of temporary settlement in the colonies of Bern and Zürich, quantifiable figures and structural patterns are thus amended by a more qualitative level of analysis.

## **6 Sources and Literature.**

The diversity of source material I have considered in order to answer my guiding questions has to do with both the nature of the chosen topic and the scarcity of information available. Migration, as Kleinschmidt says, encompasses all parts of an individual's life.<sup>40</sup> This necessitates creativity on the part of the migration scholar when it comes to the identification of valuable sources – of course

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Bade 2004: 18-19.

<sup>39</sup> The possibly adventurous routes students took from Tsarist Russia to Switzerland would merit a study of its own; I did not look into this aspect of the migration system.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Kleinschmidt 2002: 10.

depending on research interest and perspective. Apart from the ‘usual suspects’ such as population statistics, police records, resident registration offices and letters, even cookbooks can reveal something about patterns of migration and acculturation.

In the case of my own research on student migration, the university archives were the most obvious place to look for material. Indeed, the statistical data, as well as most personal information on students, their living situation and the duration of their studies, is taken from enrolment catalogs. Compiled files on decisions taken by the academic senate on requirements for enrolment or the issue of ‘Russians’, in particular, as well as faculties’ complaints or reactions to the same, can be found at the state archives in both Bern and Zürich.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, the completeness of these files cannot be assessed, but their contents did deliver valuable evidence regarding admission policies of the concerned institutions and reasons for modifications of requirements. Further statistical material on enrolment figures and facts about the universities of Bern and Zürich was drawn from the *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Statistik*, the official organ of the Swiss Society for Statistical Science. Other sources that might have added to my knowledge of institutional policies and of the debate about students from the Tsarist Empire are the official semester or annual reports issued by the universities, as well as protocols of the regular meetings held by the academic senate. However, my time frame was tight and searching through these (mostly hand-written) records of over 50 academic years would have demanded many hours; besides, control samples have revealed that the relevant protocols and reports are included in the compiled files mentioned above.

Naturally, enrolment catalogs and statistics do not provide information on individuals, their activities, their social life and their experience of the migrant situation. Evidence for these non-quantitative aspects of the student migration of Russian Jews was very difficult to find. Some of the Russian-Jewish students enrolled in Swiss universities later became major political figures in the *Bund* or in the Zionist Movement, and they included some paragraphs on their student years in Bern or Zürich when they published their life stories. Likewise, political emigrants residing in the colonies of Swiss university towns or visiting them for ‘propaganda’ tours have produced memoirs and often talk about the student migrants. I am thankful to Dr. Tamar Lewinsky for pointing out the availability of Yiddish-speaking memoirs by Daniel Charney, Gina and Vladimir Medem, as well as Chaim Zhitlovsky. The English-language autobiography of Chaim Weizmann and the life stories of David Farbstein amended my pool of ego-documents.<sup>42</sup> Dealing with autobiographical material always requires careful assessment of when and in what context a text was written down, and who was the intended readership. But memoirs are valuable sources for individual experiences of a situation, especially in a case like the present, where other documentation is rare.<sup>43</sup> The six memoirs I studied represent a time span of the late 1880s up to 1912 and document various political positions; this range

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. StAZH Z70.248-250 (Immatrikulationsbestimmungen Russland und Polen) and Z70.216 (Aufnahmeprüfung, Ausländer), and StABE BB IIIb 196-200 (Zirkulare, Drucksachen, Entscheide), BB IIIb 495 (Russenfrage), BB IIIb 1003 (Immatrikulation/ Zulassung).

<sup>42</sup> For information about these people, please refer to the biographies in the appendix.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Haumann 2006, Stephan 2004, and Depkat 2003.

impedes strong bias on the part of the historian. However, the fact that all authors whose recollections were accessible for me were, or became, important political leaders, exhibits an additional catch; the life stories of *Bund* theoretician Vladimir Medem and Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann – which offer the most exclusive reflection of Russian-Jewish student life in Switzerland – hardly represent the everyday life and experiences of student migrants but automatically overemphasize the role of politics in the student colonies.<sup>44</sup> If I utilize their accounts quite extensively, I am certainly aware of their individual perspective and mainly use them to document opinions. But the similar experience of Russian-Jewish student life in Bern and Zürich substantiated by all authors and across a time span of 40 years also bears witness to general significance of certain factual information. As for students' organizations or other cultural and political associations, evidence is scarce, too. Names of groups that were officially registered with the university could be traced for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and statutes as well as membership rosters are available for Jewish fraternities. Some hints regarding students' associations and other groups tied to the colonies could be retrieved from memoirs. But I cannot rely on any indication concerning the actual scope of existing networks.

Initially, I was convinced that police records stored at the Swiss federal archives (*Bundesarchiv*, BAR) would reveal much about gatherings of Russian and Russian-Jewish students, especially if the gatherings smacked of socialist conspiracies. I based my reasoning on the German context, where large-scale and systematic surveillance of students from the Tsarist Empire was carried out by both the German authorities and the Russian secret police. This monitoring system, which was established because the Russian students were perceived as dangerous revolutionary activists, has yielded extremely rich and valuable source material on the political gatherings and opinions of these individuals.<sup>45</sup> In Switzerland – unfortunately, one is inclined to say as a historian, – neither federal nor cantonal authorities cared much about the political ideas of foreign students. As long as they were focused on the conditions in their home countries, emigrants and students could engage in any activity they wanted. The constitutionally guaranteed freedom of press and assembly was only restricted in the case of anarchist action which could undermine the Helvetic societal order.<sup>46</sup> Hence, the BAR files turned out to be a major disappointment. There is a dossier on 'Russians' in Switzerland which includes correspondence between authorities on a handful of political activists or 'dangerous elements', evidence of some meetings of 'Russians' (no detailed information about who gathered) and some translations of Yiddish newspapers whose authors the authorities obviously suspected. Pursuing the tracks would have been possible, but the time-consuming endeavor would only have delivered information on single individuals deemed suspicious by the government. Individual political biographies are not my focus.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Peter 2001: 29-30.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. „Russländische Studenten an deutschen Hochschulen und Universitäten im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert“ (EME) 2007: 927, Peter 2001: 19-23, and Wertheimer 1982: 192-194.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Goehrke 1994: 321, Leutenegger/ Sovilj 1994: 466-467, and Neumann 1987: 153-155.

As regards the availability of literature, much has been said above. There is a tiny body of works on student migration from the Tsarist Empire to Germany thanks to Claudie Weill and Hartmut R. Peter, above all. For Switzerland, the early admission of women to higher education has inspired a considerable number of studies on ‘Russian’ women enrolled at Swiss universities – but they almost exclusively focus on the 1870s. Then there are some paragraphs specifically concerned with the political activities of the students in histories of East European Jewry, its modernization and political movements, as in David Weinberg (1996) and Jonathan Frankel (1981, 2009). But none of these reveal much about the actual size of the phenomenon of Jewish student migration from the Tsarist Empire to Switzerland, nor do they care about Russian-Jewish students *qua students and Jews*. And surprisingly, though Bern has been branded as particularly important place for the development of political ideas and programs of East European Jewry, no study has been produced that would try to verify the claim. Still, by reading as much as possible around the topic of my thesis, I managed to pick up bits and pieces in order to eventually put together the jigsaw puzzle that would render a more or less complete background picture.

## **7 Notes on Terminology, Transliteration and Date Format.**

Some terms and concepts I am employing are quite elastic and might require exact definition. When talking about Jews from the Tsarist Empire, I refer to the Jewish subjects living in the territories of Imperial Russia which existed until 1917. The label ‘Russian Jews’ and its corresponding adjective for Jewish subjects of the Tsar hence rests upon political and geographic parameters. This allows for easy delimitation of the social group to analyze, but it does not necessarily correspond to their self-conception. Indeed, Jews in Imperial Russia often also identified as Polish and/ or merely Jewish depending on time, place and socio-cultural environment. In Switzerland, any student migrants coming from the Tsarist Empire were labelled ‘Russians’ irrespective of their national belonging, and until the turn of the century, many of them actually gathered in organizations which pointed to no other identity.<sup>47</sup> Only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century did the national Jewish identity become a much stronger point of reference for the Jewish youth in the Russian Empire. In Russian, there is the very helpful distinction between the adjectives “rossijskij” (российский) and “russkij” (русский); the first refers to the subjects of the Russian state as political and geographic entity, while the latter denotes ethnic Russians or the language.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, the English language does not have appropriate terms to render this distinction, and I am therefore compelled to using ‘Russian’ in inverted commas if I wish to emphasize the fact that I am not necessarily talking about ethnic Russians.

The terms Russia, Imperial Russia and Tsarist Empire, as well as other variants and combinations, are used interchangeably in order to avoid too much repetition. But they all denote the political and geographic entity governed by the Romanov family. In fact, the label ‘Tsarist Empire’ is

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Weill 2003.

<sup>48</sup> I am very thankful to Carla Cordin, M.A., for pointing out to me this crucial difference.

not quite correct. The heads of the Russian Empire took on the title of Emperor after 1721 and were not officially called Tsar, anymore. Yet, as most literature on the Russian Empire refers to the autocratic rulers as Tsars until 1917, I am following this habit in order not to cause confusion. As for the term ‘colony’ which I am using in order to capture the collectivity of ‘Russian’ students of a specific Swiss town, as well as their social space and places of residence; this was a term already used by contemporaries. In the following pages, other concepts and names might emerge that are not clear to the reader. Terms that are italicized are proper names or important concepts; if they are neither commonly used nor explained in the text they are included in the glossary in the appendix.

Owing to the nature of the topic and the source material, quite a number of languages are used in this thesis. I assume that the intended reader of this work reads German and French and hence do not translate quotes given in these tongues. Yiddish citations, however, are reproduced in English. For Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian terms and names in Latin letters, the following principles apply: Transliteration of the Cyrillic alphabet follows the ISO 9 Romanization system of 1995. The Romanization of Yiddish is based on the standard developed by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, unless I am dealing with names that have become well-known in another form of transliteration<sup>49</sup>; and Romanization of Hebrew follows the 2006 transliteration rules of the Hebrew Academy, which have also been adopted as UN standard in 2007. On a last note, dates concerning Russian history, if nothing else is indicated, are given according to the Julian calendar (‘Old Style’) which was used in the Tsarist Empire and only replaced by the Gregorian one in 1918. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Julian calendar was twelve days behind the Western (Gregorian) calendar, and after 1900 the difference was 13 days.<sup>50</sup>

## **8 Section Overview.**

I have divided the thesis into two parts according to geographic environment. Part one establishes the historical setting of Jewish life in 19<sup>th</sup> century Imperial Russia and asks about the specific combination of factors leading towards a mass emigration of Russian-Jewish students from their hometowns. The second part forms the main body of my study. It illuminates the political conditions in 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Switzerland and the admission policies of the universities of Bern and Zürich which allowed for so many Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire to pursue a higher education here. Then much space is dedicated to the actual analysis of numbers and academic paths of the Russian-Jewish students in Bern and Zürich and of the two colonies as place of residence and lively activity. A synopsis of the shared destiny that linked the Jewish students in emigration despite their ideological disputes and the question regarding the particularities of the Russian-Jewish student migration complete the picture of the phenomenon. A few concise remarks at the end conclude my research.

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<sup>49</sup> The name Chaim, for instance, is always given with a ,ch‘ instead of an ‘h’, which the YIVO standard would demand.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Hutchinson 1999: vi.

## PART I: EASTERN EUROPE.

### 1 Russian Jewry in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### 1.1 General Social, Economic, and Political Conditions.<sup>51</sup>



1: Map showing the Pale of Settlement taken from Klier 1986.

It was only with the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (henceforth Poland) between Habsburg Austria, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that the latter became home to a Jewish community – eventually the largest one until the First World War. Previously, Russia had forbidden Jews to settle on its territories. Yet even after the incorporation of large parts of former Poland, most Jews did not live in Russia proper but rather continued to live in the annexed Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian provinces of the Empire, as well as in the Kingdom of Poland which was under Tsarist control but not formally annexed. Tsar Alexander I's "Imperial Statute Concerning the Organization of the Jews" of 1804 officially required the Jewish population to reside in those provinces and thus established the so-called *Pale of Settlement* (*čerta* in Russian) – the label given to the territories in which Jews were allowed to settle permanently and

<sup>51</sup> The elaborations in this chapter are based on Haumann 2010 and 2008, Polonsky 2010, Bartal 2005, Klier 1995, Löwe 1993 and the YIVO Encyclopedia.

whose boundaries were definitely confirmed in 1835. Only in very few cases were permissions to live, travel and/ or conduct business in Russia proper given to wealthy, educated or otherwise economically 'useful' Jews – that is, to those who had successfully conformed to the ways advocated by the government.

The *Pale of Settlement* (short: Pale), effectively in existence until 1917, was one of many restrictions that affected the Jewish community under Tsarist authority. Jews were forbidden to practice certain professions, compelled to speak and write Russian (instead of Yiddish and Hebrew, respectively), they paid extraordinary taxes, and the *Kahal*, the communal self-administration, gradually lost much of its autonomy. The reign of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855), in particular, was dominated by anti-Jewish legislation – no rights were granted but new obligations imposed upon the Jewish population.<sup>52</sup> As of 1835, Jews were conscripted for military service; even 12-year-old boys were recruited as *cantonists*. If bribery was no option, many young Jews fled the country or mutilated themselves in order to avoid conscription because army service was not compatible with a traditional way of life. The living conditions of Russian Jewry deteriorated in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not least due to the many restrictions concerning settlement and professional opportunities. Rural unrest was habitually blamed on Jewish 'exploitation' and Jews were branded the embodiment of destructive capitalism. But the beginning industrialization of the Russian Empire and the abolition of serfdom also affected the Jewish minority; it displaced the traditional economic basis of Jews as intermediaries between countryside and city, as providers of goods at town markets, and in moneylending. These altering conditions led to proletarianization and poverty of the Jewish masses. Enormous population increase in the *Pale of Settlement* intensified the pressure. Estimates cited by Michael Stanislawski and Antony Polonsky propose a fivefold population increase from about one million Jews in the Russian Empire at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to more than five million in 1897 (4% of the entire population).<sup>53</sup>

The reform politics of Tsar Alexander II (1855-1881) nurtured hopes among the Jewish community for emancipation and integration; the opening of institutions of higher learning to all social strata and minorities, the judicial reforms that eliminated major discriminatory articles, and other relaxations were interpreted as positive signs. But while the momentum of reform was halted already in the 1860s as consequence of the Polish uprisings, the events and developments after the assassination of Alexander II in March 1881 destroyed all faith among Jews in emancipation. Within a few weeks after the Tsar's assassination, waves of pogroms spread over the Southern provinces of the Russian Empire that were exceeded in violence only by those in the period 1903-1907; in small towns and villages, Jews were killed and their livelihoods destroyed. The violent outbreaks were probably spontaneous in character and not planned by the authorities, as early historians of Russian Jewry believed. They may be understood as a response to economic difficulties in the countryside after the

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<sup>52</sup> The complex attitude of various Tsarist governments vis-à-vis the Jews and the reasons for specific restrictions and decisions cannot be discussed here. I refer the interested reader to the following works: Polonsky 2010, Klier 1986 and 1995.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. "Russian Empire", *YIVO Encyclopedia* [05.04.2011], and Polonsky 2010 (II): 3 and 11.

abolition of feudalist structures, and to the widespread sense that Jews were the illegitimate beneficiaries.<sup>54</sup> In any case, though, the government sanctioned the violence and assented to the interpretation that Jews were to blame for the outbreaks.

Alexander III who succeeded his father on the throne reacted to the pogroms by again curtailing the rights of Russian Jewry. The so-called May laws of 1882, which essentially applied until 1917, further limited employment opportunities for the Jewish population, they prohibited new settlement of Jews in the countryside and barred them from purchase of land, and they began to limit Jewish suffrage, a tendency affirmed with new and stricter laws in the 1890s. Last but not least, the restrictions subsequently added to the catalog severely affected educational opportunities for Jews; a *Numerus Clausus* limiting the number of Jewish students at secondary schools and universities hit hard the Jewish youth eager to get secular education. Emigration of Jews from the Tsarist Empire, which had begun as a small movement in the 1870s in reaction to famine and poverty, now transformed into a mass phenomenon, again accelerating in the years 1904 to 1907. Between 1880 and 1930, Polonsky has calculated, 2,285,000 Russian Jews left their homes, and a vast majority found a new domicile in the United States of America.<sup>55</sup> Other responses to the new anti-Jewish measures on the part of Russian Jewry were the emergence of radical political movements based on the idea of *auto-emancipation*<sup>56</sup>, that is, the credo that ‘emancipation from above’ had failed and that Jews now needed to stand up for themselves as a nation. The *Bund* and the *World Zionist Organization* (WZO) were both founded in 1897 and can, if we consider Zionism in its East European appearance, be understood as a similar answer to the failure of integration and the necessity of a Jewish renewal in Russia.

As a result of the 1905 revolution, Jews were after all granted a voting right for the *Duma* and they were allowed to form political parties. Some restrictive laws were eliminated. On the other hand, the issuance of the *October Manifesto* was accompanied by yet another outburst of violence against Jews that would not cease until 1907 and during which over 3,000 Jews lost their lives. Moreover, the *Duma* – relegated to a marginal position in a still largely autocratic political system – did not grant legal equality to the Jews, and anti-Semitism grew into a central ideological element of Russian conservatism in the years before the First World War. Emancipation of Russian Jewry took place only after the fall of the Romanov dynasty in 1917. However, the Revolution of 1905 became an important event in Russian-Jewish history for other reasons – the politicization of the Jewish minority reached new dimensions and took on more concrete forms. Jews not only supported political groups (both Jewish and non-Jewish ones) that opted for change of the old order in unprecedented numbers, but they also formed new parties which stressed the national character of the Jewish people; the Zionist

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (II): 5, and “Russian Empire”, *YIVO Encyclopedia* [05.04.2011].

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (II): 21.

<sup>56</sup> *Auto-emancipation* was also the title given by Leon Pinsker to his book published in 1882. This work is often seen as representative for the new spirit of self-help and self-defence arising among Russian Jewry against the background of the 1881/82 crisis.

Socialist Party (SS according to its Russian initials, 1905), the Jewish Socialist Labor Party (SERP or *Sejmists*, 1906), and *Poale Zion*, the Jewish Social Democratic Party (1906), among others.

## **1.2 Russification, Secular Education and Protest.**

The Russian autocracy's policies vis-à-vis the Jewish minority during the 19<sup>th</sup> century oscillated between integration and segregation, that is, between the attempt at turning Jews into 'Russians' and thus weakening their ethnic solidarity, on the one hand, and the fear that the Jewish population might undermine society from within if – according to official linguistic usage – they 'merged' with the majority. Besides, authorities always had to consider the strong anti-Jewish feelings prevalent among Russian society. The reigns of Nicholas I (1825-1855) and Alexander II (1855-1881) were characterized by a policy of *Russification*; although with different methods, both governments sought to incorporate the Jewish minority into the Russian majority population and undermine their traditional religious and national identity. Jewish separatism was increasingly identified as a problem by the authorities, and education, generally a popular Tsarist instrument to coopt ethnic minorities, was deemed the best means to solve the 'Jewish question', as well. The state-run Jewish school system established in 1842 should replace traditional Jewish education with its focus on Hebrew and religious subjects, and instead teach Jewish children Russian grammar and secular matters. The goal of the three-tier system divided into primary schools, secondary schools and two rabbinical seminaries was obvious; impair Jewish separatism and strengthen the influence of Russian culture among Jews. The community leaders disapproved of the state schools, however, and most Jewish children continued to attend traditional schools – the *hadarim*, the elementary religious school for boys, and the *Yeshivot*. Hence the Tsarist government also tried to supervise these institutions.<sup>57</sup>

The state-run Jewish school system was abolished as early as 1873. Certainly, the system had not achieved its intended effect of *Russifying* the Jews because it attracted only negligible numbers of Jewish children. But above all, as the Ministry of Education communicated in an official statement, the Jewish schools were not needed anymore; enrollment of Jews in Russian public schools had dramatically increased since the mid-1860s.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, two years later, in 1875, the same Ministry of Education voiced concern that Jews were entering public schools in such numbers that they denied Gymnasium places to Christian students. By 1880, Jewish students made up more than 10% of all boys and girls enrolled in Russian secondary schools – and numbers continued growing. Jews also increasingly sought university education once the establishments of higher learning had been opened to all social strata and minorities as part of the reform politics of Alexander II. Obtaining an academic

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. "Russian Empire", *YIVO Encyclopedia* [05.04.2011], Polonsky 2010 (I): 402-403, and Klier 1995: 6-8, 222-244.

<sup>58</sup> The dramatic and sudden increase in enrollment figures of Jews at public schools needs to be attributed to inner-Jewish developments such as the weakening of rabbinic authorities and the impact of the *Haskalah*, but also to Tsarist policies of privilege towards the members of minorities who followed the educational track intended by the authorities. See Hausmann 1993: 511-520.

degree was the only way to escape the oppressive setting of the Pale, since a law of 1861 had granted unrestricted residential rights to Jewish university graduates. The vast majority of Jews chose medicine, both because the medical faculties were among the first where the government loosened restrictions for access of Jews, and because medicine was seen as an effective means for the Jewish youth to contribute to the general welfare of their community.<sup>59</sup>

While the state-run Jewish schools were not successful in terms of numbers of students, they did produce a small, but radical and articulate Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia*. Through dispute with the first generation of *maskilim*, who represented the pioneers of Jewish enlightenment (*Haskalah*) in the Tsarist Empire, these graduates of the Russian Jewish school system “in the 1860s began to debate the difficult problem of the nature of Jewish identity”<sup>60</sup> and faced the challenge of finding a role for a reformed Judaism in contemporary Russian society. Emancipation and reinvention of a secular Jewish identity, according to this generation of educated Jews, should not be left in the hands of the Tsarist autocracy but needed to arise from within Jewish society. The emerging Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia* could reach a large public; they mastered the Russian language and took part in the discourse of society at large, they had mostly been educated in Hebrew schools, but they also took advantage of Yiddish to reach the Jewish masses. This was observed with suspicion by the authorities. In 1848, the Tsar had already grasped that academic freedom and education might nurture oppositional ideas and consequently curtailed the autonomy of educational establishments. But the many members of national minorities who pushed to the universities as of 1860 only intensified the link between institutions of higher learning and revolutionary movements. *Russification* policies and Tsarist oppression vis-à-vis non-Russians<sup>61</sup> (who accounted for more than 50% of the population by the end of the century!) had alienated the young *intelligentsia* of ethnic minorities and turned them into a recruiting pool for opposition parties; among them the Jewish youth. The student youth was strongly politicized especially during the relatively ‘liberal’ era under Alexander II, when student protests were a regular feature of academic life. Repeatedly, universities were temporarily shut down after protests had escalated. The reactionary developments after 1881 also affected incipient educational reforms, which were abandoned by Alexander III who was aware of the dangerous link between education and revolutionary ideas. And with reference to the disproportionately high number of Jews among the opposition forces, access of Jewish students to establishments of higher learning was drastically limited.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (I): 404-405, and Klier 1995: 230-244.

<sup>60</sup> Polonsky 2010 (I): 414.

<sup>61</sup> By non-Russians I mean Poles, Ukrainians, Armenians, Tatars, but also Jews.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Collmer 2004: 365, Brügger 1996: 486-487, Hausmann 1993: 509-520, and Neumann 1987: 32-37, 76-79.

### 1.3 The ‘Crisis of 1881/82’<sup>63</sup> and the Emergence of a Modern Jewish Identity.

*Haskalah*, the disintegration of the feudal system, and the rise of an – albeit small – Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia* trained in state-run educational institutions with a focus on secular learning, profoundly altered Jewish society in the Tsarist Empire. *Russification* and secularization<sup>64</sup> of the Jewish population was proceeding rapidly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional Jewish authorities in the *Pale of Settlement* – religious and wealthy – proved unable to provide solutions to the suffering of the Jewish masses and to the new challenges of a changing social and economic reality; the traditional world of the *Shtetl* and the Jewish corporate structures were dissolving. Many young Jews were increasingly disappointed both by the failure of the old community leadership and by the autocracy’s anti-Jewish policies. Hopes for legal equality and integration into Russian society were frustrated.<sup>65</sup> In the 1870s, a considerable part of the Jewish youth began to join the Russian revolutionary struggle for radical change of the old order:

The link between young Jews, the opposition movement, and the underground revolutionary movements became stronger as disillusionment with the government’s policies and the faltering momentum of reform escalated.<sup>66</sup>

The awareness that an academic degree was the only way to social mobility and to acceptance into Russian society made ever more Jews struggle for access to university, where most of the students tightened their relationship with revolutionary ideas and groups.

The outbreak of pogroms after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 definitely shattered the hopes in acceptance by current Russia and initiated a trend towards “Jewish self-assertion”.<sup>67</sup> The response of Russian society at large to the outbursts of violence against Jews profoundly distressed the Jewish community. Many leading intellectuals and revolutionaries welcomed the pogroms as incipient stages of a revolution; the oppressed *narod* (people), in their eyes, was finally standing up to government and exploitative middle-men. The notable number of young Jews who had been joining the Russian revolutionary underground since the 1870s suddenly found themselves at odds with the opposition movement. Likewise, the majority of the Jewish *intelligentsia* abandoned the goal of integration. The educated elite now faced the painful experience of being rejected and persecuted by the society they had tried to acculturate to since the 1860s. Historians disagree about the extent to which the experiences of 1881/82 need to be seen as the sudden beginning

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<sup>63</sup> ‘Crisis’ is a labelling for the Jewish experience of the years 1881/82 which I am adopting from Frankel 1981 and 2009, and which is also used by Polonsky 2010, in order to emphasize the significance of these months for the transformation of Russian-Jewish society from religious orthodoxy to modern politics and secular nationalism.

<sup>64</sup> I am aware that the concept of secularization is a problematic one. For the present purpose, I use ‘secularization’ as a collective term for various processes of modernization taking part among Russian Jewry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; these are, inter alia, the weakening of traditional religion and rabbinic authority, the development of new professional fields and new social, economic and intellectual elites, the disappearance of a common *weltanschauung*, as well as the emergence of new ideological currents and a social consciousness that replaced religious bonds. For a discussion of these processes see Weinberg 1996: 1-82.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (I): 439, Bartal 2005: 1-13, 47-111, 143-156, and Weinberg 1996: 1-82.

<sup>66</sup> Bartal 2005: 143.

<sup>67</sup> Löwe 1993: 177.

of a new, modern chapter in the history of Russian Jewry. But there is a broad consensus that the pogroms and the subsequent reactions by the Tsarist government presented a shock to the Jewish community, which triggered the development of innovative – and consciously Jewish – political and ideological responses in their midst.<sup>68</sup>

Most crucial among the answers that Jews in Russia advanced after 1881/82 was the prompt emergence of new and radical political movements based on mass mobilization and on the principle of *auto-emancipation*,<sup>69</sup> or self-help. This inner-directed search for Jewish revival took many forms, populist and utopian, but overall the new Jewish consciousness took ethnicity rather than religion as the main marker for Jewish difference. It was soul-searching for a secular Jewish identity which could provide a modern answer to how Jews should be defined collectively. The *Bund* attempted to solve the ‘Jewish question’ within a general socialist framework but emphasized the need for Jews to have their own movement that tackled the challenges specific to the Jewish worker in Russia; Zionism tied the national awakening of the Jewish people to the settlement of their ancient homeland in Palestine; and ideologies such as Simon Dubnow’s ‘national autonomism’ or Chaim Zhitlovsky’s ‘diaspora nationalism’ saw the future of an autonomous Jewish nation (as a historical, cultural and linguistic community) in the framework of a multi-national Russian Empire. Some proponents of a specifically Jewish politics sought to combine socialism with a Zionist position – most prominently *Poale Zion*, the Zionist labor movement. Bundists, Zionists and territorialists fought over whether Jews should speak Yiddish or Hebrew, whether the future society should be based on socialist or republican principles, and whether the future of Judaism lay ‘here’ or ‘there’; but all agreed that Jews present a nation, not just a religious community, and that the Jewish nation should be granted autonomy in order to determine its own future. After all, the various political programs were not-so-different answers on the part of a radicalized Jewish youth in Russia to the need for a fundamental reconstruction of Jewish life.<sup>70</sup>

While the ‘crisis of 1881/82’ triggered the invention of a secular, national Jewish identity and the emergence of a modern Jewish politics, the new wave of pogroms framing the 1905 revolution in the Russian Empire “marked a transformation in Jewish thought and behavior from an emphasis upon identity and culture to a commitment to physical self-defense and practical action in general”<sup>71</sup>. By that time, the rather unspecific ideas and small movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had developed into well-defined and competing political parties drawing on the support of the masses. The rivalry became particularly obvious in the parties’ struggle for supporters among the young Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia* at home and abroad.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (II): 4-86, Haumann 2008: 152-162, Bartal 2005: 1-13, 143-155, Weinberg 1996: 1-82, and Frankel 1981: 1-169, 552-560.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. chapter 1.1 and footnote 6.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (II): 4-86, Weinberg 1996: 1-28, Mendelsohn 1993: 3-36, 93-114, and Frankel 1981: 1-169, 552-560.

<sup>71</sup> Weinberg 1996: 10.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (II): 40-86.

## 2 Student Emigration.

### 2.1 Access to Universities in Tsarist Russia and Beginnings of Student Emigration.<sup>73</sup>

Prior to World War One, Imperial Russia had been a major country of origin of foreign students at institutions of higher learning in Central and Western Europe. Young Russian noblemen had systematically been sent on educational journeys to Europe since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century; and until the late 1850s, university education in the West – just like higher education in general – remained a privilege of government-funded, or at least officially desirable, young men of titled origin. As part of structural reforms during the reign of Alexander II, the Russian system of higher education was consolidated, and secondary schools and institutions of higher learning were opened to all social strata in the early 1860s. Students of lower-class families and of non-Russian parts of the population subsequently crowded the universities, mainly because an academic degree was the only chance to improve one's social status. In 1861, a government decree authorized Jews with a higher academic degree to settle outside the *Pale of Settlement*; in 1879 this privilege was extended to all Jewish university graduates.

Generally, the authorities had realized that uniform state education was a more “deadly threat”<sup>74</sup> to minorities' culture and cohesion than military oppression. The opening of universities to the entire population of the Tsarist Empire accordingly had been intended as a means to conform the masses and *Russify* the national minorities. But instead of fostering integration and acculturation, the institutions of higher learning soon developed into the center of opposition groups and revolutionary movements, as has been elaborated in chapter 1.2. In the mid-1870s, apparently, enrolment at Russian universities sharply increased. In disproportionate numbers, young Jewish graduates of Russian state schools crowded the lecture halls. The run of mostly lower-class Jewish students on Russian institutions of higher learning, and the notable radicalization of the growing student body, alarmed the government. The student youth, to the chagrin of the authorities, not only imported Western science and knowledge, but also political ideas; it came to be a strong factor of civil disturbance whose momentum could only be crushed after the 1905 revolution, when the growing middle classes and the *intelligentsia* pressured the Tsarist government to establish a broader and better educational system.<sup>75</sup> In order to inhibit student protests and further radicalization of its youth, universities were recurrently shut down in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; thus non-privileged students – particularly members of national minorities – , too, began to aspire to studies abroad if they wanted an academic education without interruption.

The mid-1860s not only experienced greater interest in higher education among the youth of all social background in the Tsarist Empire; this was also the moment when the enrolment of

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<sup>73</sup> This chapter is based on Huser 2008, Ettinger 2007, „Russländische Studenten an deutschen Hochschulen und Universitäten im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert“ (EME) 2007, Peter 2001: 22-23, Ivanov 2001, Hausmann 1993: 509-513, Neumann 1987: 39-52, Alston 1969, and Meijer 1955.

<sup>74</sup> Alston 1969: 120.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Neumann 1987: 39-41.

'Russians' at Helvetic universities became more than an isolated incident. And it was in the 1870s, when Russian universities were crowded by ever greater numbers of Jews, in particular, that numbers of 'Russians' studying at Swiss institutions of higher learning likewise increased sensibly. In Russia, dissatisfaction with the regime on the part of the growing student body in the 1860s and the prohibition of corporate organization stimulated the formation of secret circles in university environments. The end of the decade also saw the first major student disorders and repressive answer by the government. From such radicalization of the student youth grew the *narodnik* (populist) movement. Russian populism was essentially a movement of the young *intelligentsia*; in 1873 and 1874, many university students 'went to the people' to teach them the value of agricultural work. It is no surprise that the 'first Russian colony' in Zürich (1871-73) aroused the interest not only of present-day historians but also of the Tsarist authorities; the colony of students and political emigrants from the Russian Empire was denounced – or celebrated – as revolutionary hotbed.<sup>76</sup>

The definite exclusion of women from access to universities in Russia in 1863/64 also had an impact on the accelerating migration movement.<sup>77</sup> The 'Russian' students of the 1870s who enrolled at Swiss universities were primarily female; they appear to have belonged to the middle and upper classes rather than the lower strata, and they were principally ethnic Russians.<sup>78</sup> The predominance of females remained a characteristic of the student migration from the Tsarist Empire well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century for good reasons. Females were generally excluded from a regular gymnasium and university education in Russia until 1913; girls' schools and specific colleges for women had been established in several cities as of the 1860s in order to keep them away from universities; at the beginning, these were mainly attended by daughters of wealthy families. In the early 1870s, a special "Women's Medical Institute" was established in St. Petersburg for the education of nurses. Most institutions for females were shut down in 1882, since Alexander III found educated women to be involved too much in revolutionary activity. Some of the courses were reopened after a while; a documentation of the Russian educational system collected by the authorities at the University of Zürich in 1902, however, only identifies two "Höhere Frauenkurse" (in Moscow and St. Petersburg) and the "Women's Medical Institute".<sup>79</sup> After 1905, conditions in the Tsarist Empire were more favorable and the number of women's colleges quickly expanded. In 1907, graduates of women's colleges were allowed to take final exams at regular universities and could thus gain the same academic title as men; and finally in 1913, females were also admitted at universities, albeit still with many limitations because girls' schools were seen as inferior in quality to boys' *gymnasias*. Only after the Revolution of 1917 was it

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Meijer 1955: 26-39 and 47-84.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Bankowski 1986: 10.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. chapters 3 and 4 of part II, Feller 1935: 293-294, and Neumann 1987: 42-45, 50-52.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. „Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Erziehungsrates des Kantons Zürich vom 07.10.1902“, StAZH Z70.248-250. For an overview of the possibilities of higher education for women in the Tsarist Empire, cf. Neumann 1987: 42-52.

possible for everyone as of age 16, no matter whether male or female and which school this person had attended, to study at any institution of higher learning in Russia.<sup>80</sup>

But not only women moved to Western university towns for the purpose of higher education. The reasons for emigration from the Tsarist Empire were manifold and varied from individual to individual, from ethnic group to ethnic group, and they changed over time. It is impossible to identify one or few main determinants of student migration. First of all, migration is typically motivated by a multitude of (interrelated) causal forces; and secondly, the movement of people often cannot be explained only with rational considerations. This is true expressly when migration develops into a 'social mass movement', as was the case with student emigration from Tsarist Russia.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, some dominant determinants can be ascertained. Among the negative factors that affected all students irrespective of their background were the poor conditions of many establishments of higher education in Russia – not necessarily regarding quality but rather because the capacities were limited. The educational system in the Russian Empire remained largely elitist and competitive entrance exams were designed to keep admission exclusive even after the reforms of Alexander II.<sup>82</sup> Mode of instruction and contents of study plans were seldom up to date, and academic freedom was often hampered. Political repression was yet another strong motive for many progressive-minded students to opt for education abroad. The strong link between the student youth and the opposition movement nurtured the autocrat's fear that an emergent *intelligentsia* would endanger his absolutist rule. Universities were repeatedly shut down and student protests were immediately suppressed. In the 1870s, in particular, many students were threatened with imprisonment. Hence, students who had established ties to the revolutionary underground or who wished to actively engage in opposition politics were practically forced to emigrate. And the shut-down of institutions of higher learning also affected those who 'only' wanted to pursue regular studies.<sup>83</sup>

Apart from these general causes of student migration from Russia, there were very particular and profound reasons for Jewish students to pursue studies abroad.

## **2.2 Emigration of the Russian-Jewish Student Youth.**

In an attempt to pursue an academic education despite all obstacles in Russia, the Jewish student youth migrated to the West in exceptionally great numbers. Historians and contemporary witnesses have mainly attributed the Russian-Jewish student emigration to increasing discrimination against Jews after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 and to the establishment of a *Numerus Clausus* for Jewish students at Russian secondary schools and universities in 1887.<sup>84</sup> It is true that reactionary

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. excerpt from *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 1918 (exact date unknown), in StAZH Z70.248-250, and Neumann 1987: 45-49.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Han 2010: 18.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Alston 1969: 131-132.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Weill 1996: 86-90.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. For example Huser 2008, Graetz 1996, Weizmann 1949, and Ruppin 1905.

politics after 1881 affected the Jewish youth in particular measure. A first initiative to limit the number of Jewish students at state institutions was taken in Odessa in 1881; on the grounds that the city's educated elite might soon be dominated by non-Russians and that the dominance of Jews in Odessa's schools, in particular, would have a bad influence on Christian children, the city's curator proposed to install a quota system for educational institutions. His views were no exception; many other districts and academic institutions discussed the issue of how to reduce the Jewish student body in the following years.<sup>85</sup>

In 1887, a circular issued by the ministry of education finally established a *Numerus Clausus* (NC) for Jewish students at secondary schools and academic institutions all over the Empire, which remained in force effectively until 1917: "Jews were now restricted to 10 percent of the university student body in the Pale of Settlement, 5 percent in other provinces, and 3 percent in St. Petersburg and Moscow."<sup>86</sup> In 1901, the quotas were lowered to 7, 3 and 2 percent, respectively. A circular was no law and its effect depended on a strict implementation. As a matter of fact, the quotas were frequently ignored by local authorities. Only towards the end of the century was the circular applied more strictly as a reaction against student riots. But the number of Jewish students at some institutions still amounted to more than the quotas allowed. Against the background of the 1905 turmoil, the NC was seen as an anti-liberal remnant by academic staff and even by members of the government. Many a schoolmaster or university rector ignored the circular or even encouraged bright Jewish students from privileged families to enrol; the NC thus seems to have been turned from a religious discrimination into a social one. But as early as 1907, the Tsar reinstated the original NC; the quotas were even extended to private institutions and to those students only taking the final examinations in 1908 and 1911, respectively.<sup>87</sup> The restrictions introduced by the *Numerus Clausus* were a bitter pill for various reasons. In 1897, Jews equalled 11.5% of the total population in the *Pale of Settlement*; in towns like Odessa, Warsaw and Vilna, they even made up between 30 and 40%.<sup>88</sup> A quota of 10% (7%) for the Pale thus was a massive constraint. The Jewish minority also urged for university education much more powerfully than their Christian neighbors because an academic degree was requisite to achieve social status and freedom of movement.

But in fact, attempts at impeding the access of Jewish students to Russian secondary schools and institutions of higher education had been made already in the second half of the 1870s. In a downright reversal of previous principles, the Tsarist government now annulled all incentives they had taken since the 1840s to attract Jews to state schools and instead complained about the overcrowding of educational institutions with lower-class Jewish students.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, my own research demonstrates that Jewish students migrated to Western university towns in disproportionately high numbers long before the official establishment of a *Numerus Clausus*. Among the 'Russian' students

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. Hausmann 1993: 515-520, and Ettinger 2007: 1086.

<sup>86</sup> Weinberg 1996: 59.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Polonsky 2010 (II): 15 and 79-80, Weill 1996: 86-88, and Hausmann 1993: 520-531.

<sup>88</sup> The numbers are taken from Polonsky 2010: 198-211.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Chapters 1.2 and 2.1.

at the Universities of Bern and Zürich, those with Jewish background represented about 25% even in the 1870s and approached 50% around 1880 – the Jewish population in the Tsarist Empire equalled about 4% at the time. Thus the establishment of the NC in 1887 only amended the motives for emigration. A major factor for the departure of the first contingent of Jewish students in the 1860s and 1870s must have been general discrimination, humiliation and chicanery because of their religious affiliation.<sup>90</sup> But Jews, like other national minorities, were also involved in opposition politics to a larger extent than ethnic Russians. The official *Russification* policies of the Tsarist government had alienated the young generation of minority groups even more than the autocratic rule had upset the emerging *intelligentsia*, in general, and the struggle for emancipation was necessarily tied with opposition to the regime. Hence, quite a number of Russian-Jewish students left the Tsarist Empire because they were threatened with persecution or feared menace in relation to their political views. Though research has confirmed that the majority of Jewish student migrants in fact only got involved in politics while living in the colonies abroad, the political motive for emigration should not be underestimated.<sup>91</sup> A survey carried out among the Russian colony of Munich in 1911 revealed that 15% had left Russia specifically for political reasons.<sup>92</sup> For some Russian-Jewish students in Switzerland, as will become clear, the main reason for residing in Bern or Zürich was indeed to join the emigrant community; enrolment at the local university, for this minority, was just a welcome side-effect of living abroad.

Jewish women faced twofold discrimination as Jews and females; it is thus no coincidence that they emigrated in much greater numbers than their male coreligionists in search of education. Though women in Russia could study most subjects at the special women's colleges, the aim was mainly to train them as teachers or nurses. Jews were not allowed to practice the teacher's profession because they were denied entry to state service. Moreover, with the establishment of the NC in 1887, Jewish women were even more limited in their educational possibilities; restrictions for access of Jews to universities were particularly strict in Moscow and St. Petersburg – the two places where women could get higher education, at all.<sup>93</sup> Jewish females thus jumped at the chance to study medicine at Swiss universities. But Jewish men from Russia, too, seized the opportunity to obtain an academic degree abroad if they could afford it. It was not so much the desirability of a *Western* degree that attracted them, but the possibility of getting any academic degree, at all. This was their only chance to escape the *Pale of Settlement* and to achieve some status back home. Oddly enough, the Tsarist authorities limited access to university education for Jews and women within their territory but accepted these 'outlaws' as professionals with a degree from abroad without hesitation.

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Godfrind 2007: 328-329, and Weizmann 1949: 44.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Denz 2009, Neumann 1987.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Ivanov 2001: 46.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Huser 2008, and Neumann 1987.

### 2.3 Student Emigration to Switzerland.

While the emigration of the Jewish student youth from the Tsarist Empire seems to have been motivated principally by the restricted access to universities in Russia and by the general difficulties encountered at home, the educational institutions in Central and Western Europe also exerted a particular force of attraction. As of the 1860s, students from the Tsarist Empire – especially members of national minorities and women – appeared at institutions of higher learning in Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland. Student migration from Imperial Russia became a real phenomenon in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in all these countries, principally because their universities adopted quite liberal admission policies vis-à-vis foreigners (and partly vis-à-vis females), exhibited a well-developed but non-elitist educational system and featured languages of instruction that students from Russia could relate to.<sup>94</sup> In 1905, Arthur Ruppin discussed the Russian-Jewish students at universities in the West in his *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*; he calculated that in 1902/03, between 280 and 370 Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire were enrolled at French universities, about 650 in Germany, and that between 850 and 1270 studied at Swiss institutions.<sup>95</sup> For Switzerland and France, he could not publish exact figures because these countries did not require indication of religious affiliation from their students. Anyhow, it was manifest that among all countries in Central and Western Europe which received a considerable number of Jewish students from the Russian Empire, Switzerland was number one both in absolute numbers and relative to the total student body.

The liberal admission policies of many Swiss universities were undoubtedly the main incentive for Russian – and particularly for Russian-Jewish students – to take on the long trip to Switzerland for the purpose of studying. They will be discussed in detail in part two. But there were other reasons for the choice of Switzerland. The reputation of Swiss universities, the country's central geographical location and the advanced development of transport infrastructure were certainly crucial factors in favor of an educational sojourn in the Helvetic republic.<sup>96</sup> Besides, both the German and the French language enjoyed great popularity in the Tsarist Empire; German was seen as the language of learning, culture and science, while French still functioned as an important *lingua franca* in Eastern Europe.<sup>97</sup> For East-European Jewry, whose mother tongue was Yiddish practically without exception, the German language exerted a particularly strong pull; it seemed to be so close and thus easy to learn. That this impression did not necessarily correspond with reality and that Russian Jews frequently struggled with linguistic challenges upon arrival is neatly captured in Chaim Weizmann's account of his first study trip to Germany:

[...] My Pinsk Yiddish which, like most Russian Jews, I had taken to be next door to High German, turned out to be incomprehensible to the Germans – very much to my astonishment and resentment.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Tikhonov 2003(a).

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Ruppin 1905.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. NZZ Sonderbeilage 2008: 35.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Tikhonov 2003(a): 43.

<sup>98</sup> Weizmann 1949: 45.

But undoubtedly, access to German was easier than to other tongues for Jews from the Tsarist Empire; Daniel Charney even recalls how – according to legend – some professors mistook Yiddish for a dialect of Swiss-German!<sup>99</sup>

Oral and written ‘propaganda’ for Switzerland and its educational establishments should not be underestimated, either. Dostoyevsky’s romantic picture of the Alps and the ideas of reform pedagogue Heinrich Pestalozzi had sparked general interest in the country. But the research of Liliane Brügger and Daniela Neumann also illustrates how well Russian student migrants were informed about admission policies and living conditions at their chosen destination.<sup>100</sup> The University of Zürich had become the most favored institution for Russian women in the 1870s, when news of Nadeshda Suslova’s accomplishments as first woman in Europe to obtain a doctor’s degree was disseminated by various Russian newspapers. In subsequent years, a great number of Russian women were inspired by Suslova’s success and moved to Zürich to take up studies. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a whole range of books appeared which provided data for every institution in Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland. For Bern, Geneva, Lausanne and Zürich, young Russians were informed about Russian libraries and dining-halls (including costs of a meal), about meeting points of Russian students as well as about offices of organizations such as the local Zionist group and the Polish reading club. An article in the Hebrew journal *HaZophe* apparently even reassured future student migrants that Bern offered everything a Jewish student needed – it featured a synagogue, kosher food and various political groups from Zionists to socialists. And in some streets one would find but Russian Jews.<sup>101</sup> Many students also shared their experiences with family and friends back home and induced further migration via loose networks. Both formal and informal information paths thus contributed to the creation of a chain migration of Jewish students from Tsarist Russia to Switzerland.

Over the years, the small Russian-Jewish communities in Swiss university towns indeed grew into something like a piece of home in exile, with established infrastructure and a landsmanshaft to rely on. Vladimir Medem, main theorist of the *Bund*, remembers how Bern was almost like home to him because the ‘homeless’ and ‘dejected’ Russian-Jewish students had created a warm and cohesive refuge. Everyone was friends because they depended on the solidarity of the group.<sup>102</sup> For those students who left Russia for political reasons, either because they had to escape imprisonment or because they wished to become actively involved in revolutionary movements, Switzerland was the most attractive place, anyway. The guarantee of legal protection, of freedom of press and assembly, had fostered the development of the Helvetic Republic into a center of Russian émigré revolutionary activity; printing offices were established, international congresses convened here, and every political party had established an office in Bern, Geneva or Zürich. For the *Bund* and Zionist organisations, the Russian-Jewish student colonies presented a first-rate recruiting ground.

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 119-120.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Brügger 1996, and Neumann 1987: 110-116.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Neumann 1987: 115.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 280.

## PART II: SWITZERLAND.

### 1 Legal Status of Student Migrants.

Until 1798, Switzerland was a network of independent states linked through various contracts and alliances now called the *Alte Eidgenossenschaft*. After a brief interlude of occupation through Napoleon's forces and the imposition of a centralized state, the *Eidgenossenschaft* reverted to the old loose compound of sovereign cantons. Their independence and neutrality was approved by the European powers at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The 1830s were characterized by a growing conflict between liberal and conservative powers within the federal construct, which culminated in a short civil war in 1847 but ultimately led to the foundation of the *Helvetic Confederation*, today's Switzerland. The pronouncedly liberal constitution of 1848 established a confederation of still largely sovereign cantons and initiated only minor transfer of competencies to the federal government. Foreign policy (military affairs, customs, and state treaties), coinage, the postal system and federal law were the exclusive responsibility of the federal state, whereas residual competence remained with the cantons. The right to grant asylum and to decide on immigration and settlement of foreigners was thus in the hands of cantonal authorities.

The liberal states of the *Eidgenossenschaft* had gladly provided protection to revolutionaries fighting for republican ideals from as far away as Poland and Hungary, and after the establishment of modern Switzerland in 1848, the Helvetic island of freedom in the midst of undemocratic powers offered a perfect shelter for political refugees of various colors. Freedom of opinion, of press and assembly, as well as the guaranteed rule of law and legal protection for anybody who did not present a threat to the Swiss order, made Switzerland one of the most popular destinations for political exile up to the First World War. The foreign powers viewed Swiss policies with suspicion. The fact that Switzerland granted asylum to radicals combatting the regimes in their home countries repeatedly led to attempts at forcing Swiss authorities to close its borders to political refugees and to demands for extradition of revolutionaries, most violently on the part of Italy, Germany and the Russian Empire. But both *Bundesrat* and cantons vehemently defended their accomplishments; the right to grant protection to whoever was in need of it was linked to the question of Swiss sovereignty, and the tradition to grant asylum turned into a celebration of independence vis-à-vis the European powers and the Tsarist Empire.<sup>103</sup>

Until WWI, there was no clear distinction in Swiss law between permanent settlement (*Niederlassung*) and temporary residence (*Aufenthalt*); the status of foreigners on Swiss territory, in general, was hardly regulated until 1931, when the *Bundesgesetz über Aufenthalt und Niederlassung der Ausländer* (ANAG) was enacted and conveyed basic competence in this matter to the federal authorities.<sup>104</sup> Until that time, it was up to the cantons to grant foreigners the right to settle or reside on

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. Collmer 2004: 291-297.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Schlaepfer 1969: 85.

their territory. The sovereignty of cantons was only constrained by state treaties negotiated by the federal government and by article 57 of the *Bundesverfassung* (BV) of 1848 (= article 70 in BV 1874) stating „dem Bunde steht das Recht zu, Fremde, welche die innere oder äußere Sicherheit der Eidgenossenschaft gefährden, aus dem schweizerischen Gebiet wegzuweisen“. Whether foreigners were obliged to register with the administration and what kind of documents were required of them also lay in the hands of cantonal authorities and thus varied from canton to canton.<sup>105</sup>

Generally, foreign students were treated as *Aufenthalter*, as people staying in Switzerland only temporarily. The category of *Aufenthalter* – as against the *Niedergelassene* (people who aim to settle permanently) – seems to have been determined according to purpose and duration of stay but was never defined legally. An *Aufenthalter* was someone who entered Switzerland with the explicit idea of leaving the country again after a certain amount of time and who did not wish to practice a profession in Switzerland. Foreign students typically needed to get a residence permit issued by the cantonal police department.<sup>106</sup> If students possessed regular identification documents this presented no problem. But many students from the Tsarist Empire could not identify themselves or entered Switzerland with forged papers; they received a so-called *Toleranzbewilligung* for political refugees against bailment. Swiss authorities were evidently well aware that students from the Russian Empire who were inconvenient to the Tsarist regime could hardly hope to legally obtain a passport that allowed them to travel abroad, and they principally issued a permit to any foreigner who wanted to enrol at the local university and did not exhibit objectionable behavior.<sup>107</sup> The cantonal authorities of Bern, Zürich, Lausanne and Geneva, as well as the respective universities, were repeatedly accused of accepting foreign students who came into conflict with law or did not possess legal documents. Such charges were fiercely refuted by the universities.<sup>108</sup> When the Russian authorities urged the government in Bern to only enrol students from the Tsarist Empire who brought an official letter of recommendation, Bern refused to comply.

Neither cantonal nor university authorities cared much about the political attitude of ‘their’ foreign students as long as they did not present a threat to local peace and security. The government of Zürich in fact agreed to establish a special police force for the purpose of supervising the identification documents of foreigners in 1891 – but only under the condition that the federal state paid for such an institution.<sup>109</sup> It is also noteworthy that both the University of Bern and that of Zürich did not require a residence permit as precondition for enrollment. In Zürich, a resolution of the cantonal executive had ruled in 1894 that the political authorities should check students’ identification documents, but there is no indication that this decision had any impact on daily business.<sup>110</sup> The University of Bern assented to

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Collmer 2004: 291-295.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Vuilleumier (EME) 2007: 199, Scholla 1986: 37-38, and Schlaepfer 1969: 84-87.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Neumann 1987: 112-113.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. letter of the rector’s office of the University of Zürich, date unknown (possibly 1908), *Allgemeine Zeitung München* 29.01.1908, and letter of Prof. A. Lang to NZZ 05.02.1908, in StAZH Z70.248-250.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Collmer 2004: 367-370.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. letter of the rector’s office of the University of Zürich, date unknown (1908?), in StAZH Z70.248-250.

the police department's insistence that the university only enrol students with valid residence permit in 1903, but only because the police promised to provide everyone with the document who had not committed a crime.<sup>111</sup> Often, the academic senate acted as advocate for the 'Russian' students' case; notably after the turmoil of 1905, students were – on principle – considered political refugees and enrolled without prior proof of a residence permit if all other requirements were fulfilled.<sup>112</sup> At the University of Bern, a number of 'Russian' students asked for protection by the academic senate because they were threatened with expulsion. The plea was answered positively.<sup>113</sup>

## 2 Liberal Admission Policies.

The universities of Bern, Geneva, Lausanne and Zürich adopted a markedly liberal attitude with regard to foreign students until 1914. At first, foreign students and citizens of other cantons who wished to be enrolled at the universities of Bern and Zürich only needed to supply a certificate of good conduct, whereas locals had to produce a *Maturitätsausweis* or according preparatory education. Over the years, and especially with a greater inrush of men and women from the Tsarist Empire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, both institutions began to demand proof of adequate education also from foreigners or introduced entrance exams in order to curb the numbers of unprepared students. But requirements remained minimal and were in no way comparable to restrictions in Germany, let alone to the constraints for Jewish students in the Russian Empire established by the *Numerus Clausus* in 1887.<sup>114</sup> For young women from the Tsarist Empire who were forbidden to take up studies at universities back home, the possibility for females to enrol as regular students at the educational facilities of Zürich, Bern, Geneva and Lausanne (in this order) exerted a great force of attraction. Apart from individual French universities that enrolled women as of the early 1860s – a right that was officially sanctioned only in 1880 when Belgian institutions opened their gates, too –, Switzerland remained the only country until the 20<sup>th</sup> century to allow female students at most schools. And while the Belgian and French universities could rely upon significant enlisting on the part of their female citizens, Swiss women hardly showed an interest in university education. Until the First World War, female students in Switzerland were by vast majority foreigners, and mainly from the Tsarist Empire.<sup>115</sup>

It is no coincidence that the universities of Zürich, Bern, Geneva and Lausanne adopted such liberal attitudes to both foreigners and women. First of all, the liberal profile of many Swiss institutions of higher learning is inseparable from the political victory of liberalism in modern Switzerland and the oppressive conditions in most of Europe. The open arms with which both federal and cantonal authorities welcomed political thinkers into their territories created an incomparably

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. Feller 1935: 445.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. letter of the Zürich Police Department 20.10.1905, in StAZH Z70.216, and Gagliardi et al. 1938: 783.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. protocol of the senate's meeting 12.07.1907, in StABE BB IIIb 949.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Tikhonov 2003(a): 44-45, Brügger 1996: 491-493, Neumann 1987: 93-113, as well as the works used as basis for chapters 3.1 and 4.1.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Tikhonov 2003(a) and (b).

inspiring mix for the native academic institutions. What's more, the republican state structures were conducive to academic freedom and to the unhampered growth of educational facilities. Secondly, Switzerland possessed a high number of institutions of higher learning compared to only three million inhabitants and the rather restricted potential of domestic students in a largely agrarian country; three German-speaking, three French-speaking, and one bilingual university plus the federal technical school (*Eidgenössisches Polytechnikum*, today's ETH) founded in 1855. Moreover, all Helvetic universities except one were founded between 1833 and 1910. The young institutions had large capacities for learners but could not hope to fill the lecture halls with domestic students; they therefore found their *raison d'être* in attracting foreign students in order to secure their existence. Bern, Geneva, Lausanne and Zürich competed for the highest numbers of students who guaranteed survival of the institution with their money and presence, and they thus tried to keep admission requirements as lax as possible. The early admission of women, too, was not owing to a more progressive perception of gender roles in Switzerland; rather, it is another consequence of the massive surplus of capacities and the young age of Swiss universities that still needed to take root. Only the very traditional University of Basel founded in 1460, as well as the catholic University of Fribourg (1889), successfully locked out the female sex and foreign nationals for a long time.<sup>116</sup>

### 3 University of Zürich.

#### 3.1 Institutional History, Politics, and the Student Body.<sup>117</sup>

The University of Zürich is a „Frucht freiheitlicher geistiger Regsamkeit“,<sup>118</sup> a child of liberalism, as Willy Spühler wrote on the occasion of the institution's centennial. Indeed, *Universitas Turicensis* was the first university in Europe to be founded by a democratic state rather than by the church or an absolutist sovereign!<sup>119</sup> The legal basis for the foundation of an academic school was laid with the cantonal *Unterrichtsgesetz* of September 28, 1832, and the university was officially opened with a ceremonial act in April 1833. The previously independent academies of theology, law and medicine were merged into one school and augmented by the philosophical faculty, which again was split into a linguistic-historical section (I) and a mathematical-natural-scientific section (II) in 1859. The medical faculty was the largest in terms of student numbers up to the 1890s. Requirements for enrollment consisted of a certificate of good conduct; only citizens of the canton needed to deliver a *Maturitätszeugnis*. In many cases, this precondition could be bypassed with an entrance exam. The

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. Bolliger/ Ziegler (EME) 2007: 929, Tikhonov 2003(a): 44-45, and Neumann 1987: 110.

<sup>117</sup> The information given in this chapter which is not based on my own research is taken from the NZZ Sonderbeilage 2008, Gagliardi 1938, Erb 1937, Spühler 1932, and Ruegg 1869. Figures on student enrollment can be checked with the official semester records published by the university (*Verzeichnis der Behörden, Lehrer, Anstalten und Studierenden*) as well as with the almost annual tables in the *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Statistik*.

<sup>118</sup> Spühler 1932: 1.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Bolleter/ Ringger 2008: 128, and NZZ Sonderbeilage 2008: 33.

school started out with 161 students in the summer term (ST) of 1833. And numbers, to the distress of university and city, did not increase substantially until the mid-1860s. Only in the winter term (WT) of 1904/5 did the number of students surpass a thousand. The student body was predominantly Swiss in the first years, with a handful of Germans joining them. The pronouncedly and singularly liberal nature of Zürich's university may have been an advantage for the initial recruitment of German lecturers of republican stance. Yet it hampered the growing of the student body, which the academic senate had hoped to draw from German states, in particular. The German Bundestag was suspicious of the liberal attitude of many Swiss cantons and their tradition of providing asylum to revolutionaries from neighbouring states, and it advised its member states to officially forbid their subjects to study at the emphatically democratic institutions of higher learning in Bern and Zürich. Up to 1867, young Germans who attended the two universities without official recommendation from the authorities remained barred from practicing their profession back home. What's more, the University of Zürich was drawn into the violent conflict between liberals and conservatives; until the founding of the Swiss federal state in 1848, the times hardly allowed the school to secure its existence with a sizeable student body and scholarly prominence.

Before long, the enrollment of females arose as a serious issue – one that would significantly influence the future development of the university's student body. The academic senate asked the canton's department of education to supply an official decision on whether or not women could be regularly enrolled when two Russian females required such in WT 1864/5. The positive verdict would become legend; the University of Zürich was the first German-speaking institution to enrol women and the first institution to have a woman (the Russian Nadeshda Suslova) obtain a doctor's degree in medicine. During the first few decades of women's enrolment in Zürich, the run was almost exclusively concentrated on the medical faculty. Most women were foreigners; first they came from England and North America, but soon the 'Russians' took over. In WT 1869/70, seven out of 14 women were subjects of the Tsar – in ST 1873 they numbered 100 out of 114 females enrolled.<sup>120</sup> The total student body at the time amounted to 439. After Swiss students had complained about unsatisfactory preparatory education of Russian women and petitioned the government to extend requirements for a *Maturitätsausweis* to all students, new regulations were published in the summer of 1873. All students were now required to be 18 or older and to provide proof of adequate previous education or else to pass an entrance exam.

But the problem of Russian women had already been solved at that time. An *Ukase* of the Tsar published in various newspapers in June 1873 outlawed all Russian females who would continue their studies in Zürich after January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1874. Women who ignored the ban would be barred from practicing their profession at home. That the autocrat was alarmed by the development of Zürich into the center of Russian revolutionary activity abroad and by the mingling of Bakunin, Lavrov and the like with Russian students is not surprising. Interestingly enough, though, the *Ukase* was not directed against

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<sup>120</sup> See table with enrollment figures in the appendix.

the radical student circles at the *Limmat*, in general, but merely against its female members. Clearly, it was not only the fact that young, innocent women were ‘seduced’ by political radicals which outraged the Tsarist authorities but also their alleged moral degradation. The University of Zürich protested against such untenable accusations against serious and respectable women among its student body, but its voice was not heard in Russia. Most women obeyed the *Ukase*. Those who did not return home transferred to the universities of Bern or Geneva which had just opened their doors to females – only twelve Russian women enrolled at the University of Zürich in WT 1873/74.

Non-nationals generally presented a strong element among the student body in Zürich. At its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1883, 436 students were enrolled at the University of Zürich, of which 271 were Swiss citizens and 165 were foreigners. Between 1905 and 1910, more foreign students than Swiss studied in Zürich. The largest share of non-nationals was generally of German origin, with the exception of the years from 1898 until WWI, when the Germans were outdone by students from the Tsarist Empire,<sup>121</sup> sometimes by three or more. In ST 1905, Russians represented more than a third of all students at the University of Zürich. The years between the turn of the century and the First World War are labelled ‘Russenzzeit’<sup>122</sup> by all chroniclers. Challenges were manifold in the eyes of the university authorities, especially with regard to the limited facilities and equipment. Swiss students of medicine fiercely protested the masses of ‘Russians’ crowding the lecture halls and hospitals.

The academic senate, uncertain how to cope with the invasion of ‘Russian’ women, asked for the help of the federal authorities in summer 1902; the Department of Foreign Affairs should inquire of the Tsarist government the conditions for enrolment of females in Russia. Provisionally, they would be required to show satisfactory knowledge of German, proof of education at a Russian girls’ gymnasium of 8 years plus an exam in Latin, *or* proof of attendance of lectures at another university for at least four semesters.<sup>123</sup> These measures did not have the intended effect of curbing the number of ‘Russian’ women enrolling at the University of Zürich, on the contrary. In summer 1903, proof of attendance of lectures at another university did not suffice anymore as proof of adequate education, and in 1907, regulations were tightened with reference to the many unprepared females and the institution’s image. Women from Russia henceforth needed to pass an entrance exam of German, Latin and two other subjects varying according to faculty, which should guarantee adequate preparation of the females enrolled in Zürich.<sup>124</sup> The stricter requirements became necessary according to the academic senate because numbers of Russian women had again dramatically increased; the unrest in Russia between 1904 and 1907, and the temporary shut-down of many institutions of higher learning made male and female students from the Tsarist Empire arrive in unprecedented numbers.

At that time, the University of Zürich was not the only institution hit by an invasion of ‘Russians’; Bern, Geneva and Lausanne received equal – if not greater – numbers of students. The

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<sup>121</sup> Note that the *Ukase* was annulled only few years after its publication.

<sup>122</sup> Spühler 1932: 10.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. letter of Zürich Department of Education to the Federal Council 03.07.1902, and protocol of the meeting of the first 07.10.1902, in StAZH Z.70.248-250.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. protocols of the Zürich Department of Education 15.07. and 01.08.1907, in StAZH Z70.248-250.

lack of coordination regarding admission requirements for foreign students increasingly developed into a problem because an *Exmatrikel* from one Swiss institution was automatically acknowledged as proof of adequate education by others. As a matter of fact, Zürich more than once accused Bern of enrolling every 18-year-old who had not been in jail, and Bern on the other hand blamed Zürich of establishing strict entrance requirements but not enforcing them.<sup>125</sup> While the heads of all German-speaking establishments of higher learning had exchanged experiences annually since 1901<sup>126</sup>, the *Schweizerische Rektorenkonferenz* which first met in 1904 included the heads of all institutions on Swiss territory. It agreed on the necessity for Helvetic universities to apply equivalent criteria for admission of foreigners. At its 5<sup>th</sup> conference in 1908, the *Rektorenkonferenz* adopted specific guidelines for enrolment of Russians. Requirements for admission should at least equal those established by Russian universities, and if a student could not present adequate documents, he or she needed to pass a standardized exam. An *Exmatrikel* obtained from another university could be rejected as entry ticket. It also seems that the *Rektorenkonferenz* assiduously collected information on the contents of each and every type of middle school in the Russian Empire in order to specify which diploma qualified for admission at a Swiss university.<sup>127</sup> New enrolments on the part of students from Tsarist Russia indeed decreased at all institutions during the following semesters. Yet it is difficult to assess whether the new countrywide entrance requirements were accountable for this ‘success’; the drop in numbers of ‘Russians’ was mainly due to the departure of women, who benefitted from the opening of universities to female students back home.<sup>128</sup>

In any case, Bern and Zürich experienced yet another storm of ‘Russians’ – this time principally male – on the medical faculties as of 1913. German universities first established strict entrance exams for students from the Tsarist Empire and finally, in September 1913, introduced a *Numerus Clausus* for students from Russia; that is, they defined a maximum number of students per country of origin to be enrolled per semester.<sup>129</sup> The vast majority of ‘Russian’ students now aimed at Helvetic schools. The University of Zürich was anxious to take precautions and imitated the tools of its northern neighbor; for ST 1914, a maximum of 60 new enrolments per country of origin was determined for foreign students at the Faculty of Medicine. The *Numerus Clausus* in medicine was formally applied to all foreign students but essentially directed against the ‘Russians’, as they were the only ones to exceed the 60 enrolments per semester.<sup>130</sup> The outbreak of war in August 1914 rendered the quotas redundant.

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. speech of A. Gobat of June 1904, in StABE BB IIIb 196-200, and Neumann 1987: 111.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Oltener Zusammenkunft, in StABE BB IIIb1003.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. directive for enrolment of male Russian students, date unknown (possibly 1908), booklets on enrolment policies at non-Swiss universities issued by the *Schweizerische Rektorenkonferenz* 1909, 1910 and 1912, in StAZH Z70.248-250, and Feller 1935: 448-449.

<sup>128</sup> For this interpretation cf. letter of the rector’s office of the University of Bern to its medical faculty 14.02.1914, in StABE BB IIIb 495.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. protocol of the Zürich Department of Education 10.10.1913, in StAZH Z70.248-250, letter of the rector’s office of the University of Bern to its medical faculty 14.02.1914, in StABE BB IIIb 495, and Feller 1935: 506.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. protocol of the Zürich Department of Education 18.02.1914, in StAZH Z70.248-250.

### 3.2 The Russian-Jewish Students.

Although university records treat all students from the Tsarist Empire as one group and do not reflect their heterogeneous composition, the ‘Russians’ were of course seldom Russians in the strict sense. If they were not Jewish, students had Armenian, Polish, or Russian-German background. In the 1860s, Polish refugees were very present, later on Armenians and especially Jews became more dominant. Russian-Germans supplied a stable minority throughout the decades. Only among the female students could I identify many ethnic Russians – which is hardly surprising if one considers the constraints women faced if they wanted to pursue higher education in Russia.

#### *Number of Students<sup>131</sup> over Time*

Contrary to the common view that the emigration of Jewish students from Russia only began in the 1880s, the University of Zürich had accommodated quite a few Jewish students even before. As of 1865, up to 20 students per semester from Russia were enrolled in Zürich at the Faculties of Medicine, Philosophy and even Law, and for about 25% of these ‘Russians’ I could ascertain Jewish background. Many of these pioneers were women. At the time of the notorious and principally female first Russian colony of 1871-73 with its almost 150 students from the Tsarist Empire, the percentage of Jews was on the increase. Among the many students largely concentrated at the Faculty of Medicine, the proportion of Jews varied according to semester but never passed 40%. Among the ‘Russian’ men, the number of Jews was definitely higher than among women, which has to do with the fact that ethnic Russian men, as opposed to their female counterparts, were not forced to receive education abroad. The official festschrift for the University of Zürich’s centenary conveys the picture of a heavily “Jewish imprint” on the first Russian colony in Zürich.<sup>132</sup> According to my estimates, this is exaggerated. In any case, the authors mix up the timeline; they account for the allegedly tremendous predominance of Jews among the students from Russia in the 1870s by reference to the *Numerus Clausus* for Jewish students in the Tsarist Empire, even though the NC was only established in 1887.<sup>133</sup> My guess is that the festschrift, published in 1938, was influenced by the zeitgeist and accentuated the problem of foreignness and Jewish character a bit too much. This issue will be taken up again in chapter five.

After publication of the Tsarist *Ukase* in 1873 which outlawed studies at the University of Zürich for women, only few ‘Russians’ (mostly men) remained. Until well into the 1880s, their numbers oscillated between 6 and 20. The percentage of Jews levelled off around 35% for these years,

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<sup>131</sup> The reader should note that I am only considering the students who were regularly *enrolled*. Auditors, that is, individuals who attended lectures but did not study for a degree, were in fact quite numerous at Swiss universities before WWI and could equal up to a fourth of all students. But auditors were not included in the enrolment catalogs and I thus do not have information on their identity and country of origin. The same holds true for the case of the University of Bern. For reasons elaborated in part one, though, Russian-Jewish students came to study abroad in order to obtain a degree, and I assume that the majority figures among the regular students.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Gagliardi et al. 1938: 629 and 635.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Gagliardi et al. 1938: 635.

and it was a bit higher in medicine than in philosophical subjects. As of WT 1882/83, the ‘Russian’ student colony slowly recuperated. But only in 1895 did their numbers again pass a hundred. By then, Jews accounted for roughly 60% of all individuals from the Russian Empire. Their numbers had continually risen over the years and were always higher at the medical faculty than at the philosophical one. In fact, the striking upsurge in the number of ‘Russians’ in WT 1902/03 was almost exclusively due to Jewish students – that is, due to Jewish women who predominantly enrolled in medicine, and due to Russian Jews of both sexes at the Faculty of Philosophy (mainly section II). Students from Russia amounted to more than 400 in the period of 1905 to 1910, with an all-time high of 480 individuals in 1907. This number corresponds to 62% of all foreigners enrolled at the University of Zürich, and to 34% of the whole student body. Among the 480 ‘Russians’, I have identified an overall minimum of 70% Jews. In general, the proportion of Jewish students was similar among men and women from the Tsarist Empire.

The quantity of subjects of the Tsar in Zürich declined during the following years, probably owing to better chances for women in Russia to pursue studies at a regular university and obtain an academic degree.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, the number of ‘Russian’ women enrolled at the University of Zürich dropped faster than that of men, and the decrease mainly affected the medical faculty. At the same time, the ratio of Jews against other ‘Russians’ shifted in favor of the first. As I have indicated earlier, the number of ethnic Russians was considerable only among female students, since they also faced discrimination back home. The male student body from the Tsarist Empire was almost exclusively composed of members of minorities. Thus, the departure of females led to an ever greater overrepresentation of Jews. Besides, conditions for Jewish students in Russia had deteriorated, so that Jews were even more desperate to study abroad than in the past.<sup>135</sup> In 1913 to 1914, Swiss universities experienced another “Russeninvasion”<sup>136</sup> (again over 400 ‘Russians’). This time, the percentage of Jews was nearly 80%; at the Faculty of Medicine, their numbers even equalled more than 85% of all students from Tsarist Russia.

The percentage of women among the ‘Russian’ students oscillated between 50% and 70% throughout the years but dropped markedly after 1908. The new climax in 1913/14 only featured about 15% women. Among the Russian Jews, however, the number of females was never quite as high. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women still made up about half the Russian-Jewish student body, but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century their proportion decreased. In the years before World War One, the numbers of Jewish males increased much more dramatically than that of women. Generally, women from Russia were always concentrated in medicine and their numbers were not as remarkable in other subjects.

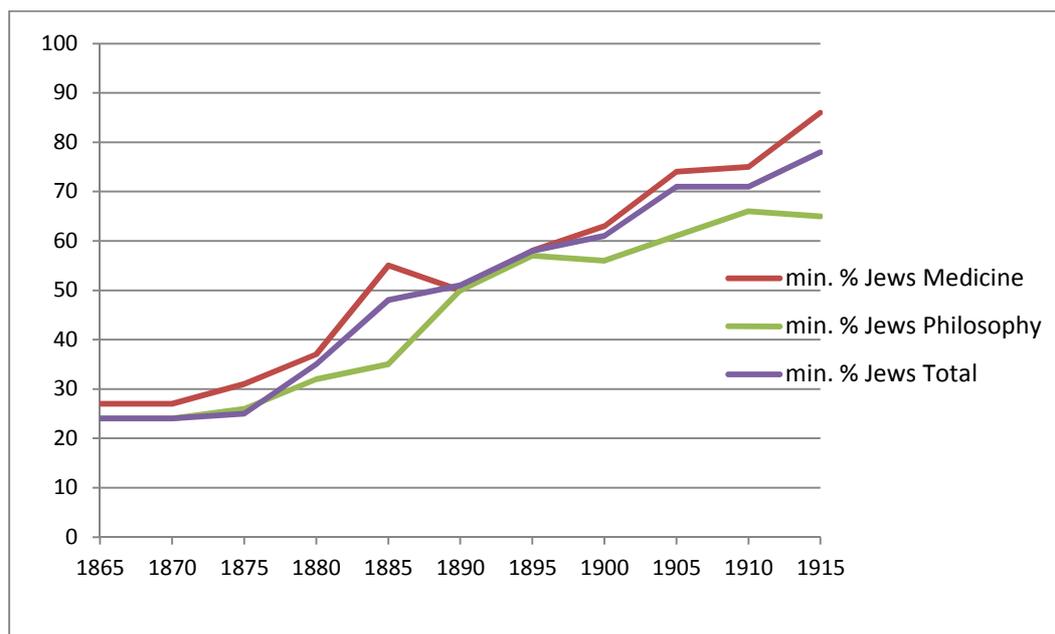
The following graph illustrates the proportion of Jews among all students from the Tsarist Empire enrolled at the University of Zürich from 1865 until (theoretically) 1914/15.

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<sup>134</sup> Cf. Part I, chapter 2.1.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Part I, chapter 2.2.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. letter of the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy to the Rector’s Office, November 1913, StAZH Z70.248-250.



1: Minimum Percentage of Jews among 'Russians' at University of Zürich over Time.

### ***Faculties***

On the whole, students from the Tsarist Empire favored medicine over all other subjects. In Zürich, though, the proportions were not as unbalanced as in Bern, where – as we will see in chapter 4.2 – the medical faculty by far outdid the philosophical one in terms of 'Russians'. In the 1880s and the 1910s, especially, the Faculty of Philosophy in Zürich could attract considerable numbers of students from Russia both in absolute figures and relative to those in medicine. Yet at the same time, the proportion of Jews among 'Russians' in philosophy never reached the impressive numbers identified for the Bernese university. Until the mid-1880s, Jews made up between 25% and 35% of students from Tsarist Russia studying philosophical subjects. Their percentage rose towards the turn of the century and reached a height of around 65% in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that the number of Jews among 'Russians' in philosophy was lower in Zürich than in Bern may partly be owing to the larger interest in the Faculty of Philosophy displayed by students from Russia at the University of Zürich, in general. If Russians overall were more inclined to study philosophy, then the decrease in percentage of Jews is not surprising. But there was a very concrete motive for Russian Jews in Bern to enrol at the philosophical faculty which might explain the difference; it will be elucidated in the chapter on the University of Bern.

At the Medical Faculty, Jews amounted to more than half of the student population from the Tsarist Empire as early as the 1880s. At the turn of the century, their numbers approached 70% and levelled off around 75% in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another marked rise in the proportion of Jews at the medical faculty was determined for the last five years before the First World War, when Jews amounted to over 85% of all 'Russians' in medicine! The paramount interest of Russian-Jewish

students in obtaining a degree in medicine has manifest reasons. Jews were barred from many professions in the Tsarist Empire, but not from the medical one. Government decrees in fact “made medical service more attractive to Jews”<sup>137</sup> over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Working as a medical doctor in Russia not only meant an upward movement in terms of social status but also allowed free movement for Jewish men and women. Hence, a degree in medicine presented an opportunity to escape the oppressive environment of the *Pale of Settlement*.<sup>138</sup> But the choice of medicine was also motivated by a desire to contribute to the welfare of Russian society, in general, and to the transformation of Jewish society, in particular; studies in medicine would be useful for the people and thus fulfilled a moral goal that was held high among the Russian-Jewish youth. In the words of Chaim Weizmann:

Medicine was the favourite study, for it offered the most obvious road to a livelihood; besides, it was associated with the idea of social service, of contact with the masses, of opportunity to teach, by precept and example.<sup>139</sup>

Especially women exhibited a moral and political zeal to help the unfortunate, and because of the considerable want for medical doctors in Russia, they could be sure to be offered a position after their studies without problem.<sup>140</sup>

As for the gender ratio, the picture is quite clear. Russian-Jewish women first clearly favored medicine, while men also chose the Faculty of Philosophy in considerable numbers. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, however, and more Russian-Jewish men arrived in Bern, male and female students were more evenly spread among the two faculties. At the philosophical faculty, both men and women favored the natural sciences over the philosophical-historical subjects. The two sections of the faculty are listed separately in the enrolment catalog only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it can be assumed that preference among Russian-Jewish students for the natural sciences was comparable in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Weizmann in fact names chemistry as the subject most often chosen by Jewish students after medicine.<sup>141</sup>

‘Russians’ choosing the Faculty of Law remained a rare occasion. Only after the turn of the century did their numbers reach up to 50, but they never added up to more than 15% of the figures identified for the Faculty of Medicine. What is remarkable about the Faculty of Law is that throughout the years, the percentage of Jews among students from the Russian Empire equalled at least 70%! Very often, in fact, there was hardly any non-Jewish student from Tsarist Russia enrolled in law. This finding was even more startling to me because I never read any comment on Russian, let alone Russian-Jewish, students of law in Switzerland. Only the faculties of medicine and philosophy are generally referred to in literature as attracting students from the Tsarist Empire. And admittedly, the fact that students from Russia, and particularly Jewish students, chose law is rather unexpected. These

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<sup>137</sup> Polonsky 2010 (I): 405.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Godfrind 2007: 331, and Weill 1996: 116.

<sup>139</sup> Weizmann 1949: 50.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Bankowski 2010: 15, Huser 2008: 111, and Feller 1935: 441.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Weizmann 1949: 50.

students could not hope to practice law in Switzerland because they were foreigners, and Jews were barred from civil service in Russia because of their religious affiliation. In any case, Swiss law hardly benefitted any foreign student for a career back home. I assume that politically minded Russian-Jewish students regarded studies in law as a kind of general education in political science. The prime example would be Pavel (or Paul) Axelrod, an active social democrat who first studied philosophy in Zürich and then switched to law (ST 1885-ST 1888). In one case, a Jewish student of law from Imperial Russia in fact received Swiss citizenship and then functioned as lawyer in Switzerland. This was David Farbstein from Warsaw, who studied at the University of Zürich for a year and then transferred to Bern for WT 1895/96 and ST 1896, where he successfully completed his studies with a dissertation (something Zürich had denied him).<sup>142</sup>

### *Duration of Studies*

The average duration of studies identified for Russian-Jewish students at the University of Zürich was between two and four semesters. Quite a few students also stayed longer. But generally, Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire exhibited paths similar to their non-Jewish compatriots; they either came to Zürich with an *Exmatrikel* from another institution of higher learning, already, or they transferred to a further university in Switzerland or Germany after a couple of semesters at the *Limmat*. The online database of students enrolled at the University of Zürich before 1918 gives all information available on individuals' previous education and future paths.<sup>143</sup> The data on Russian-Jewish students confirm that inter-university movement was frequent, and that between the universities of German-speaking Switzerland, in particular, exchange was common. For the same reason, it is difficult to assess how many of the Russian-Jewish students who moved to Switzerland for further education in fact completed a degree. A lot of students left Zürich without diploma; others handed in a dissertation and obtained a doctor's degree. It can be assumed that in certain cases, an *Exmatrikel* attesting education at the University of Zürich was all students needed in order to be admitted to another institution whose requirements were stricter.

Some students left the University of Zürich but then enrolled again after one or two semesters, either at another faculty or at the same. The student of medicine Raissa Efron is an interesting case. She first enrolled at the University of Zürich with an *Exmatrikel* from Bern in ST 1896 – that is, she had been studying medicine at the Bernese institution before. At the end of ST 1898, Raissa left the Zürich medical faculty with a diploma, but then appeared again at the same faculty in ST 1899. She remained enrolled in Zürich until WT 1900/01 and again left with a diploma. The enrolment catalogs do not mention her anymore after that, but she obviously handed in a dissertation in medicine, which is recorded for the year 1902/03.

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. Zweig-Strauss 2002 for the quite exceptional biography of David Farbstein.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Matrikeledition Universität Zürich, <http://www.matrikel.uzh.ch/pages/0.htm>.

### ***Regional and Social Background***

The Russian-Jewish students enrolled at the University of Zürich mainly came from the various Russian provinces and Polish towns in the *Pale of Settlement*, as was expected. There are instances of students who indicated Moscow or St. Petersburg as place of origin; and very rarely, even other towns outside the Pale and in far eastern parts of the Russian Empire appear in records. In the case of Moscow or St. Petersburg, it is difficult to assess whether students in fact really came from those cities or had only studied there for a certain time. Sometimes information given in the online enrolment database of the University of Zürich confirms that students' parents resided outside the *Pale of Settlement* – the meaning of such residence patterns is commented further below.

Unfortunately, it is hardly possible to determine the social background of the Russian-Jewish students enrolled at the University of Zürich. Answering this question would require evidence of the profession of fathers; yet the registration forms at the Zürich institution only required such information as of 1931.<sup>144</sup> The university archives in Zürich, however, have made some effort to gather material on students as far as available in retrospect, and have made this information accessible online. Hence, for some students from the Tsarist Empire whose records were found in police dossiers or for whom other sources delivered evidence, we do have information on the social background. For the few Jewish students from Russia enrolled in the 1860s and 1870s, the minimal evidence on social background suggests that most of them came from rather well-off families – often they were the sons and daughters of merchants, of which a minority even resided outside the *Pale of Settlement*. For the 1880s, as well, I found indication of a middle-class status rather than origin from needy families to be the rule. If a Jewish student's home is listed as St. Petersburg or Moscow, which was not as much a rarity as I had expected, this could point to higher social status. Only Jews who were deemed useful or cooperative (that is, assimilated) by the Tsarist government received permission to live outside the Pale. Often, these were rich merchants or families involved in finance. It is of course possible that students indicated not their place of origin, but the last place they had lived. They might have broken through the NC and attended the universities of Petersburg or Moscow for some semesters. Consider the example of Chaja Israilitin, born 1880, who studied medicine first in Bern and then in Zürich (WT 1904-WT 1906). Her place of origin is recorded as St. Petersburg, yet the information in the online database says her parents lived near Chernigov.

For the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the social background of students is even more difficult to determine, but supposedly a lower-class background was more usual than in earlier decades. Access to university in the Russian Empire was opened to all social strata and minorities in the 1860s, and the large run of Jewish students to the establishments of higher education began in the 1870s. Thus, more Jewish students appeared on the scene as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, and it would be logical to assume that the thirst for education which first caught the sons and daughters of established families would soon infect the lower strata, too. If numbers of Russian-Jewish students who left their country for education

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. Spühler 1932: 13.

abroad grew as of the 1880s, then the lower social strata must have been involved more and more in this migration. But in the end, a definite statement on the social background of Russian-Jewish students enrolled at the University of Zürich cannot be made. The few reminiscences of contemporaries convey a vague picture, too. Chaim Weizmann emphasizes the middle-class origin of Russian-Jewish students in the West:

They belonged to the middle and lower-middle classes; for the rich Jews of Russia – like the rich anywhere – could ‘arrange’ things, and seldom had to send their children to foreign universities. [...] And they were, almost without exception, the children of baalabatische parents, solid, respectable, intelligent householders of the middle and lower-middle class, people steeped in Jewish tradition, instinctively liberal, ambitious – just like my father – for their children, eager to burst the bonds of the past.<sup>145</sup>

But a couple of pages further he suddenly writes that the majority of students in Switzerland whose “survival was an eternal mystery”, was “as poor as church mice”.<sup>146</sup>

Of course, these statements do not need to be inconsistent. It seems reasonable to assume that the Jewish students from Russia might indeed have come from the middle and lower-middle classes, since very poor parents could hardly afford to send their children abroad for education. But such status in Russia did not necessarily mean that students had sufficient money according to Swiss standards. I am not familiar with the purchasing power of Swiss and Russian currency at that time, but it might well be that living standards in Switzerland were higher. The issue of students’ social status and standard of life will be taken up again in the chapter on the Bern colony, as we are more fortunate with contemporary accounts there.

### ***Residence***

Throughout the decades, Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire – like ‘Russians’ in general – settled in today’s inner city along the Eastern shore of the river *Limmat* up until its opening into the lake. With very few exceptions, their addresses were to be found in the neighbourhoods of Fluntern, Hottingen, and Oberstrass, all located within walking distance from the University’s main campus but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century still considered the green outskirts of Zürich. The supply of low priced and furnished rooms must have adjusted to the growing demands. By and large, the students seem to have lived in a kind of boarding house; the enrolment catalogs usually indicate a landlord or landlady such as “Fr. Rubli” or “Hr. Fluck”. Often, more than one student inhabited the same place, which also implies that several rooms were rented out by the owners of these houses and that they resembled small and modest inns rather than shared flats. The University of Zürich’s archivist suggests that moneyed students from Tsarist Russia took up residence in a pension, while the less affluent ones rented rooms in private houses.<sup>147</sup> However, for Jewish students, a pension or hotel as place of residence was a great exception; I have identified five instances over all the years. A remarkable

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<sup>145</sup> Weizmann 1949: 50-51.

<sup>146</sup> Weizmann 1949: 87.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. NZZ Sonderbeilage 2008: 35.

feature of ‘Russian’ students’ residence patterns is that they moved practically every semester. The constant changing of address was no phenomenon unique to Zürich but was at least as pronounced in Bern; an analysis will be included in the chapter on the University of Bern.

### *Colony Life*

The lack of source material for the students’ activities outside the academic universe has been pointed out earlier. Still, the couple of published memoirs referring to the Russian colonies in Bern and Zürich, records of student organizations, and some contemporary reactions voiced in Switzerland allow drawing a sketch of social life in the colonies. Moreover, there are a few allusions to the political engagement of Jewish students in scholarly literature that admittedly does not deal with the group of Russian-Jewish students but looks into political movements of Russian Jewry. The material needs to be considered with caution, however; the statements of contemporaries mainly reflect unusual events and/ or conspicuous characteristics, while behavior considered ordinary is often not worth mentioning. This might easily lead an observer to overrate the extraordinary. The one-sidedness of source material derived from political activists and police records was noted in the introduction. With respect to the Zürich colony, documentation of student life and political disputes is particularly limited. It happens to be the case that all the political characters discussing life in the Swiss student colonies had either settled in Bern or Geneva or reflected their regular visits to these colonies. Only Chaim Zhitlovsky had in fact lived in Zürich for three years; but his report ends precisely with the arrival at the *Limmat*.

Even though documentation of the Zürich colony life – with the exception of the infamous, strongly politicized first colony of 1871-73 – is scarce, we can assume that infrastructure and organizational life in the Russian-Jewish student colony of the later period correspond to that of Bern, for which we have more evidence. Overall, the aim of infrastructure established in the colonies everywhere was to create a familiar home in a strange environment – a small *shtetl*, as Medem suggests.<sup>148</sup> Literature on the Zürich colony refers to a Russian library and reading hall, to a mutual aid society, and to a common lunch table or dining hall where culinary specialties from Eastern Europe could be obtained for little money.<sup>149</sup> The elaborate descriptions of various student colonies by Weizmann and Medem confirm the existence of such institutions in other cities, and they assert that apart from the library and dining hall, social life in the Russian-Jewish student colonies also centered on informal gatherings in private homes and on the streets. If there was no presentation or discussion scheduled at the reading hall, Russian-Jewish students would spend their evenings together at someone’s place or in a café. Proms and formal dinners seem to have taken place frequently, often in order to raise money for the colony or a particular cause. Specific religious institutions are not mentioned in the memoirs; I could not determine whether Jewish students from Russia attended

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 278-281.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Rogger/ Bankowski 2010: 55, NZZ Sonderbeilage 2008: 35, Bankowski 1991, and Erb 1937: 382.

services at local congregations, gathered in their own communities or returned home to their families for holidays, or maybe did not bother about religion, at all.

Evidence suggests that until the turn from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Russian-Jewish* colony was more or less the same as the *Russian* colony. Jewish and non-Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire frequented the same dining hall, which by turns served specialties from Poland and Siberia as well as Jewish delicacies such as *gefilte fish*.<sup>150</sup> At the Russian library and reading hall, Jews would engage in discussions about general revolutionary struggles in Russia, and they would be members of Russian revolutionary and populist parties. Claudie Weill's studies on the Russian student colonies in German cities imply that these Russian colonies, even though predominantly Jewish, identified as simply Russian for a long time. This was reflected in the labelling of organizations and institutions as "Russian XY" and makes it difficult to decide whether a formal group can be considered Jewish or not. Even if the membership was predominantly Jewish, an association of students from Russia might have totally ignored any 'Jewish' concern. Only with the rise of Jewish nationalism did tensions arise between Jewish 'nationalists', on the one hand, and proponents of a universal Russian interest, on the other hand, and did specifically Jewish infrastructure and organizations arise in the colony. Weill locates this moment somewhere between 1903 and 1907.<sup>151</sup> The history of Russian Jewry at large and my own research confirm this picture.<sup>152</sup>

Two types of formal organizations can be distinguished for the colonies in Switzerland; those that were registered with the university and exclusive to academics, and those based in the student colony but not attached to the university. Many student organizations, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, adopted names that only referred to a general Russian 'program', and most Jewish students joined general Russian political groups. We can assume, however, that members were mostly Jewish; if Jews formed a large part of the 'Russian' colony and we can identify only general Russian organizations, then Jewish students most likely formed part of the latter. The fact that food prepared at the Russian dining hall also included Jewish delicacies supports such interpretation. The first specifically Jewish student organization I could detect was *Hessiana*, an academic Zionist association co-founded by David Farbstein in 1898.<sup>153</sup> Farbstein, who claims to have inclined towards a socialist Zionist perspective since his youth in Warsaw,<sup>154</sup> was not the only Russian-Jewish student from Zürich who attended the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1897); there was also a certain Ms. Reinus, student of medicine in Zürich, Bern, and again Zürich.<sup>155</sup> Farbstein also says he joined a Jewish student association when he first came to Zürich in 1894, but I could not find other proof of the existence of such a group. A Jewish corporation called *Hashacher* was established in 1903; its membership was recruited among students from the Tsarist Empire and Austria-Hungary. A small mutual aid society

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. Rogger/ Bankowski 2010: 55.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Weill 2003, 2001: 82-85, 90, and 1996: 172-182.

<sup>152</sup> The issue of Jewish versus Russian affiliation will be raised in chapter 6.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Zweig-Strauss 2002: 48, Platzer 1988: footnote 20, and Farbstein 1954: 200.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Farbstein 1954: 197-199.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. "Liste der Teilnehmer am Ersten Zionistenkongress", 1937.

and a literature club (*Ibriah*) followed in 1905 and 1907, respectively. But the majority of associations and corporations with explicitly Jewish – and mostly national Jewish – character emerged between 1910 and 1914.<sup>156</sup> It is very likely that the organizations which were officially registered with the university authorities only represent the tip of the iceberg, and that many more clubs gathered informally.

Among the second type ranked political groups, above all. These organizations were not specifically student associations and often headed by older political emigrants, but they relied to a great extent on students living in the colonies.<sup>157</sup> For the first Russian colony of 1871-73, which counted about 300 students and ‘professional’ revolutionaries, political interest focused on the ideologies of Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Lavrov who resided in Zürich at the time. The colony was torn between those favoring Bakunin’s call to revolutionary activism and the adherents of Lavrov’s emphasis on education and propaganda. Jan Martinus Meijer called the Zürich colony the “breeding house of populism”;<sup>158</sup> former students from Zürich would join the ‘going to the people’ and – once back in Russia – would spread the ideas worked out in endless discussions among the colony youth. As has been pointed out in part I, an emerging secularized Jewish *intelligentsia* subscribed to the Russian populist movement. Among them was Pavel Borisovich Axelrod.

Pavel Axelrod nicely represents the transition from the first short-lived Russian colony in Zürich to the second period of Russian colony life between the late 1880s and the outbreak of war. He fled to Switzerland after the failure of the *Narodniks* in 1874 and can be considered pioneer of Russian social democracy as co-founder of the Marxist group *Emancipation of Labor* (1883). Axelrod settled in Zürich and was enrolled in philosophy and law, alternately, between WT 1882 and WT 1888. There, his new Marxist view would gain more and more ground among the Russian-Jewish students, in particular. Zhitlovsky in fact describes the political struggles in the Zürich colony of the late 1880s as a battle between the last remaining *Narodniks* and the emerging Russian social democracy.<sup>159</sup> Zhitlovsky himself, when he moved to Zürich in 1888, was immediately engaged in both the “social-revolutionary battle and the Jewish-national struggle for emancipation”<sup>160</sup> – he symbolizes the beginning of a more Jewish-dominated Russian colony in Zürich but also the shift in identification and struggle of Russian Jewry after the pogroms of 1881/82. Many more parties and emigrant committees must have joined the political struggle in the Zürich colony by and by; and as evidence on official student organizations suggests, the question of Jewish national identity played an ever greater role as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed. The founding of the *Bund* and the Zionist Movement were both reflected

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. list of organizations in the appendix.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Weill 2001: 90.

<sup>158</sup> Meijer 1955: 163.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Zhitlovsky 1935: 220.

<sup>160</sup> Zhitlovsky 1935: 221. Translation from Yiddish is my own. Weinberg (1996: 94) notes that Zhitlovsky was working for a „fledgling Jewish socialist organization that had begun to publish works on socialism in Yiddish“.

in Zürich before long; apart from the first Zionist student association *Hessiana* (1898), a local Bundist group (*Achdes*) existed at least since 1902.<sup>161</sup>

Otherwise, information on the political developments in the Zürich colony is scarce. Only individual biographies present clues. Rosa Luxemburg, member of the Marxist underground in Russian Poland, fled to Zürich in 1889. She studied at the Faculty of Philosophy as of WT 1889 and graduated with an excellent dissertation in the spring of 1897. It was during her sojourn in Zürich that Luxemburg developed her internationalist Marxist stance and co-founded the *Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland* (SDKP) with her fellow students Leo Jogiches and Julian Marchlewski. Luxemburg represents the socialist internationalist perspective on the problems of Russian Jewry which was still widespread among the Jewish youth at the time; the ‘Jewish question’ should be solved as part of the general struggle for emancipation of the working classes. An alternative socialist answer to the oppression of Jews in the Tsarist Empire was provided by the *Bund*. It emphasized the need for a separate Jewish labor movement and for Jewish cultural autonomy in Russia due to the specific problems of Jewish workers in the *Pale of Settlement*. With David Machlin, who was enrolled at the University of Zürich from WT 1904 until WT 1905/06, I could identify at least one individual who would become a central figure in the *Foreign Committee of the Bund* after leaving Zürich for Bern and Geneva. Chances are he was already active in the local Bundist group during his studies in Zürich, though we do not have proof of such involvement. Anyway, Zürich – like Bern, Geneva and Lausanne – was a central arena of Russian-Jewish political debates.<sup>162</sup>

Zürich was also home to a number of international conferences or events that were linked with the Russian-Jewish student colony in some way. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> congresses of the *Bund* gathered in Zürich in 1903 and 1905, respectively. The 1905 congress was in fact the decisive one with regard to the Jewish nationality question; it demanded national-cultural autonomy on extra-territorial basis for the Jewish people in Russia.<sup>163</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know much about location and participants at the two gatherings. According to Medem, “all the canons of conspiracy were observed in the most superlative fashion”,<sup>164</sup> and the awaited delegates did not know where the congress would take place. Even today I could not find any evidence of a Bundist convention in Zürich other than the information given by witnesses. Medem refers to about 20 men and some women who represented the Russian delegation and the *Foreign Committee*. He himself was one of the two guests representing the local circles in Switzerland.<sup>165</sup> Other meetings in Zürich were directly connected with the student colony. In March 1914, the congress of all Russian student organizations in German-speaking Europe took place

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<sup>161</sup> Mayoraz 2010: 32. Cf. also Denz 2009: 63.

<sup>162</sup> I refer the reader to a more detailed description of the struggle between Jewish internationalists, socialists, and Zionists in the Bern colony in chapter 4.2.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. „The Bund“ (Mendes-Flohr/ Reinharz 1980): 341.

<sup>164</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 278.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Medem 1923 (II): 18.

in Zürich, and the preparatory meeting of Russian-Jewish cultural societies might have happened in the same city in 1912.<sup>166</sup>

## 4 University of Bern.

### 4.1 Institutional History, Politics, and the Student Body.<sup>167</sup>

The Bernese academy established in 1805 was converted into a full-fledged university through a cantonal act of Parliament in March 1834. Lectures started out with 187 students – mainly citizens of Bern and other Swiss cantons, plus a handful of Germans – in the winter term of 1834/35. Like the University of Zürich, the Bernese institution could grow within its first decade but was strongly afflicted with the political turmoil of the 1840s; the clash between liberals and conservatives in government and among the university staff nearly ended in the shutdown of the school. Only in the 1850s was the existence of the reorganized university secured with a new law. The University of Bern included the usual four faculties of theology, law, medicine and philosophy (I and II), of which the medical one was soon to be the main attraction for students and only overtaken by philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A veterinary medical school existed as a separate institution and was incorporated into the university in 1900. Enrollment at the University of Bern, according to the *Hochschulgesetz* of 1834, was possible at the age of 18 and required a certificate of good conduct. Citizens of Bern needed to supply a diploma of a Gymnasium or corresponding preparatory training, whereas citizens of other cantons and foreigners could apply without. Generally, requirements were not always strictly enforced and proof of sufficient education was only asked for at the time of application for final exams.

Ever since its establishment, the institution counted on foreign students to fill the lecture halls; especially Germans were expected to enrol. Yet the ban on studies in Bern and Zürich on the part of German authorities until 1867 prevented the neighbours from the north to arrive in considerable numbers. Hence, the University of Bern, just like the one in Zürich, depended on attendance of Swiss citizens and counted less than 200 students per semester up to 1865. With the winter term of 1865/66, however, a reversal of trends set in and students continued to register in ever greater numbers until World War One. The medical faculty, in particular, benefitted from the increased interest of Swiss citizens and foreigners; as of 1865 even a couple of young men from the Tsarist Empire enrolled at the University of Bern. In the ST 1872, two young women from Russia travelled to Bern to inquire about the possibility of enrolling at the medical faculty and marked the beginning of an actual run on the Bernese institution on the part of Russian women. The Tsarist *Ukase* of May 1873 accelerated the process. Those who chose not to return to Russia transferred from the University of Zürich to the one

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<sup>166</sup> Cf. Weill 2001: 84.

<sup>167</sup> The information given in this chapter which is not based on my own research is taken from *Hochschulgeschichte Berns* 1984, Feller 1935, Marti 1932, and Lasche 1873. Figures on student enrollment can be checked with the official semester records published by the university (*Verzeichnis der Behörden, Lehrer, Anstalten und Studierenden*) as well as with the almost annual tables in the *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Statistik*.

in Bern, where they were accepted on delivery of paternal permission. In WT 1873/74, 26 women from the Tsarist Empire were enrolled in Bern, the vast majority of which chose the medical faculty. Officially, women were allowed as regular students in Bern as of 1874. Apart from the certificate of good conduct and the minimum age of 18, female students were asked to present permission of a legal representative or proof of legal autonomy – women were considered property of their husband or father if married or under age, respectively.<sup>168</sup>

The Bernese government attempted to establish stricter requirements for enrollment at the university in the early 1880s; but the academic senate did not want to extend the demand for a Gymnasium certificate or similar preparatory education to foreigners and females. The institution wanted to be a school of ‘the people’ – and more importantly, strict regulations might have entailed a decrease in interest on the part of foreign and female students whom the institution depended on. Instead of enforcing stricter requirements for enrolment, the University of Bern thus tightened admission to doctoral examinations according to the principle “weites Eingangstor und schmale Ausgangspforte”.<sup>169</sup> This dogma was only abandoned in 1901. Continuous growth of the number of foreigners at the faculties of medicine and philosophy had led the academic authorities to ponder over the question whether the influx of ‘Russians’, in particular, presented a problem of space and a threat to the quality of instruction. Indeed, while the number of foreigners at the University of Bern had been much more moderate than in Zürich until the turn of the century, trends clearly reversed after. Moreover, “ausländischer Student hiess in Bern primär Russe bzw. Russin”.<sup>170</sup> Bern continuously received a much greater number of students from the Russian Empire as of 1873, both in absolute numbers and compared to its total student body. Germans, who appeared in large quantities at the University of Zürich and other institutions in Switzerland, never reached even a fifth of the Russians in Bern.<sup>171</sup>

In 1901, new regulations were passed. Albert Gobat, superintendent of public instruction in the canton of Bern from 1882 until 1906, has entered history books as friend and supporter of Russians; he did not like the abandoning of Bern’s open-gates-policy but had to comply. Too persistent was the popular allegation that foreign students, particularly those from Tsarist Russia, would push back Swiss students and lower the level of teaching. Such charges might not have been totally unfounded, but the complaint about an allegedly unsatisfactory educational level of ‘Russians’ was probably inflated. There were quite a few students from the Tsarist Empire, especially Russian Jews, among the students who received the annual academic prize awarded for extraordinary papers from the early 1880s onwards.<sup>172</sup> In any case, the 1901 guidelines required proof of adequate preparatory education of all students to be enrolled; foreigners needed to supply proof of education

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. regulations on enrolment 24.09.1880, in StABE BB IIIb 196-200.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. regulations on granting of the doctoral degree 23.12.1898, in StABE BB IIIb 196-200, and *Hochschulgeschichte Berns* 1984: 408.

<sup>170</sup> *Hochschulgeschichte Berns* 1984: 81.

<sup>171</sup> See table with enrollment figures in the appendix.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. annual documentation of “Akademische Preisaufgaben”, StABE BB IIIb 196-200.

sufficient for the faculty they enrolled in. Students who did not possess satisfactory documents were asked to pass an exam designed by the rector's office. But student numbers did not decrease – on the contrary.<sup>173</sup> The conquest of the University of Bern by male and female 'Russians' beginning around the turn from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not come to an end; by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Bernese institution had become the largest one in Switzerland with respect to student numbers. The climax was reached in the winter term of 1907/08 with 1712 students enrolled and over 700 'Russians'. In fact, from WT 1903/04 until WT 1907/08, foreigners outnumbered Swiss citizens, and about 80% of the first were from the Russian Empire. The medical faculty was frequented by a majority of 'Russian' women throughout the decade – in WT 1904/05, 407 out of 594 students of medicine were female, and 399 of the 407 women came from the Tsarist Empire.

The new regulations of 1901 did not lead to a decrease in numbers of 'Russians'. In 1903, a Member of Parliament motioned to restrict the access of foreign students to the overcrowded clinics. The Faculty of Medicine rejected such weakening of the freedom of learning but instead announced to confer with the other medical faculties in Switzerland in order to establish guidelines for the enrolment of foreigners.<sup>174</sup> Before the medical faculty in Bern could put its plan into action, the rector's office had set out more specific guidelines for Russian candidates in 1905, specifying rules for each and every possible certificate from Russian schools. In 1908, the University of Bern installed new provisions for admission which essentially equalled those that were shortly after agreed on at the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the *Schweizerische Rektorenkonferenz* in Bern.<sup>175</sup> The stricter requirements seemed to meet with success at least momentarily; numbers of foreign students declined from 882 to only 483 between WT 1907/08 and ST 1911. The faculty of medicine, according to their own perception, was affected by a dramatic decrease of student numbers owing to the partial opening of Russian universities to women. As in the case of Zürich, it remains disputable whether the tightened regulations of 1908 were to blame for the decrease in numbers.

A new run on the part of 'Russian' – mostly Jewish – men on the Bernese medical faculty began in 1912. In ST 1914, the last semester before the outbreak of war, students of medicine from Imperial Russia again numbered more than 400. An exchange of letters between the Bern department of education and the deanship of the medical faculty from 1913 to 1914 discusses the meaning of this new invasion of Russian students and attributes their coming to the measures against students from the Tsarist Empire adopted at German universities. After careful deliberation, an upper limit for new enrollments of foreign students per semester and country of origin was agreed upon. For ST 1914, the maximum should be 60, and a limit of 30 was determined for WT 1914/15.<sup>176</sup> The Bernese *Numerus Clausus*, like the one in Zürich, was formally applied to all foreigners but really directed against the

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<sup>173</sup> Cf. regulations on enrolment 12.01.1901 and regulations on entrance examinations 26.06.1901, in StABE BB IIIb 196-200, *Hochschulgeschichte Berns* 1984: 412-413, and Feller 1935: 443-445.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. speech of A. Gobat of June 1904, in StABE BB IIIb 196-200.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. chapter 3.1.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. exchange of letters between the Bern Department of Education, the Medical Faculty and the rector's office in StABE BB IIIb 495.

Russians. The outbreak of war made any further measure futile, however; most foreign students left Switzerland immediately. In the enrolment catalog of WT 1914/15, the number of ‘Russians’ reached new records, but about 80% of them – and many Swiss males, too – are in fact listed as “beurlaubt”. And presumably, others had left straightaway without notice of departure or official deregistration from university. In any case, numbers of students from Tsarist Russia had drastically decreased by ST 1915 so that we can take the outbreak of war as the end of the ‘Russian’ invasion at Swiss establishments of higher learning. The *Numerus Clausus* was nullified by the medical faculty in September 1914. The Russians, of whom the vast majority were Russian Jews, did not return; the revolution back home had finally opened all gates for them.

## 4.2 The Russian-Jewish Students.

### *Number of Students over Time*

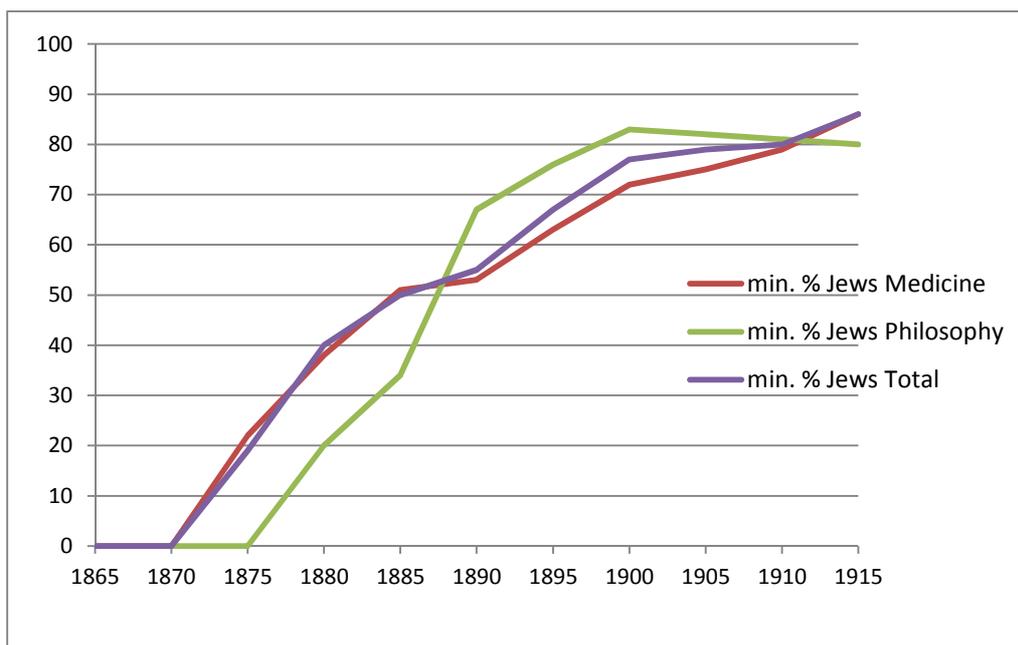
The University of Bern received its first students from the Tsarist Empire in the mid-1860s, as did Zürich, but numbers here were much more modest. Between 1865 and 1872, the maximum per semester was five ‘Russian’ students of medicine; no Jews and no women among them. Both fringe groups only appeared at the Bernese Faculty of Medicine in WT 1873 in connection with the Tsarist *Ukase*. As of 1873, indeed, the subjects of the Tsar were by far the largest group of foreigners in Bern, and their numbers constantly grew. By 1891, the total of ‘Russians’ first passed a hundred, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, numbers of students from Russia exceeded those at the University of Zürich by far. The absolute maximum was reached in 1907/08 with over 700 students from the Tsarist Empire, 60% of which were women. Afterwards, numbers dropped markedly owing to developments elaborated earlier, but again surged in 1913/14.

As early as the 1870s, the percentage of Jews among these ‘Russians’ amounted to 40% in medicine and 20% in philosophy. And their share increased over the years, from about 50% (of c. 50 students from Russia) in the first half of the 1880s to over 65% (of c. 90 to 100) in the first years of the 1890s up to 80% in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the last four years before the outbreak of war, Jewish students accounted for at least 86% of about 300 to 450 ‘Russians’ enrolled in Bern! The number of Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire was always higher in Bern than in Zürich – except for the years before 1873, when Bern hardly received any ‘Russians’ and definitely no Jews. At the Faculty of Medicine, the proportion of Jews among all students from Tsarist Russia was in fact similar in Bern and Zürich; it rose from about 50% at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to more than 85% just before the First World War. Among the few students who chose to study law, too, numbers of Jews were equally high (c. 70%) at both institutions. It is the Faculty of Philosophy that makes the difference in the overall percentage of Jews between Bern and Zürich. While in Zürich, Jewish students equalled about 65% of all ‘Russian’ students in philosophy (I and II) at most, they were much more numerous in Bern since the late 1880s. Their percentage rose from nearly 70% at that time to over 80% throughout the years of

the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is quite remarkable that the percentage of Jews among ‘Russians’ in Bern, with the exception of the years 1910 to 1914, is much higher in philosophy than in medicine.

Among ‘Russian’ men, the proportion of those with Jewish background was generally a bit higher than among ‘Russian’ women. Because of the prohibition of university education for women in the Tsarist Empire, as has been explained, ethnic Russian females were forced to emigrate in order to get an academic degree but ethnic Russian men were not. But the University of Bern also received relatively fewer Armenians, Poles and Russian-Germans than Zürich, for reasons I cannot reconstruct, and Jews thus featured even more prominently among the male student body from the Tsarist Empire. The high percentage of Jews among ‘Russian’ males is especially visible at the Faculty of Law, where hardly any women were enrolled. The stake of women among Russian-Jewish students in Bern was comparable to that in Zürich; it was always higher in medicine than in philosophy and also dropped markedly in the years before the First World War.

The following graph illustrates the dramatic increase in the proportion of Jews among all students from Tsarist Russia enrolled at the University of Bern between 1865 and (theoretically) 1914/15.



2: Minimum Percentage of Jews among ‘Russians’ at the University of Bern over Time.

### ***Faculties***

Until the mid-1880s, Russian-Jewish students clearly favored the Faculty of Medicine. ‘Russians’ in general hardly showed an interest in the philosophical subjects, and Jews even less so. Medicine remained number one at all times, and the number of Jews relative to all ‘Russians’ enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine continuously rose. In the mid-1880s the proportion of Jews passed 50%, and it

approached 70% before 1900. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jews always made up at least three quarters of the students from Russia in medicine and up to over 85% before the outbreak of war. Russian-Jewish women, in particular, principally chose the medical faculty – as did female students from the Tsarist Empire, overall. Only after 1908 did numbers of females from Tsarist Russia at the Bern medical faculty decrease and did numbers of Russian-Jewish males upsurge, both in absolute terms and relative to the ‘Russian’ student body. The reasons for Russian Jews, in general, and women, in particular, to favor medicine over other subjects have been elaborated in the chapter on the University of Zürich.

But much more so than at the University of Zürich, Russian-Jewish students in Bern also showed considerable interest in the Faculty of Philosophy (I and II). In the mid-1880s, the number of Russian Jews studying philosophical subjects rose markedly, and until 1908, in fact, the percentage of Jews among ‘Russians’ was much higher at the philosophical faculty than at the medical one. It increased from close to 70% in the late 1880s (when the overall proportion of Jews equalled only about 55%), peaked at nearly 85% (= 40 to 50 individuals) before the turn of the century and levelled off around 80% until 1914. In terms of absolute numbers, the medical faculty always outperformed philosophy. In the last five years before World War One, the philosophical subjects noticeably lost attraction. But for the whole decade of the 1890s, numbers of Russian-Jewish students at the Faculty of Philosophy practically equalled those at the Faculty of Medicine. I cannot definitely account for the reasons why the interest of Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire in philosophy was much more pronounced in Bern than in Zürich. But a crucial factor seems to have been Professor Ludwig Stein (1859-1930), who was born into a Jewish family in Hungary and first functioned as liberal rabbi in Berlin, then came to Switzerland and founded the *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*. Stein was professor of philosophy at the University of Bern from 1891-1909, and his main areas of interest were political philosophy and systematic philosophy and sociology.<sup>177</sup> Apart from Stein’s lectures, Russian-Jewish students at the Faculty of Philosophy seemed to have been primarily interested in natural sciences. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the two sections of the faculty were listed separately in the enrolment catalogs, and Jewish students were more often found in the second – though the preference for the natural sciences was not as obvious as in Zürich. Philosophy I and II both remained rather male domains among Russian Jews; in ST 1891, for instance, there was only one woman among the 15 ‘Russian’ – and 12 Russian-Jewish – students enrolled. Over time, the philosophical faculty attracted more females, but Jewish women always preferred medicine quite clearly. Among Russian-Jewish males, the Faculty of Medicine only became the odds-on favorite in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and quite visibly so in the five years before the war.

In absolute numbers, the Jewish students from Russia enrolled at the Bern Faculty of Law are negligible. The interest apparently grew larger in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but we are still speaking about a

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<sup>177</sup> Cf. “Stein, Ludwig”, HLS [24.10.2011] and the biography of Ludwig Stein at <http://www.ludwigstein.org/biografia.asp> [24.10.2011].

tenth of the figures reached at the Faculty of Medicine. However, the Faculty of Law is interesting for reasons which have been elaborated for the University of Zürich, already. Among the law students in Bern indicating the Russian Empire as their place of origin, about 90% were Jewish from the 1870s up to World War One. And they remained predominantly male.

### *Duration of Studies*

With regard to the duration of students' stay at the University of Bern, all kinds of patterns can be found at both the medical and philosophical faculties. Some students appear to have pursued their whole academic education here, since they were enrolled for three years or more. Others – and this was the majority – can be found in the enrollment catalogs for a period between two and four semesters. Then there were those who appeared for only one or two semesters. Chaim Zhitlovksy, for example, was enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy for two semesters (WT 1892/93 and ST 1893) and then disappears from the catalogs, even though he stayed in Bern until 1903.<sup>178</sup> In his case, this has to do with the fact that he did not come to Bern specifically for the purpose of studying but rather for political reasons. As Claudie Weill rightly stresses, “la brièveté de l’inscription ne coïncide d’ailleurs pas nécessairement avec celle du séjour”.<sup>179</sup> Students might have abandoned studies or interrupted them for various reasons and still stayed in town. This was the case especially for those students who had left the Tsarist Empire with the intention to actively get involved with the revolutionary émigré community in Switzerland, or for those who had emigrated in order to escape persecution. For these students, enrolment at a university was probably a welcome side-effect of emigration rather than the main reason for residing in Switzerland.

Gina Medem<sup>180</sup> came to Bern in order to take courses at the Philosophical Faculty for one year; her reminiscences make clear that she did not plan to obtain a degree, and she was definitely not enrolled as a regular student, since the Bern catalogs do not mention her. Gina presumably just attended lectures and seminars as auditor and took the year in Bern as an opportunity to learn and breathe the air of freedom and political activism. But she, too, stayed in Switzerland longer and in fact took up studies again in Geneva around 1910.<sup>181</sup> Sometimes students are listed for two semesters, then do not appear in the catalog for one or two semesters, but are listed again later. This is probably owing to the fact that they did not actually attend lectures; the catalog explicitly states:

In das Verzeichnis sind nur diejenigen immatrikulirten Studirenden aufgenommen worden, welche für dieses Semester wirklich Vorlesungen belegt haben.<sup>182</sup>

Anna Polikier-Ledermann, for example, was listed in the catalog from summer 1886 until winter 1889/1890 as student at the philosophical faculty, and then again for one semester in winter 1892/93.

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<sup>178</sup> Cf. Weinberg 1996: 94.

<sup>179</sup> Weill 1996: 118.

<sup>180</sup> At the time, her name was Birenzweig. Gina married Vladimir Medem sometime between 1905 and 1909.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. G. Medem 1950: 130-133.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. *Verzeichnis der Behörden, Lehrer, Anstalten und Studirenden der Universität Bern*, note at the beginning of each year's student lists.

Her date of enrolment was always indicated as ST 1886. In WT 1896/97, suddenly, a certain Dr. Anna Polikier (now with academic title) was enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine. She was included in the catalog until ST 1897.

A handful of Russian Jews came to Bern with an academic degree (doctor's title) already, but most did not have a long university career behind them when they enrolled in Bern. Still, the majority of Russian-Jewish students seem to have transferred from other institutions or left the University of Bern for another university after some semesters. Based on the information on previous education which is given in the online databases on student enrolment of the universities of Bern<sup>183</sup> and Zürich, we can maintain that inter-university movement was the rule rather than the exception. Movement between Bern and Zürich, in particular, was quite common, as will be elaborated in chapter 5.2; but many students also came from Russian or German establishments, or left for those. The frequent change of institution may explain the average of only few semesters at one institution.

### ***Regional and Social Background***

The exact regional background of students is not always discernible. Sometimes, the catalog only states "Russia" or "Poland", sometimes it indicates a provincial area such as Bessarabia; but in the majority of cases, the exact place of origin is given. Among the places that appear most often are Kishinev, Lodz, Odessa, and Zhitomir. But generally, students arrived from all over the *Pale of Settlement*; from the provinces of Bessarabia, Kherson, Kiev, Kovno, Kurland, Livland, Minsk, Mogilev, Podolia, Poltava, Vilna and Volhynia, as well as from the Kingdom of Poland. More often than expected, Moscow or St. Petersburg appear as place of origin of a definitely Jewish student – these are either the few 'lucky ones' who were allowed to live outside the Pale for reasons of their parents' business or prominence, or they had managed to get one of the quota places at universities there and put their last place of residence as hometown. Very rarely, a Jewish student even indicated as place of origin a town like Irkutsk in the Asian part of Russia.

The social background, as has been explained before, is very difficult to assess for lack of data on parents' professions. Literature and newspaper articles representing the Swiss perspective always draw the picture of very poor, hungry faces, of poorly dressed girls who would share a meal because they could not afford more;<sup>184</sup> but this impression of dire poverty might as well stem from the difference in living standards between Tsarist Russia and Switzerland and thus needs verification. Chaim Weizmann's portrayal of Russian-Jewish students abroad as children of solid middle and lower-middle-class parents has been quoted. For Bern, we can also rely on accounts of Russian Jews who had resided in the colony. Gina Medem, who took up residence in Bern in 1904/05, does not explicitly speak about the social background of her fellow students; yet we learn that she herself earned a living in Bern by teaching at a Jewish girls' school because she knew that her parents could

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<sup>183</sup> Cf. Datenbank der Studierenden 1834-1914, [http://apps.uniarchiv.unibe.ch/index.php?syst=stud\\_1834\\_1914](http://apps.uniarchiv.unibe.ch/index.php?syst=stud_1834_1914).

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Gagliardi 1938: 757, and Feller 1935: 442, for example.

not afford to pay for her studies.<sup>185</sup> Vladimir Medem confirms the view that the Jewish girls who crowded the Bern colony after the turn of the century “were, as a rule, the daughters of poor parents who would send them a few dozen rubles a month”.<sup>186</sup> Of the Jewish men in Bern, according to him, many came from religious background and had studied at a *Yeshiva* before they plunged into the joys of secular knowledge. Traditional, observant families in Russia were often not very prosperous. The observation that the bulk of Russian-Jewish students in Bern, male and female, had grown up in rather humble conditions, in families steeped in Jewish tradition, and that for many a young man or woman secular studies meant a rebellion against their parents, would match Weizmann’s account and is also backed by an article from 1904 written by a Russian-Jewish student and published in the *Berner Tagblatt*.<sup>187</sup>

In many cases, siblings followed each other to Switzerland; like the sisters Scheina and Chana Ratner of Poltava, who enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in WT 1903 and 1904, respectively, many brothers and sisters joined a sibling a semester or two later. Some also came together. Liuba and Ida Axelrod together represented the social democratic faction in the Bern colony, whereby the first was the more activist one and Ida, the younger sister, occupied herself with writing.<sup>188</sup>

### ***Residence***

The Russian-Jewish students in Bern settled exclusively in the city’s central areas. Three major zones could be identified where the students found a temporary home; the historic city center circled by the river *Aare*, the surroundings of the university and today’s train station, and the quarters of *Mattenhof* and *Montbijou* south of university and old town.<sup>189</sup> These residence patterns persisted throughout the decades from the 1870s to 1914. Presumably, it was the proximity to the university as well as the availability of cheap housing that determined the domicile in these areas. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some students moved a bit further outward, but instances remain rare and they are probably simply owing to the fact that space was limited in the inner city when the number of ‘Russians’ grew. Many addresses were found more than once per semester, which suggests that students lived in larger households or pensions where they rented just one room or even shared one. Unlike in Zürich, enrolment catalogs of the University of Bern do not specify landlords or -ladies, but on the grounds of identical addresses and the fact that flats were not easily rented to youngsters in Switzerland, we can assume that Russian-Jewish students also lived in boarding houses rather than in their own apartments. Only in the case of married couples registered at the same address is the latter more probable. In Bern, I could identify a couple of Russian-Jewish students who lived in a hotel or pension, but they generally did so only for their first semester in town.

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<sup>185</sup> Cf. G. Medem 1950: 130.

<sup>186</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 217.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. “Die russische Studentin”, *Berner Tagblatt* of May 9, 1904.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 283.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. also Medem 1923: 277-278.

What is rather striking if not conspicuous is that most students from Russia (Jewish and non-Jewish) moved around quite a lot – most of them changed dwelling every semester. This, too, was not restricted to specific years or periods but occurred throughout the decades. The reason for such behavior remains obscure. My first hypothesis for the frequent change of address in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that students feared the Russian secret police might find out about their whereabouts. Many young men and women abroad, in the 1860s and 1870s, were involved in the struggle of the Russian populist and opposition movement. And because the colonies at the time were still very small, surveillance would have been a rather easy matter for the Tsarist authorities. That Rosa Luxemburg, for instance, changed dwelling every semester might not surprise the reader. But then I realized patterns did not change over time; even in the 1910s, hardly any student from Russia lived at the same address for more than one or two semesters. At that time, the colonies were big enough for students to feel more secure in the crowd, and the many different emerging political circles would have overstrained the police. In the end, the continuous change of address might be simply owing to the circumstance that most student migrants spent the long summer break back home in Russia and rented furnished rooms per semester. But it might also have to do with the fact that the students – according to records – used their rooms as meeting places for discussion groups, and that the respective owners did not approve of nocturnal gatherings and the smoke of cigarettes.<sup>190</sup> Vladimir Medem hints at such disapprobation on the part of landlords or landladies:

At night, when everyone else wanted to sleep, the “colonists” would be strolling about in the streets, talking and shouting and singing and whistling beneath the windows of respectable people, and so forth and so on. Endless unremitting complaints. Hence the hostility towards us, and the ever more frequent appearance of the familiar inscription on the doors of houses with rooms for rent: “No Russians!” Or a different version: “No Slavs!”<sup>191</sup>

But all of this remains speculation; neither memoirs nor secondary literature comment on the conspicuous moving patterns.

### *Colony Life*

The Russian-Jewish colony of Bern featured the same infrastructure as all other colonies in the university towns of Central and Western Europe. As in Zürich, the Russian eating center, the reading hall and a mutual aid society constituted the heart of the colony throughout the years<sup>192</sup>; but students would spend the whole day together, anyway. Medem describes the daily grind of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as that of a small *shtetl* of only young people:

Colony life was a source of considerable gratification to me precisely because of the feeling of intimacy and mutual affection [...]. One was forever in the presence of the group, forever in the company of close friends. At noon it was the Russian eating center; in the afternoon there was a quick visit to someone for a glass of tea and a bit of chocolate. The evening was the time for a meeting, a *referat* (lecture), a discussion. *Referatn* were scheduled with great frequency; and when such lectures took place it was simply impossible to remain at home.

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<sup>190</sup> Cf. Rogger/ Bankowski 2010: 42-43.

<sup>191</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 218.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Feller 1935: 442, and Charney 1935: 221.

Thus, one would partake of the lecture and the ensuing discussion, and stay on after the discussion for another hour of song and the enjoyment of good fellowship.<sup>193</sup>

Charney confirms that the students in Bern – except those in medicine, who never had time for social life according to him – would spend the whole semester waiting for and attending lectures in the reading hall.<sup>194</sup> Jewish students would also frequent theater shows and concerts.<sup>195</sup>

According to witnesses, Russian-Jewish life was much more astir in Bern than in Zürich at least since the early 1890s.<sup>196</sup> The ‘era of Zhitlovsky’ (1891-1903) must have had a particularly strong impact on the Bern colony.<sup>197</sup> Chaim Zhitlovsky had first spent three years in Zürich and moved to Bern in 1891, where he also enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy (WT 1892/93-ST 1893). In Bern, Zhitlovsky was the uncontested leader of the *Socialist Revolutionary Party* (SR), a populist-socialist agrarian movement, and his mission apparently was to fight the Marxist program of Axelrod.<sup>198</sup> But he also continued his struggle for Jewish national emancipation and his research into Jewish history which he had taken on in Russia, already, and carried with him to Berlin and Zürich:

In 1892, he and a group of local Hibbat Zion students in the Swiss capital founded the Yiddish-speaking Farayn far vissenschaft un lebn dem yidishn folks (Association for the Study and Life of the Jewish People), an informal study group that served largely as a forum for various Jewish socialist and nationalist émigré thinkers.<sup>199</sup>

Zhitlovsky was “both a revolutionary and a Jewish nationalist”.<sup>200</sup> His synthesis of Jewish nationalism and revolutionary socialism became very popular among the Russian-Jewish students in Bern. Several years before a specifically Jewish socialism would find its expression in the founding of the *Bund*, at a time when Russian mainstream socialism was strictly assimilationist and regarded any manifestation of Jewish identity with suspicion, Zhitlovsky offered a “significant alternative to Palestinophilism [and a way for] Jewish activists [to maintain] their allegiance to the Russian socialist movement”.<sup>201</sup>

Not only Zhitlovsky appreciated the student colonies abroad as stage for political contention; almost every party which was forbidden in Russia had their central offices in Switzerland, and most were concentrated in Bern and Geneva. Apart from Zhitlovsky’s SRs, there was the *Russian Social Democratic Party* (RSDRP; later *Mensheviks* and *Bolsheviks*) with which the *Bund* broke over the national question, the *Polish Socialist Party* (PPS), plus a number of specifically Jewish movements such as the aforementioned *Bund*, the general Zionists, *Poale-Zion*, *Mizrachi* (the Orthodox Zionists), and finally the *Zionist Socialist Workers’ Party* (SS) and the *Sejmists* (or SERP, Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party), both founded after the 1905 revolution.<sup>202</sup> Even the so-called ‘language battle’ between adherents of Yiddish and proponents of Hebrew was reflected in the Bern colony; Charney

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<sup>193</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 219. Italics by Portnoy.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 221.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Feller 1935: 442.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Farbstein 1954: 198, and Weizmann 1949: 69.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 221, and Farbstein 1954: 198-199.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Weinberg 1996: 94-96, and Medem 1923: 282.

<sup>199</sup> Weinberg 1996: 94. For the *Hibbat Zion* movement see the glossary.

<sup>200</sup> Weizmann 1949: 70.

<sup>201</sup> Weinberg 1996: 95.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. G. Medem 1950: 130-133, Weizmann 1949: 69, Charney 1935: 218-221, and Medem 1923: 281-300.

describes how he became part of the large ‘Yiddish cultural family’ thanks to his brother Shmuel Niger, an emerging Yiddish writer whose home became central meeting place for all Yiddish authors residing in Switzerland.<sup>203</sup>

Bern is generally described as a center of Russian and Russian-Jewish socialists and revolutionaries. When Chaim Weizmann got to know the Bern colony in 1898, according to his own perspective, he entered a world dominated by Marxist revolutionaries who denied any Jewish national sentiment:

They stamped as unworthy, as intellectually backward, as chauvinistic and immoral, the desire of any Jew to occupy himself with the sufferings and destiny of Jewry. A man like Chaim Zhitlovsky [...] was looked upon with extreme suspicion. And when the Bund was created – the Jewish branch of the revolutionary movement, national as well as revolutionary in character – Plekhanov sneered that a Bundist was a Zionist who was afraid of sea-sickness. Thus the mass of Russian-Jewish students in Switzerland had been bullied into an artificial denial of their own personality [...].<sup>204</sup>

Weizmann had grown up in a proto-Zionist environment in Russian-Poland and had been an active member of the *Russisch-jüdischer wissenschaftlicher Verein* in Berlin – the first expressly national Jewish student organization in the West which associated with early expressions of Russian Zionism. He certainly saw Bern and its colony through particular glasses and probably ignored that the *Bund* was very popular precisely because it stressed its Jewish character *and* engaged in the socialist-revolutionary struggle for the general Russian cause. Vladimir Medem, himself a major proponent of the *Bund*’s emphasis on cultural autonomy for the Jewish nation, insists that when he arrived in Bern in 1901, the city had become “a true fortress of the Bund”.<sup>205</sup> The effort of the newly established *Bund* to raise awareness for its blend of national and socialist principles among the Russian-Jewish students abroad might have met with considerable success in Bern during the three years between Weizmann’s arrival and Medem’s appearance. But Weizmann did not really acknowledge the Bund as a national Jewish party, anyway.

According to Medem, the Zionists “constituted a separate colony [and] operated their own cooking and eating facility”.<sup>206</sup> Weizmann recalls how the first attempt on the part of a group of Zionists to establish their own organization in the Bern colony produced a veritable scandal. The meeting was held standing because the opponents had removed the furniture. But the real shock to the socialists followed later:

The colony was in a turmoil [...]. We called a mass meeting of the Jewish student body for the purpose of increasing our membership. [...] if the founding of *Ha-Schachar* was a scandal, this step was a revolution. The other side mobilized all its forces; we, for our part, invited down from Berlin two gifted young Zionist speakers, Berthold Feivel and Martin Buber. The meeting, which was held in a Bierhalle, expanded into a sort of congress, and lasted three nights and two days! [...] the resolution was put to a vote, and we scored a tremendous triumph. A hundred and eighty students enrolled in the Zionist society – a

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 119, 221, 224-226.

<sup>204</sup> Weizmann 1949: 70.

<sup>205</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 223.

<sup>206</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 222.

striking revelation of the true inclinations and convictions of a large part of the Jewish student body.<sup>207</sup>

Medem, in his reflection of the same event (which he says took place right after the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Bund* in 1902), assures that the “majority of the colony, of course, was on our [the Bund’s] side”.<sup>208</sup>

Despite such fierce arguments over the right answer to the ‘Jewish question’, however, residents in the colony maintained friendly relations across all political differences. Medem declares that he “personally had close friends among them [the Zionists]”,<sup>209</sup> that he was on good terms with Weizmann, and that he counted many (female) Zionist students among his closest friends.<sup>210</sup> Gina Medem remembers how S. Ansky, a member of the SRs, was a very popular figure in the Bern colony also with students who did not agree with his political stance;<sup>211</sup> and according to Charney, even active Zionists loved his Yiddishist brother’s writing.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, when a Zionist congress took place in Basel, many Russian-Jewish students residing in Switzerland attended no matter their political conviction – even anti-Zionists could not elude the universal excitement.<sup>213</sup> Medem, the theoretician of the *Bund*, enjoyed being an observer to the 6<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress; the meeting “proved exceedingly interesting, full of drama and suspense”,<sup>214</sup> he recalls, because the announcement of the Uganda Project created great turmoil.

Conflicts certainly arose not only between internationalist socialists, those propagating Jewish autonomy in a multi-national Russia, and the Zionists; in Bern one can also observe a quite mischievous skirmish among Zionist fractions. The right-wing Zionist fraternity *Kadimah*, especially its member Samuel Max Melamed, offended the *Academic Zionist Association* (AZA) and other Jewish-national groups with the publication of a nasty article on female Russian-Jewish students in the *Berner Tagblatt* of May 9, 1904. Only a few days later, an assembly of all Zionist students in Bern (excluding *Kadimah*) vehemently repudiated Melamed’s words. Thereupon, Melamed collectively denounced all local Zionist groups as slander of Zionism.<sup>215</sup> He particularly disliked the so-called ‘Democratic Fraction’ headed by Chaim Weizmann which was strongly rooted in the Bern colony and of which the AZA seems to have been the organizational expression. Weizmann and the ‘Democratic Fraction’ campaigned for a more activist, pugnacious position against the bourgeois and orthodox leaders of the Zionist movement.<sup>216</sup> But notwithstanding such revolutionary views of the Zionist youth, Nahman Syrkin had obviously gone too far with his criticism of the Zionist leaders – he

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<sup>207</sup> Weizmann 1949: 71.

<sup>208</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 262.

<sup>209</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 262.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 283-284.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. G. Medem 1950: 131.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 224-226. Note that at the time, supporting Yiddish culture was mainly a socialist, anti-Zionist position. Zionists were generally fierce proponents of a Hebrew revival.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 221-224.

<sup>214</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 294.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. various articles and short notes in the *Berner Tagblatt* of May 9 and May 18, 1904.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Weizmann’s address to Zionist students in Munich, in: *Reden* 1937: 2-15.

anticipated his formal exclusion from the AZA in 1899 and left the organization together with five other Bern students.<sup>217</sup> Syrkin seems to have left Bern after that incidence; he had been enrolled at the University of Zürich in 1897/98 and studied medicine in Bern from ST 1898 until ST 1899. His wife Bassja remained enrolled in WT 1899/1900 but also disappeared from records afterwards.

There were certainly many more Russian-Jewish organizations and informal circles in Bern, but the only other student associations of Russian Jews I could identify were a Russian reading club *Saltykow* (est. 1889) and a Jewish student club called *Ibriah* (est. 1911).<sup>218</sup> Most political groups and gatherings of Jewish students from Tsarist Russia, unfortunately, remained secret.<sup>219</sup> But as indicated, we know that students from Bern regularly attended the Zionist congresses held in Basel. Three (former) students of the University of Bern indeed were registered participants at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897.<sup>220</sup> And like Zürich and other Swiss cities, Bern itself hosted many conferences related to the activities of Russian-Jewish students in the West. At the beginning of 1902, Bundist circles from various colonies met in Bern in order to establish a unified organization and central office of all *Bund* groups abroad. From this meeting eventually emerged the *Foreign Committee of the Bund*.<sup>221</sup> Students at the University of Bern had also made an attempt to invite all Zionist students residing in Central and Western Europe to a congress in 1898, but the project failed. In May 1914, though, a conference of Russian student organizations in Central and Western Europe took place in Bern.<sup>222</sup>

## **5 Patterns and Observations apropos Bern and Zürich.**

### *Similarities and Differences*

Migration of Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire to the universities of Bern and Zürich generally took a similar course. At both institutions, Jews were represented in disproportionately high numbers among the ‘Russian’ student body as soon as this student migration began in significant numbers. At the University of Zürich, about 25% of the ‘Russian’ pioneers in the second half of the 1860s were of Jewish origin, and their share equalled about 40% of ‘Russian’ medical students at the time of the first Russian colony in 1872/73. In Bern, the arrival of students from Russia began slowly in the 1870s and numbers continually grew – as did the proportion of Jews. Both in Bern and Zürich, the real influx of Jewish students took off in the late 1890s. The medical faculties were the main target at both universities, and second came the natural sciences. As the twentieth century progressed, more and

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<sup>217</sup> Cf. *Die Welt*, No. 3, 1899, p.11. After the 1905 revolution, Syrkin founded his own party, the *Zionist Socialist Workers’ Party*, which was actually territorialist rather than Zionist in its outlook. It stood for an autonomous Jewish territory anywhere in the world, not necessarily in Palestine. See the glossary for Syrkin’s biography.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. list of organizations in the appendix.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 285, and Feller 1935: 442.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. „Liste der Teilnehmer am Ersten Zionistenkongress in Basel“, 1937.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 306.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Weill 2001: 84.

more Jewish students enrolled in Bern and Zürich; when ethnic Russian women gained access to university education in Russia and their share among the ‘Russian’ student body in Switzerland decreased significantly, the proportion of Jewish students surged at the Faculties of Medicine, in particular. In the last few semesters before the outbreak of war, Jews accounted for roughly 85% of all ‘Russians’ enrolled in medicine at both the University of Bern and that of Zürich! The percentage of women among Russian-Jewish students oscillated between 50% and 70% at both universities but dropped markedly after 1910 – while the first peak in 1907/08 still rested upon a large number of women, they amounted to only 15% during the second highpoint of 1913/14.

The majority of Russian-Jewish students in Switzerland did not complete their whole academic education at the same university. Some arrived with an *Exmatrikel* from a German or Russian institution, already, others moved in between Bern and Zürich, and a third group started off their ‘careers’ in Switzerland and went on to study in Germany. The average duration spent at both universities lay between two and four semesters. A representative example for path, residence patterns and average duration of studies of Jewish students from Russia in Switzerland is a student of medicine called Moses Aronsohn. He was born in Mogilev (Belorussia) in 1854. In WT 1879/80, Moses was enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in Bern but left after one semester. He then appeared at the University of Zürich, where he studied medicine from ST 1880 until WT 1882/83. In March 1883, he left Zürich with a doctor’s degree – that is, he had graduated with dissertation. Most Russian-Jewish students did in fact leave with a simple diploma or attestation. With regard to housing patterns, however, Moses’ case can again be used as standard; during his six semesters in Zürich, Moses Aronsohn lived at four different places. In ST 1880, he was registered with a certain Mr. Fluck in Oberstrass, from WT 1880 until ST 1881, he lived with Ms. Rubli – together with another Russian-Jewish student – , in WT 1881 he stayed in Fluntern at Dr. Ausderau’s, and in his last year, finally, his home was with a Mr. Rüttimann in Hottingen.

The highpoints of student migration from Russia to the universities of Bern and Zürich were triggered by specific developments that affected both institutions to a similar degree. Women first came to Zürich because they were denied access to university education back home. The emergence of the first real colony of 1872/73 in Zürich, then again, was a direct consequence of the radicalization of the student youth in Russia and the repressive answer on the part of the Tsarist authorities. Bern basically took over the remaining female ‘Russians’ when the *Ukase* of 1873 pushed students away from Zürich. At both universities, numbers of ‘Russians’, and particularly of Jewish students from Russia, increased noticeably and continuously as of the 1890s. This was presumably the deferred effect of the establishment of the *Numerus Clausus* for Jewish students at Russian universities in 1887. At the University of Bern, enrolments of students from Russia leapt in WT 1899/1900 and continued to rise dramatically during the following years. This, again, relates directly to the suppression of student riots in Russia in 1899 and the subsequent shutdown of all institutions of higher learning.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. Weill 2001: 90, and Alston 1969: 154.

Oddly enough, the University of Zürich received more ‘Russians’ in the mid-1890s and experienced a temporary decrease around 1900. Between 1901 and 1908 the invasion of students from the Tsarist Empire, predominantly Jewish, was impressive both in Bern and Zürich and reached a climax in 1907/08. Student disorders again disrupted in Russia in 1901 and were even greater in extent than the ones of 1899. During the turmoil of the years 1903-1906, political repression in Russia was severe and universities were completely shut down in 1906. A wave of politically motivated student migrants thus reached Switzerland. At the same time, the tightening of the NC for Jews in Russia in 1901, 1908, and 1911 determined the increasing proportion of Jews among the ‘Russian’ students in Bern and Zürich in the 20<sup>th</sup> century at a time when other marginalized groups such as women faced better opportunities back home.

The universities of Bern and Zürich could only answer with stricter entrance requirements; but they hesitated to enforce such in too fierce a manner. The overall concern of both institutions and cantonal governments was threefold; that infrastructure would be strained by too many ‘Russians’, that the level of instruction would suffer from these students’ insufficient education, and finally that the reputation of the university might suffer as consequence of the second. The measures taken by both Bern and Zürich were simple. The entrance requirements for foreign students should, as a principle, not be more lax than those which they faced in their home countries. All institutions of higher learning in Switzerland should coordinate their admission policies so as to inhibit that foreign students would use an *Exmatrikel* from one institution to circumvent the strict entrance requirements of another. And when Prussian universities introduced quotas for foreign students in 1913 in order to counter the demand on the part of ‘Russians’, Bern and Zürich immediately followed because they feared getting the masses rejected in Prussia.<sup>224</sup>

But notwithstanding all similarities concerning the enrollment of Russian-Jewish students at the universities of Bern and Zürich, I could also determine significant differences. First of all, the University of Zürich featured two distinct periods of ‘Russian’ student colonies; a first, very short highpoint in 1872/73 and a second, longer “Russenzeit” beginning in the late 1880s and ending with the First World War. At the University of Bern, on the other hand, the influx of ‘Russians’ began slowly with a few females as consequence of the Tsarist *Ukase* in 1873 and continually grew into a mass phenomenon. For Bern, we can thus speak of one long Russian colony. A second major difference can be identified regarding numbers. Since the 1890s, the University of Bern received a far larger quantity of ‘Russians’, and thus also of Jewish Russians, than did Zürich. In 1907/08, Bern had over 700 ‘Russians’ (of which about 80% were Jews), while Zürich counted not even 500 (70% Jews). Only in 1913/14 did Zürich catch up with Bern. While many students enrolled at the University of Zürich were of German origin, foreigner in Bern basically meant Russian.

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. speech of A. Gobat of June 1904, in StABE BB IIIb 196-200, protocol of Zürich government, 01.08.1907, and protocol of Zürich Department of Education, 10.10.1913, in StAZH Z70.248-250, letter of dean of the Bern medical faculty of 14.02.1914, in StABE BB IIIb 495.

The extraordinary attraction of Bern might have had various reasons. It has been pointed out earlier that the presence of Professor Ludwig Stein was probably responsible for the significantly greater interest of Russian-Jewish students in the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bern as opposed to Zürich. Presumably, Stein also exerted a wider force of attraction on Jewish students. But Vladimir Medem refers to another very notable appearance in Bern:

The head of the colony was Prof. Naum Reichesberg, a Russian Jew, a socialist, but also a professor at the University of Bern. In his capacity as an official figure and a renowned personage in the city, the colony was under his wing. People invariably turned to him when hard pressed and in difficulty.<sup>225</sup>

Prof. Reichesberg, born in Kremenez, had received his doctorate in law from the University of Bern in 1891; he taught as private lecturer at the same institution and later achieved the rank of professor (1898-1928). It is very likely that the presence of Reichesberg, who was widely known for his works on social relations and the rights of workers, prompted many Russian-Jewish student migrants to settle in Bern – particularly those with socialist positions.<sup>226</sup> There is no indication of a comparable character in Zürich who would create an ersatz home abroad for Jews from the Tsarist Empire.

The Bern colony also figured as center of the general Russian and the Russian-Jewish political emigration in German-speaking Switzerland, if we believe the memoirs of Vladimir Medem, Daniel Charney and Chaim Weizmann. It might be a mere coincidence that all of the contemporary witnesses I could rely on either settled in the Bern colony or, in their accounts, focused on the political struggles between internationalist socialists, Bundists, and Zionists in Bern. Certainly, Zürich also featured a local Bundist group, Zionist organizations and other cultural and political associations where Russian-Jewish students could engage in discussions. But there is no evidence of Zürich playing a crucial role in the political emigration of Russian Jewry, whereas Bern is often referred to in literature especially as center of Bundist and socialist activity. If a Jewish student left Russia for political reasons, then Bern seemed like the obvious place to go. Against this background, it is even more remarkable that Bern has never received the attention of historians as center of Russian-Jewish student life and political struggles. Even though Bern received considerably more Jewish students from Russia than Zürich – which was the bigger city, moreover –, and even though after Geneva, Bern seems to have been *the* place of the Russian-Jewish political emigration in Switzerland, it was only the first Russian colony in Zürich that inspired scholarly studies.

### ***Inter-University Movement***

Movement between Bern and Zürich was the rule rather than an exception; this counts for both directions. Some students were first enrolled in Bern and then transferred to the University of Zürich for one or two more semesters, others went the opposite direction. All kinds of patterns can be discovered. I have identified a couple of instances, too, where a student only studied at his/her first

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<sup>225</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 220.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Senn 1971: 9-10.

university in Switzerland for one semester and then transferred, or practically terminated their whole studies at one institution and then switched for graduation. Helene Goldberg from the Caucasus is such an example; she studied in Zürich from WT 1882 until WT 1885/86, left with diploma, and appeared in the enrollment catalog of the University of Bern for one more semester in ST 1886. Such transfers might be mere coincidences or owing to personal reasons. But students were also well informed about which university featured more liberal entrance requirements. It seems that the University of Bern, for instance, did not enforce requirements too strictly well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Medem recalls a joke that was told among students in Bern; until around 1900 it was possible to submit a train ticket instead of a diploma to be enrolled.<sup>227</sup> And even in 1910/11, Charney claims, many graduates from religious schools in Odessa were admitted to the University of Bern without problem.<sup>228</sup> Hence, students might have enrolled in Bern only to get an *Exmatrikel*, which was regarded as sufficient proof of education by many institutions in Switzerland and in Germany and thus served as entry ticket to the institution of choice.

But most instances of inter-university movement were probably conditioned by either political motives or personal preferences. After the Tsarist *Ukase* of 1873, a first great movement of female ‘Russian’ students from the University of Zürich to that of Bern set in. Among them was Dorothee Aptekman from Kharkov. She enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in Zürich in the summer of 1872 and was forced to transfer to Bern because of the *Ukase*. At the University of Bern, she studied medicine from 1873 until 1876 and obtained a doctor’s degree in February 1877. The relocations of Chaim Zhitlovsky and Nahman Syrkin – both from Zürich to Bern – have been mentioned already. Presumably, their decisions to settle in Bern were related to the more vibrant political environment in the Swiss capital. David Farbstein, then again, transferred from Zürich to Bern only because his dissertation was rejected at the first institution; after a year at the University of Bern he left with degree in 1896 and immediately returned to Zürich, where he was naturalized and worked as lawyer for the *Swiss Social Democratic Party*.

### ***Friendship and Love***

The Russian-Jewish student colonies in Bern and Zürich constituted a small, self-contained universe, “an island in a strange, cold, and even hostile sea”.<sup>229</sup> The world of these Jewish student migrants, as all memoirs testify, was not touched by the immediate surroundings, but was only concerned with its own reality. Swiss life and politics did not exist for the Russian-Jewish students, and the assimilated, bourgeois local Jewish community remained strange to them.<sup>230</sup> As for interaction with the small East-European Jewish emigrant community in Switzerland which existed at least in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century,

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<sup>227</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 278.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 119.

<sup>229</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 217-218.

<sup>230</sup> Please note that I did not carry out research with regard to interaction between the local Jewish community and the Russian-Jewish students; I am merely reproducing the opinion voiced by Jewish students from Russia.

the memoirs remain silent. Bern did not accommodate such a community, but Zürich received its share of poor East-European Jews.<sup>231</sup> Whether there was contact with a Jewish community or not, the few hundred young Jewish men and women studying at the universities of Bern and Zürich felt “the need to cling together”.<sup>232</sup> Medem, especially, raves about the warmth and intimacy of the Bern colony. Most students returned home for the summer,<sup>233</sup> but those who did not even spent the holiday together as a colony. The students of Bern, it seems, maintained their summer residence in Spiez, a small village in the Bernese Alps.<sup>234</sup>

Apparently, the student colonies in Switzerland were also quite effective marriage markets. The University of Zürich enrolment catalogs – like those of Bern – expose numerous instances of couple formation. A Gita Nekritsch of Bobrujsk, for instance, was enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine since WT 1902. As of winter 1903/04, she is suddenly listed as Mirkin-Nekritsch; obviously, she had married her fellow student of law Nochim Mirkin from Kiev. Both left the University of Zürich in summer 1905 with diploma – Gita even handed in a dissertation. At the University of Bern, an Anna Ledermann had been studying at the philosophical faculty since ST 1886. In WT 1888/89 I found her registered under the surname Polikier-Ledermann; she had married her fellow student Heinrich Polikier, who was registered at the same faculty during the academic year 1887/88. Another example is provided by Nahman Syrkin and Bassja Osnos, both enrolled in medicine from ST 1898 until ST 1899 and WT 1899/1900, respectively. They obviously got married in early spring 1899, as Bassja is enrolled as Syrkin-Osnos as of ST 1899. Others moved to Switzerland as a married couple. Salomon Zuperfein and Zipa Zuperfein-Wassilewskaja both studied at the Faculty of Philosophy in Bern from WT 1904 until WT 1909/10. Zipa remained enrolled until winter 1910/11 but a note after her name says “beurlaubt” (suspended).

Yet, as Charney recalls, it was not that easy for young men to find an amour in the student colonies; most female students enrolled in medicine and were too much concerned with their studies, according to him. Luckily, the girls who chose the Faculty of Philosophy were more susceptible to love.<sup>235</sup>

### *Anti-Semitism*

Contrary to the German case,<sup>236</sup> the handling of the so-called “Russenfrage” at Swiss universities did not expose obvious anti-Semitic bias. The fact that a great majority of the students from Tsarist Russia enrolled in Switzerland were of Jewish origin is hardly reflected in contemporary academic records.

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<sup>231</sup> The archives of the local Jewish communities might deliver information on possible interaction, but my schedule and focus did not allow for me to check. Religious holidays could be an occasion on which Russian-Jewish students would try to connect to the local community, for instance. But all evidence suggests that the students went home for holidays if they could afford it.

<sup>232</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 219.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Weizmann 1949: 58.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Weizmann 1949: 46-48, 55-58, 93, and Medem 1923: 278-281, (II) 50-56.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 229-230.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Peter 2001, and Wertheimer 1982.

Only in one occasion did academic staff point towards the Jewish faith of many of its ‘Russians’; in a letter to the Department of Education, the dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Bern elaborated on the reasons for the increase in the number of ‘Russian’ students and claimed that students from Russia pouring in after 1908 were mainly male and “der Grosszahl nach Israeliten”.<sup>237</sup> But the tone remains strictly factual; there is no reason to assume that the author was suggesting that the religious affiliation of these students could be a problem. Feller also refers to a meeting of the Bernese government where Gobat pointed at the preponderance of Russian Jews among the students in Bern.<sup>238</sup> But again, there is no indication of prejudice or negative connotation. Indeed, Prof. H. Hitzig-Steiner of the University of Zürich sent a furious letter to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) to complain about the newspaper’s correspondent in Russia who had denigrated the Russian students in Switzerland and advised the academic institutions to principally exclude Jewish students because they were the purported troublemakers:

Und was soll man dazu sagen, dass der Mann glaubt, uns raten zu sollen, wir möchten doch bei der Immatrikulation nach dem Glaubensbekenntnis fragen und die Juden principiell ausschliessen! Das ist nicht der Rat eines freisinnigen und edel denkenden Menschen.<sup>239</sup>

It seems that the universities of both Bern and Zürich were not interested in differentiating their students and that they proudly defended their liberal heritage also with respect to religious tolerance.

As regards public discussion, I do not claim to have carried out extensive research. Literature suggests that the ‘Russian’ students were regarded as revolutionaries and socialists by the Swiss population and that their lifestyle did not exactly win favor among the conservative locals.<sup>240</sup> And certain scepticism is understandable; against merely 67’600 inhabitants in Bern in 1900, 400 students from the Russian Empire cramped in the inner city must have been quite conspicuous.<sup>241</sup> In Zürich, proportions were more relaxed and an East European Jewish immigrant community of considerable size probably received more attention from locals and political authorities. But anti-Semitic ideas vis-à-vis Russian-Jewish students do not seem to have been prevalent neither in Bern nor in Zürich. As Medem quizzically remarks, “the Switzer [...] was not very knowledgeable on the ethnic question”,<sup>242</sup> and did not know the difference between an ethnic Russian and a Russian Jew. Hence, features, attitude and comportment of Russian-Jewish students were interpreted as typical of Slavs. If the political activities of students from Russia were decried, and if the press called for more restrictive admission policies, the charges were brought against all students from the Russian Empire, without distinction. This is not to say that anti-Semitism did not exist in Switzerland. Jews only became equal citizens in Switzerland with the constitutional revision of 1874, and Jewish immigrants of East

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<sup>237</sup> Letter of the dean of the Faculty of Medicine to the Bern Department of Education, 14.02.1914, in StABE BB IIIb 495.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Feller 1935: 441.

<sup>239</sup> Letter of Prof. H. Hitzig-Steiner to the NZZ, 16.08.1907, in StAZH Z70.248-250.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Neumann 1987: 163-182, Gagliardi 1938: 629-637, and Feller 1935: 387.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. „Fläche und Bevölkerung der Städte mit mehr als 30’000 Einwohnern“, <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/01/22/lexi.html> [15.12.2011].

<sup>242</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 218.

European origin were systematically excluded from citizenship in the years before World War One.<sup>243</sup> But university students from the Russian Empire were presumably not perceived as part of the group of unwanted East European Jewish immigrants but rather as part of a temporary student migration from Russia which presented different challenges.

The official historiography produced for the centennial of the University of Zürich and that of the University of Bern, respectively, is an interesting matter. Both festschriften were published in the 1930s after the Nazis had seized power in Germany. But while Feller's history of the University of Bern (1935) exhibits a rather positive stance towards the 'Russians', in general, and displays much understanding for the poor and oppressed Jewish students, the zeitgeist seems to have rubbed off on the anniversary publication of the University of Zürich. That the latter was published in 1938 might explain a more negative judgment against students of Jewish origin. But according to Neumann, in any case, official historiography of the Zürich institution was also much more negative than others regarding the female Russian student migration: "In keiner anderen Universitätsgeschichte wurde [...] so abschätzig über die Russinnen geschrieben wie in derjenigen Zürichs."<sup>244</sup>

## **6 The Russian-Jewish Student Migration as Particular Phenomenon.**

### **6.1 Shared Destiny.**

I have studied the Russian-Jewish student migrants as a particular group among other student migrants from the Tsarist Empire mainly because Jewish students, *qua Jews*, received specific treatment in the Tsarist Empire. Jewish students not only suffered from general economic, social, and political discrimination as religious minority, but they also faced especially great obstacles if they wished to pursue an academic education – the only way to escape the entrapment of the Pale and to achieve status in society. But apart from this extrinsic factor that determines the Russian-Jewish student migrants as a specific entity, is there another reason that justifies treating these individuals as a particular group? Is there, in fact, also an internal cohesion, some kind of shared destiny or common purpose that united the Jewish students from Tsarist Russia residing abroad? To be sure, it is difficult to account for thoughts and identity negotiation of Russian-Jewish students in Bern and Zürich. The only sources we have that document reflections on such matters are the memoirs introduced earlier which were written with specific intentions. Nonetheless, I will dare to utter a few general thoughts on a shared discourse and fate of Russian-Jewish student migrants.

The reader has noted that I often talked about students from the Tsarist Empire and the Russian colony in a general manner even though this paper is concerned specifically with the migration of *Jewish* students from Russia. But indeed, the distinction is not always clear-cut. In the 1860s and 1870s, when the first student migrants from Tsarist Russia moved to Switzerland and joined

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<sup>243</sup> I refer the reader to the studies of Patrick Kury listed in the bibliography.

<sup>244</sup> Neumann 1987: 103.

the political émigré community, the few Jewish individuals hardly identified as anything else than Russian. These were the years when many a young Jew, convinced that the struggle for Jewish emancipation was identical with the fight against the autocratic system, joined the Russian populist movement and the revolutionary underground. And even after the crisis of 1881/82 which triggered the first stirrings of a secular Jewish national identity and a consciously Jewish politics, many Jewish students in Russia and abroad continued to engage in the general struggle of the Russian opposition movement. Evidence – though limited – suggests that student organizations in the various ‘Russian’ colonies abroad did not reflect any particular affiliation even if a great majority of its members were in fact Jewish.<sup>245</sup> Most adopted names such as ‘association of Russian students’ or ‘Russian reading club’.<sup>246</sup> Shmarya Levin, a Russian-Jewish student in Berlin, reports that in the 1890s, the members of the Russian reading hall in Berlin, about 90% of whom were Jews, sternly resisted any attempt on the part of a minority to buy Yiddish- or Hebrew-speaking newspapers. The Jewish students who had been driven out of their home country for their involvement with the Russian opposition movement or their religious affiliation obviously tried to minimize their otherness; they felt part of a general Russian cause.<sup>247</sup> In Berlin, Levin was active in the forerunner of all national Jewish student organizations, the *Russisch-jüdischer wissenschaftlicher Verein* founded in 1887. At the time, an association which emphasized the particularity of the Jewish people was considered chauvinist and antiquated.

Yet the biography of Chaim Zhitlovsky proves that identification with Russia and a general revolutionary cause did not automatically imply a “complete denial of Jewish identity”,<sup>248</sup> as Weizmann liked to declare. Zhitlovsky combined his revolutionary activity for a change of order in Russia with a virulent interest in Jewish history and the Yiddish language. With his synthesis of Jewish nationalism and socialism, as has been noted, Zhitlovsky created an attractive form of secular Jewish identity to soul-searching Jewish youth in the 1880s and 1890s. The early history of the *Bund*, likewise, reflects the idea that there should be room for a pronounced Jewish identity within a general Russian socialist framework. The *Bund*, indeed, was among the founding organizations of the *Russian Social Democratic Party* (RSDRP) in 1898 and only broke with the umbrella organization in 1903 when its autonomous position as representative of Jewish workers was rejected. The adoption of a clearly national program at the 5<sup>th</sup> congress of the *Bund* in Zürich, then again, epitomizes a general, marked shift towards greater emphasis on a Jewish national identity on the part of Russian Jewry. Both Medem and Weizmann in fact underscore the tremendous shock produced by the Kishinev pogrom in 1903;<sup>249</sup> the events between 1903 and 1906 prompted a radicalization of many young Jews in Russia and abroad, but also a more pronounced accent on Jewish identity and national character. New political programs and parties with a focus on specifically Jewish revolutionary work were born in Tsarist Russia, and they immediately took root in the student colonies in Switzerland.

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<sup>245</sup> The case of Polish students is different; most of them joined explicitly Polish societies.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Weill 2001 and 2003.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Levin 1938: 249-251.

<sup>248</sup> Weizmann 1949: 51.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Weizmann 1949: 105-108, and Medem 1923 (II): 5-10.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, events in Russia had pushed the Jewish *intelligentsia* to express themselves in clearly national terms, whether socialist or bourgeois, whether centered on a future ‘here’ or ‘there’. But even then, many a politicized young Jew did not discern a contradiction between his or her Russian citizenship and Jewish identity. And Russian-Jewish students did not necessarily neglect their Jewish heritage before consciously Jewish political expressions emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A bond with the Jewish background could be expressed in many ways. Presumably, young Jews from Russia spoke Yiddish among themselves even if they read and wrote Russian.<sup>250</sup> In the Bern colony, according to all memoirs, one could get by very well with only speaking Yiddish. The Yiddish language and culture, for the new generation of secularized Jews, presented the basis of Jewish identity.<sup>251</sup> And as has been indicated before, Jewish delicacies were served in the Russian eating halls as a matter of course. One might hypothesize that in a colony where Jewish students presented a majority, it was not necessary to label an organization or institution ‘Jewish’; like in a *shtetl* back home, one lived in a Russian context but at the same time in a pronouncedly Jewish world. With the same matter-of-course attitude, a Jewish student could engage in Russian opposition politics if his friends shared the belief that *qua Jews*, one could only benefit from the abolition of Tsarism and that socialism was the answer to the ‘Jewish question’. It is certainly no coincidence that of the five memoirs I read, four speak about the ‘Russian colony’ but mean the crowd and institutions of Russian-Jewish students. Only Charney, representing the student body of the 1910s, explicitly refers to the ‘Russian-Jewish colony’!<sup>252</sup>

In part I, I have labelled the basis of modern Russian-Jewish identity as ‘ethnicity’. By that I mean to grasp the blend of the Yiddish language, the Jewish religion (or, in the case of secularized Jewry, the cultural expression of a Jewish heritage), the common regional, social and often economic background in the *Pale of Settlement*, and finally a shared experience of discrimination on the basis of the aforementioned constituents of identity, which formed an exceptionally cohesive social group. With regard to the young generation, there was yet another element responsible for a strong feeling of community. Jewish men and women growing up in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Tsarist Russia made the painful experience of being rejected for their heritage even if they made desperate efforts to behave as Russian as possible. The rapid demographic growth among the Jewish population of Russia had produced a very young generation – in 1905, about half of Russian Jewry was between 10 and 29 years old – , a generation pushed to revolt by both poverty and an increasingly hostile attitude of the Russian regime and society.<sup>253</sup> It was a particular historical moment that had a major impact on the emergence of a cohesive young Russian-Jewish generation which would eventually determine the fortunes of its

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<sup>250</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 277-281.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Weinberg 1996: 83.

<sup>252</sup> If I usually refer to the Russian-Jewish student colony instead of the Russian student colony, this has to do with the fact that as of the 1890s, the small number of non-Jewish Russians can be denied. But as I tried to make clear, the Jewish students – with the exception of right-wing Zionists – did not dissociate themselves from non-Jewish Russian students, and the two groups often cannot be distinguished.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Frankel 2009: 72-75.

people. That this generation had also received secular education in Russian state schools presented a crucial concurrence with regard to the development of their ideological orientation and activism. As Frankel observes,

[...] in the absence of a political class ready to think beyond cautiously incremental measures [...] radical initiatives became the almost exclusive domain of the *intelligenty* (with their command of Russian or Polish) and, to a lesser extent, of the yeshiva-educated “half”-intelligentsia. It was the intelligentsia that produced the breakthrough ideologies oriented toward an imagined future and that, almost unaided, launched the organizations confidently expected to lead the way to that future, to a juster world that would eliminate the “Jewish question”.<sup>254</sup>

Imagination of the future, as emphasized earlier, could take various forms from an internationalist socialist utopianism to a Palestine-centered radical nationalism. But whether Zionist or Bundist or anything else; the answer of the young generation seems to have been consciously Jewish, secular, and socially radical in outlook.

Of this Russian-Jewish generation, a large part was forced to move abroad in search of academic education; this mass movement to university towns in Central and Western Europe prompted the formation of veritable Russian-Jewish student colonies. In the environment of such colonies, the cohesion of this social group and its action for the shared imagination of a better future would gain yet another quality. The exile as common experience of this “Denkkollektiv am Rande der Gesellschaft”<sup>255</sup> and the insularity of their reality certainly deepened the feeling of confidence and common destiny. One could speculate that precisely this collective isolation of the Russian-Jewish colony in strange surroundings also made Jewish students tighten rather than loosen bonds with their people’s heritage. Even though each political program had its ardent supporters in the student colonies, and even if the various groups would from time to time engage in fierce debates, the Russian-Jewish student colonies in Switzerland and elsewhere exhibited a staggering social cohesion. In 1983, Jack Wertheimer put forth a still matchless attempt at grasping the forces that made possible such inner unity; “[...] even as intense ideological debates divided students into rival factions, they also unified the emigrés by focusing their attention on a common concern – the future of Jewish life [...]”.<sup>256</sup> In the student colonies of the West, the young Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia* not only constituted a specific age cohort driven by the same pressing moral issues. The foreign environment in Switzerland, Germany or France presumably made Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire realize that – as a group – they had very exclusive challenges to face that set them apart from all other students and that in fact, they were looking for not-so-different answers to the same problem. What united the Russian-Jewish student youth despite political differences was their enthusiasm for a radical reconstruction of Jewish life, for a revolutionary turn in the history of their people, for national self-liberation, and their rejection of traditional religion and *shtetl* life. The cohesion of the Russian-Jewish student migrants

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<sup>254</sup> Frankel 2009: 4-5. Quotation marks and italics in the original.

<sup>255</sup> Polexe 2011: 102.

<sup>256</sup> Wertheimer 1983: 337.

was thus not only a matter of external pressures but also the result of a strong feeling of shared destiny.<sup>257</sup>

Finally, even if contact between the Russian-Jewish students and the local population was limited, the Swiss environment did have an impact on the migrants and their debates. Both Vladimir and Gina Medem place emphasis on the freedom they experienced in Switzerland, and they rejoice about the absence of police surveillance which allowed them to openly immerse themselves in politics.<sup>258</sup>

The colony concerned itself [...] very much with politics. Quite understandably. People were arriving from Russia, from that old Tsarist Russia, and stepping into free Switzerland. Back there everything was proscribed; here everything was permitted. [...] Here, on Swiss soil, it was possible to indulge one's interest to an extraordinary degree: socialist literature, socialist meetings, socialist leaders; and everything on the most ample scale.<sup>259</sup>

It seems that the political and legal framework of the Helvetic Confederation permitted political thought experiments without restrictions – as long as they did not jeopardize Switzerland's security and political consensus. Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of opinion, of press and of assembly made it possible for politically-minded student migrants to share any of their ideas with friends and even a wider public – something they could not do in Russia. The more ideas were uttered, the more they could be refined and tested against other concepts; and the concentration of great numbers of politicized individuals on one spot made sure they were heard. The conditions in Switzerland were of crucial importance for the development of many revolutionary ideologies. No wonder that many future political leaders only finally defined their particular convictions in the student colonies of Central and Western Europe.<sup>260</sup>

## **6.2 Particularities of this Student Migration.**

The Russian-Jewish student migration to Bern and Zürich constituted a migration system defined not only by large numbers of students moving to these cities from Tsarist Russia, but also by particular factors determining the group's decision to migrate. The elitist nature of the Russian establishments of higher education, its often poor conditions regarding infrastructure, the very restricted autonomy of universities and the repression of student disorders affected all students in the Empire and lead many young Russians to pursue education abroad. Women, then again, were not allowed to enrol as regular students at Russian universities and turned to Switzerland, where both sexes were equal with respect to educational rights. But for Jewish students, conditions in the Tsarist Empire were especially adverse. As Victor Karady notes, in the case of Jewish student migrants from Russia, the push-factors were very much dominant and pull-factors hardly decisive.<sup>261</sup> General discrimination of Jewry in Russia,

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<sup>257</sup> Cf. also Graetz 1997.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 286-287, and G. Medem 1950:130-131.

<sup>259</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 224-225.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Weizmann 1949: 69.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Karady 2003: 23.

*Russification* policies of the Tsarist government, and finally the establishment of a *Numerus Clausus* for Jewish students drastically limited the options of young Jews who wished to pursue a higher education. That an academic degree was indispensable to Jews in Russia for social status and freedom of movement, and the fact that an alienated, secular young Jewish generation was disproportionately affected by political repression only added to the movement to universities in the West.

There is another crucial characteristic which distinguishes the migration of students from the Tsarist Empire to Switzerland from other student migrations at the time; the phenomenon was tightly linked to the Russian and Russian-Jewish political émigré community. Russian-Jewish students abroad cannot be studied in isolation from the history of the Russian revolutionary movement and of the modern political movements of East European Jewry, both of which largely developed their positions in exile. Indeed, it is often impossible to differentiate between the student colony in a particular town and the political émigrés residing there. For political parties, the colonies of students abroad were a major recruiting ground for young political leaders, a testing ground for the potential of theoretical convictions, and last but not least a great environment for enlarging political power.<sup>262</sup> It has been indicated that all the major political parties of Russia, including the various Jewish movements, had offices in Switzerland – often in Bern or Geneva. All of them tried to gain as much influence as possible on the student migrants who, after all, constituted their basis: “The student mass represented a great reservoir of vital, youthful energy, from which each party grouping and political tendency drew its human material.”<sup>263</sup>

To what extent the Russian-Jewish students in the colonies of Bern and Zürich actively engaged in politics is impossible to assess on the basis of the sources I have considered. It seems that most students attended political lectures and debates but did not assume leading positions in political struggles. In a list of politically active ‘Russians’ collected by the federal authorities I could identify a handful of students listed in enrolment catalogs, among them Pavel Axelrod.<sup>264</sup> Moreover, a student of medicine at the University of Bern, Alexander Losinsky, was expelled from Swiss territory in 1906 for dangerous activities;<sup>265</sup> whether these were politically motivated I do not know, as he does not figure among the names blacklisted by the authorities. By and large, I assume that the majority of political leaders in the colonies of Bern and Zürich had already been active for their respective parties in the Russian Empire and chose the Swiss exile for political reasons. Their enrollment at a university was not necessarily camouflage; “dans la carrière de nombreux révolutionnaires professionnels de l’Est européen le passage par des universités occidentales représentait un moment de répit, de réflexion ou

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<sup>262</sup> Cf. Ortmann 1994: 141-142, and Wertheimer 1983: 335-336.

<sup>263</sup> Medem, according to the English translation of Portnoy 1979: 225.

<sup>264</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Laura Polexe for providing me with the list of available files on ‘Russians’ at the BAR as well as with indices of names she could find that were identified as ‘revolutionaries’ by either the federal or the Zürich authorities.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Bundesratsbeschluss betreffend die Ausweisung von Alexander Losinsky vom Gebiete der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, 19. Okt. 1906, <http://www.amtsdruckschriften.bar.admin.ch>.

de préparation“.<sup>266</sup> Both Medem and Zhitlovsky, indeed, ponder over the beauty and calm of the Swiss natural environment at length. Both of them initially travelled to Switzerland because they had to escape political persecution by the Tsarist police, both took over leading positions as political figures in the colonies, and both enrolled at the local university once settled. Another well-known Russian-Jewish political leader, Nahman Syrkin, likewise took to studying as a kind of welcome change. Chaim Weizmann is a different case; he came to Switzerland for his academic career but also continued to work for the Zionist cause.

While the majority of young Russian Jews moved to Switzerland with the sole purpose of getting an academic degree, many quickly got caught up with politics and the negotiation of a Jewish national future once they had settled in the colony environment. The density of political ideas and companions in a context of freedom that allowed voicing anything infected numerous ‘unawakened’ students. Rebekka Denz refers to studies abroad as political initiation of various Bundists.<sup>267</sup> The tension between dedication to science and political activity caused a moral conflict for many Russian-Jewish students, as Weizmann – lecturer in chemistry by the time he came to Switzerland – knew very well:

How could we devote ourselves to careers when conditions in Russia were so bitter? Was it not cowardly and selfish to pursue one’s academic work in seeming deafness to the cry of one’s people? I saw my closest friends [...], the best and ablest, neglecting their university work. [...] They were not alone. Thousands of able young men and women were studying in Western universities; remarkably few of them ever became anything in science, art and literature. The dissipation of their energies, the drain on their nervous and even physical resources, made it impossible for them to concentrate on their studies. At best they managed to get their college diplomas, that is, their doctorates; and that was the end of it.<sup>268</sup>

Of course, there remained those who were entirely dedicated to studies and who would go on to become successful physicians, writers or academics.<sup>269</sup> It is just that they did not write any memoirs about their careers.

### 6.3 Sojourners?

It has been pointed out in the introduction that migration studies have paid little attention to student migration as contemporary and/ or elite movement; consequently, there is no clear conceptual framework to which I could refer. Still, I have long deliberated over the question as to whether one could comprehend the reality of Russian-Jewish student migrants in Switzerland with a general concept from the discipline and/or whether one could link their migration to the large-scale exodus of Jews from Russia emerging at the same time.

On the one hand, the Jewish students leaving Tsarist Russia for university education in Switzerland and elsewhere could be understood as part of the mass emigration of Russian Jewry

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<sup>266</sup> Karady 2003: 23.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Denz 2009: 61.

<sup>268</sup> Weizmann 1949: 91.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Charney 1935: 218 and 221.

towards the West that began in the 1880s and only ended in the 1930s. Some push-factors were common to both movements, above all poverty in the *Pale of Settlement* and political and social discrimination. Both migration streams accelerated towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and again reached enormous dimensions between the Kishinev slaughters of 1903 and the First World War. But on the other hand, the differences between the two population movements are blatant, and I believe they need to be studied as separate phenomena. First of all, the Russian-Jewish students did not leave Russia for good because they saw no future there, as did the ‘regular’ migrants. On the contrary; most Jewish students were determined to return to their hometowns and contribute to a better future for their people. They went abroad only to get the indispensable academic title which was denied to them in the Tsarist Empire. In this regard, and in their widespread political engagement for a change of order in the Russian Empire, the Russian-Jewish students were part of a general Russian intellectual and political émigré community rather than of the betterment migration of Russian Jewry at large.

It might be justified to refer to the millions of Russian-Jewish migrants establishing new homes around the globe as ‘diaspora community’ in the conventional understanding,<sup>270</sup> even if they did not really profess loyalty to a lost homeland.<sup>271</sup> The students definitely did not form a diaspora community for the same reasons that they cannot be subsumed under the more recent notion of ‘transnational community’.<sup>272</sup> Certainly, the Russian-Jewish students in Switzerland maintained close ties with their families and friends back home and shared common interests and references with other Russian-Jewish students across Europe; in that sense, their ties and actions were transnational. Yet the term ‘transnational community’, like ‘diaspora community’, usually implies a group’s long-term settlement in emigration and the development of dual loyalty, both of which was not true with respect to the student migrants. The Russian-Jewish students in Bern and Zürich had no desire whatsoever to integrate into Swiss society; on the contrary, they consciously decided to move to Switzerland for a short time period and for the exclusive purpose of education. They remained oriented exclusively towards Russia and Russian Jewry in their ideas and actions.<sup>273</sup>

Aside from the concept of ‘expatriate’, which has been introduced in introductory chapter two, the notion of ‘sojourner’ maybe comes closest to the experience of Russian-Jewish students in Switzerland. Unfortunately – to my knowledge – Paul Siu’s sociological category of the sojourner (1952) has not been further developed. Siu describes the sojourner as an ‘ethnocentrist’ clinging to his own culture and unable to settle in his place of residence and/ or integrate into the host society; the “formation of [a] cultural colony”<sup>274</sup> with people of his or her cultural heritage as characteristic of the sojourner would perfectly fit the insularity of Russian-Jewish student colonies in Switzerland. Moreover, according to Siu, “the intrinsic purpose of the sojourn is to do a job and do it in the shortest

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<sup>270</sup> Cf. Cohen 2006, and Cohen/ Vertovec 1999.

<sup>271</sup> Most Russian-Jewish migrants indeed considered their new home countries the promised lands. Few hoped for a return to Eretz Israel, and none would grieve over the loss of Russia if it were not for family ties.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. Vertovec 2009, Kastoryano 2000, and Cohen/ Vertovec 1999.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Medem 1923: 277-281.

<sup>274</sup> Siu 1952: 36.

possible time”;<sup>275</sup> the job abroad was often meant to help reach social status back home. The ‘job’ of a Russian-Jewish student in Switzerland, accordingly, was to get an academic education that would allow them to practice an esteemed profession in the Tsarist Empire and to escape the conditions of the Pale. Russian-Jewish student migrants were no elite migrants in the sense that they went abroad to receive the best education possible or to maximize the ‘returns’ for their previous efforts. Most Jewish students would probably have remained in Russia if it was possible to get a university education there; they only moved to the West because back home, they were refused the academic degree they urgently needed in order to advance their interests in Russia. The ‘job’ was not to get a *Western* degree, even if Germany in particular attracted many students as country of culture and science. Rather, the ‘job’ was to get *any* degree – any piece of paper that would allow them to return to Russia and be successful.

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<sup>275</sup> Siu 1952: 35.

## CONCLUSION.

By compiling the determinants, statistics and patterns of Russian-Jewish student migration to the universities of Bern and Zürich from its onset until the cut brought about by the outbreak of war in 1914, my research has laid the basis for further, more detailed studies into certain facets of this student movement. The decision to trace this migration system in its entirety necessarily entailed a trade-off with regard to the depth of analysis. But the lack of even basic previous research into the subject and the difficulty of finding enough source material that would allow for a detailed study of particular aspects, I believe, legitimize such rather cursory survey. The University of Bern, especially, has never been considered as place where large numbers of Russian-Jewish students received their academic training, and the capital's large Russian colony has not been studied as site of political disputes relevant to the political modernization of East European Jewry. Despite the fact that Bern received many more Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century than any other place in Switzerland (and Europe), it seems that in historiography, the notorious first Russian colony in Zürich (1871-73) and its female students have overshadowed the later, much more numerous settlement of student migrants. In any case, my thesis provides a relevant contribution to the scholarly debate concerning migration patterns of East European Jewry before the First World War, the strategies developed by a student youth excluded from access to education in their home country, and finally concerning the arrangements established in order to feel comfortable in a foreign environment that was never intended to be more than a temporary sojourn.

Jewish students from the Tsarist Empire moved to Switzerland to pursue education because *qua Jews*, they faced particular adversities in Russia. A secularized Jewish youth in Russia suffered from general socio-economic discrimination and *Russification* policies, was persecuted for large-scale involvement in the Russian opposition movement, and was above all penalized by a strict *Numerus Clausus* established in the 1880s in order to keep Jews away from academic education that would enhance their chances for social and geographic mobility. The universities of Bern and Zürich became a popular destination to study for the desired degree because these establishments featured liberal admission policies and gave young men and women irrespective of nationality, social status, religious affiliation and preparatory education the opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual abilities. The student emigration of Russian Jews to Bern and Zürich began in the 1860s but turned into a mass phenomenon only towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though contemporaries and historians have noted the preponderance of Jews among the hundreds of 'Russian' students per semester especially after the turn of the century, a scholarly analysis was missing until today. By relying on material from the university archives, above all, I managed to establish approximate figures of Russian-Jewish students in Bern and Zürich between 1865 and 1914 for the first time. In absolute numbers, students from Russia exceeded a hundred only in the late 1890s (with the exception of the first Russian colony in Zürich), but Jews figured disproportionately among the student migrants even in these early years. At both universities, the share of Jews among 'Russians' passed 50% in the 1880s and continuously

rose in the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to over 85% of the more than 400 students (per institution) from Tsarist Russia in 1914.

In Bern and Zürich, Jews for the most part enrolled in medicine, and men chose the Faculty of Philosophy more often than women. In Bern, two well-known professors of East European Jewish origin not only made the colony as such attractive for young Jews but presumably also account for the higher enrolment figures in philosophical subjects. Most students did not stay in one place for their entire university career but rather switched institutions within the German-speaking world. Inter-university movement was very common especially between Zürich and Bern and may explain the average duration of studies of only two to four semesters at one institution identified for Russian-Jewish students in Switzerland. As for residence patterns, Jewish students, often from traditional, lower middle-class families in the *Pale of Settlement*, settled in very few streets close to university in both cities; they constituted a veritable colony, or intimate *shtetl*, in the eyes of one observer. A reading hall/ library, a dining hall, and a mutual aid society constituted the institutional heart of the Russian-Jewish colonies in Bern and Zürich throughout the years; but the students also gathered in cafés and private homes and they actively engaged in political discussions. It is indeed difficult to strictly separate both infrastructure and members of the student colony from that of the Russian-Jewish political émigré community residing in Switzerland. The memoirs of Chaim Zhitlovsky, Chaim Weizmann, Vladimir Medem, Gina Medem, and Daniel Charney identify Bern as major battle ground abroad between various ideological programs put forth among Russian Jewry as solution to the 'Jewish question' – between internationalist socialism, Bundism, Diaspora nationalism, territorialism and all sorts of Zionist currents.

The meaning of the Russian-Jewish student colonies and its internal dynamics for the development of political programs concerning the future of the Jewish nation could not be addressed on the basis of my source material. Mastery of Russian, Polish and Hebrew is indispensable in order to trace political discussions in all journals and forums Russian-Jewish political activists fought over the 'right' political answers to contemporary challenges. And I had neither time nor money to avail myself of archival resources around the world. Yet I have tried to illustrate the strong social cohesion of the Russian-Jewish student group residing abroad; the insularity and intimacy of the colonies, the common experience of alienation from Russian society, and the shared enthusiasm for a radical reconstruction of Jewish life and national self-liberation made the Jewish students from Russia close ranks across all political differences. A community of shared understanding leaving Russia for specific reasons, dedicated to receiving education abroad for the benefit of their people in great numbers, and acting as link between their home country and Swiss university towns across more than 50 years, these Russian-Jewish student migrants constituted a veritable migration system.

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## APPENDIX.

### 1 Glossary.

*Autonomism*, a political solution to the ‚Jewish question‘ in Russia put forth by historian Simon Dubnow, among others. *Autonomism* was a form of Jewish Diaspora nationalism; Dubnow’s political program conceptualized the Jewish people as historical-cultural nation and promoted cultural autonomy of the Jewish nation in a multi-national Russian federation. Dubnow absolutely rejected any form of *territorial* autonomy because he strongly believed that nationalism based on a sovereign territory was a chauvinist and preparatory stage to the ‘real’ and ultimate goal of cultural-historical nationalism. Dubnow also founded his own party, the *Folkspartei*, to defend the Autonomist program.

*Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeyterbund in Polen, Liten un Rusland*, see entry for *Bund*.

*Alte Eidgenossenschaft*, see *Eidgenossenschaft*.

*Bund*, actually *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeyterbund in Polen, Liten un Rusland*, which translates as ‘General Jewish Workers Alliance in Poland, Lithuania and Russia’. The *Bund* was a Jewish socialist party founded in 1897. It traces back its organizational beginnings to workers’ circles of the early 1890s and always stood in a revolutionary tradition. After 1905, it stressed the national character of the Jewish people, demanded cultural autonomy for the same, and promoted a socialist politics specifically concerned with the fate of Jewish workers. The *Bund* rose to great importance in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century because it combined its concern with cultural autonomy for the Jews in Russia with a strictly socialist position and an emphasis on active self-defence. This specifically attracted the young generation. A member of the *Bund* is usually called a *Bundist*.

*Bundesrat*, the executive power of the Swiss federal government. It consists of seven members representing all dominant parties in Switzerland.

*Bundesstaat*, the state of Switzerland, that is, the consortium of all cantons united in the Helvetic Confederation.

*Bundesverfassung*, the constitution of modern Switzerland (founded in 1848).

*Cantonist*, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian context, refers to boys who were educated in special schools for future military service. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term was also applied to the compulsory military service for Jewish boys who were recruited at the age of 12 and served for 25 years. Strict quotas were imposed on the Jewish community, and it was often the religious leaders who took on the task of choosing who was to send off. The sons of poor parents suffered most from the system. This often led to violent conflict within the *Kahal*.

*Duma*, literally ‘thought’ and a name generally used for consultative assemblies, refers to the State Parliament in the Russian Empire established by the *October Manifesto* of 1905 and endowed with legislative powers. The Duma was elected four times; in 1906, twice in 1907, and in 1912.

*Eidgenossenschaft*, a historic entity dating back to the first defensive alliances in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The *Eidgenossenschaft* essentially constituted a loose compound of 13 sovereign states and subject areas and was the predecessor of modern Switzerland (with the interrupt of Napoleonic occupation).

*Exmatrikel*, a written confirmation that a student receives when leaving university. The *Exmatrikel* attests that a student had received formal education at the respective institution.

*Foreign Committee of the Bund*, founded in Geneva as the outpost of the *Bund* outside the Russian Empire. In Russia, Bundist activity was illegal; thus the *Foreign Committee* assumed a crucial role in printing and disseminating socialist literature, in raising money for political activists in emigration, and in coordinating work between the *Central Committee* in Russia and Bundist circles abroad.

*Haskalah*, literally ‘understanding’, a Hebrew term used to label the Jewish enlightenment. It was a rationalistic movement emerging in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Jewish world, under the impact of the European enlightenment. Its followers are called *maskilim*.

*Heder*, pl. *Hadarim*, literally ‘room’, is the name for the traditional, religious elementary school for boys in Ashkenazi Judaism which existed in Eastern Europe up to World War Two. Jewish boys usually entered the *heder* at the age of three and left it after their *bar-mitzvah*, their official maturity as full member of the Jewish community. Instruction took place at the teacher’s home and included the Hebrew alphabet and the reading of Torah and Talmud.

*Helvetic Confederation* = *Confoederatio Helvetica*, is the official name of modern Switzerland.

*Hibbat Zion*, now considered the forerunner of modern Zionism, was a widespread movement among East European Jewry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The adherents of *Hibbat Zion* were called *Hovevei Zion* (lovers of Zion); they encouraged the establishment of agricultural settlements in Palestine and promoted ‘practical’ work instead of the political goals envisioned by Herzl and his supporters. Rishon LeZion (1882) was the first Zionist settlement in Palestine established by Hovevei Zion.

*Intelligentsia*, a term that appeared in Russian discourse in the 1860s. The exact definition remains a matter of dispute until today. As a rule, *intelligentsia* encompasses intellectuals, that is, university-educated people who did not have a clearly defined position in society. The absence of a bourgeoisie in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian Empire eventually turned education rather than property into the marker of a stratum in between nobles and peasants. It was the *intelligentsia* who first adopted the declared goal of political reform and liberation of the people in Russia.

*Kahal*, *Kehilah*, both meaning ‘community’ in Hebrew. *Kahal* denotes the institution of Jewish autonomy (i.e. self-organization) in a particular place, whereas *Kehilah* refers to a community of Jews (i.e. the people) living in a particular town.

*Limmat*, the river running through the city of Zürich. *Limmat-Stadt* is another name for Zürich.

*Maturitätsausweis* = *Maturitätszeugnis*, the diploma students receive after successful termination of their Gymnasium education in Switzerland. The *Maturitätszeugnis* qualifies for enrollment at a university.

*Narodnik*, an adherent of Russian populism, literally a ‘friend of the people’. The *Narodniki* were a strong movement in the late 1860s and early 1870s, but the summer of ‘going to the people’ in 1874 dramatically failed and practically marked the end of Russian populism.

*Numerus Clausus*, for the purposes of this paper, refers to the quotas established by the Tsarist authorities in 1887 in order to limit the number of Jewish students at secondary schools, universities and other institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire.

*October Manifesto*, issued on October 17, 1905, by Tsar Nicholas II. The manifesto was a response to disorders in the Russian Empire and pledged the granting of civil liberties, including freedom of opinion, universal male suffrage and the broad participation in the parliament, the *Duma*. The promised democratization, however, turned out to be a major farce.

*Po’ale Zion*, a political movement that merged Zionism and socialism. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many small *Po’ale Zion* groups emerged in the *Pale of Settlement*, largely independent of each other. In 1906, the Jewish Social Democratic Workers Party *Po’ale Zion* was founded as a union of various small circles. This party was Marxist and Zionist in outlook and it was concerned with the establishment of a new society based on socialist principles; as opposed to the *Bund*, *Po’ale Zion* called for a Jewish national home in Eretz Israel. *Po’ale Zion* became the state supporting party in the young State of Israel.

*Russification*, according to Polonsky 2010 (I): 401-402, is only one of many terms used by the Tsarist authorities to describe their attempt at transforming the Jews into ‘useful’ subjects. The main goal was to weaken Jewish national identity and promote Russian language and culture among the Jewish youth. *Russification* of minorities was a major goal of Tsarist educational policies.

*Sejmists* (=SERP), the Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party, was based on a synthesis of Jewish national and socialist principles. The *Sejmists*, like the *Socialist Zionists*, emerged from within the *Po’ale Zion* movement. The ideological inspiration of the *Sejmists*’ program was drawn from Chaim Zhitlovsky’s writings; the party promoted extraterritorial autonomy for the Jewish nation. A Jewish national *sejm* (parliament) should represent the collective body of the Jewish nation and decide over education, law, cultural matters, etc. Such a national parliament as sovereign basis of the autonomous Jewish nation and a decidedly socialist position presented the major differences to Dubnow’s idea of *autonomism*.

*Shtetl*, ‘little town’, was a small town in the *Pale of Settlement* with a largely Jewish population. The term *shtetl* is also used as metaphor for the traditional way of life of poor and pious Jews in 19<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Europe. The Holocaust determined the disappearance of the *shtetl*.

*Territorialism*, a political movement of East European Jewry which called for the establishment of an autonomous Jewish territory, but not necessarily in Eretz Israel. Some socialist Zionist parties were in fact more territorialist than Zionist, as in the case of Syrkin’s *Zionist Socialist Workers Party*.

*Ukase*, in Imperial Russia, was an official proclamation of the Tsarist government or of a religious leader. Such a decree possessed the force of law.

*World Zionist Organization (WZO)*, founded at the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1897). The WZO was established as umbrella organization of the Zionist Movement and still exists today. Theodor Herzl served as first president until his death in 1904, and Chaim Weizmann was twice elected as president (1920-31, 1935-46).

*Yeshiva*, pl. *Yeshivot*, literally ‘sitting’, is a Jewish religious educational institution that boys traditionally entered after graduating from the *heder*. The *yeshiva* schedule focuses on the study of religious texts (Torah and Talmud).

*Zionism*, in its modern form, emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A fusion of traditional messianic hopes for return to Zion (Jerusalem) and modern nationalism led to the emergence of a secular Zionist movement at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which called for the establishment of a ‘Jewish national home’ in Palestine. An important early thinker of *Zionism* was Moses Hess (1812-1875), but modern *Zionism* really started with Theodor Herzl’s publication of “Der Judenstaat” (1896). In 1897, at the First Zionist Congress in Basel, the *World Zionist Movement (WZO)* was founded as umbrella organization of various Zionist institutions. *Zionism* was a broad concept, and accordingly, there were many political and cultural expressions from socialist interpretations to those rejecting a sovereign state to the mainstream political *Zionism* of Herzl. Though after the establishment of the State of Israel, *Zionism* is seen as *the* great project of modern Jewish history, it was only one among many political movements developed by East European Jewry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and definitely not the largest!

*Zionist Socialist Workers Party* (Russ. *Sionisty-Sotsialisty*, or SS), often just referred to as *Zionist Socialists*, was a socialist territorialist party founded in 1905. The *Zionist Socialists* had seceded from *Poale Zion* due to ideological conflicts; they endorsed an autonomous Jewish territory but opposed the Palestinocentrism of *Poale Zion*, and most of the group’s energy went into practical revolutionary work in Russia. The party soon emerged as the second largest Jewish workers’ party in Russia (after the *Bund*). N. Syrkin was its most prominent leader.

(The glossary is mainly based on Haumann 2010, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, and *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz* online)

## 2 Biographies.

*Axelrod, Pavel Borisovich*, 1850-1928. Axelrod was born into a poor Jewish family near the town of Mogilev in the *Pale of Settlement*. He started his revolutionary activity for the populist movement in Russia in the 1870s and fled to Switzerland in 1874. In Swiss exile, and after a brief flirt with the *Hibbat Zion* movement in response to the pogroms of 1881/2, he turned to Marxism. Co-founder of the *Emancipation of Labor* group, Axelrod contributed a great deal to the development of Russian Social Democracy. In 1899 Axelrod obtained Swiss citizenship and continued to be actively engaged in both the Socialist International and the Russian Social Democracy. He edited the latter's official journal *Iskra* and became leader of the Menshevik faction after 1903. Axelrod was enrolled at the University of Zürich for many years. He studied philosophy from WT 1882 until ST 1884, law from ST 1885 until ST 1888, and again philosophy in WT 1888. In the mid-1880s he settled at Zürich's Mühlegasse with his wife and children, where he also accommodated various students from the Tsarist Empire.<sup>1</sup>

*Charney, Daniel*, 1888-1959. Charney, born near Minsk, was an important Yiddish poet and journalist. He suffered from an illness since his early childhood and spent time in various sanatoriums; among them one in Switzerland. His brother Shmuel Niger lived in Bern between 1910 and 1912 and worked towards a dissertation at the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Bern. Charney joined him in the Bern colony, though he did not study. While for his brother, dedication to the cause of socialist Zionism is documented, Charney does not say anything about his own engagement in politics. He became known as Yiddish journalist, lived in various European cities and finally settled in New York City in 1941.<sup>2</sup>

*Farbstein, David*, 1868-1953. Farbstein grew up in a traditional Jewish milieu in Warsaw but soon distanced himself from the Orthodox upbringing. He first moved to Berlin for his studies and joined the *Russisch-Jüdischer Wissenschaftlicher Verein*; there he became friends with Nahman Syrkin. In 1894 he moved to Zürich and then Bern, where he graduated from the Faculty of Law with a dissertation on "the legal status of the free and unfree worker in Talmudic law" in 1896. In 1897, Farbstein received Swiss citizenship and joined the Social Democratic Party in Zürich. He was active in politics in the canton of Zürich and eventually became the first Jewish member of the Swiss parliament (*Nationalrat*, 1922-1938). According to his own testimony, Farbstein had been an active Zionist since his youth in Warsaw and at the same time had always inclined towards a socialist perspective on the 'Jewish question'. He wrote for Zionist newspapers and was the motor behind the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1897). At the congress, he held a speech on the economic and socio-political implications of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Axelrod, Pavel Borisovich", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, and Ascher 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. „Charney, Daniel“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006.

the Zionist idea and therewith clearly positioned himself with the left wing of the movement.

In Swiss politics, he engaged in the fight against Anti-Semitism and social inequality.<sup>3</sup>

*Luxemburg, Rosa*, 1871-1919. She was born into a Jewish merchant family near Warsaw and joined the Polish revolutionary movement as a schoolgirl. Luxemburg escaped imprisonment in Russia and immigrated to Switzerland at the age of 18. In Zürich, she studied political philosophy from WT 1889/90 until WT 1896/97; during that time, she changed her place of residence every semester, moving around between various addresses in Oberstrass, Fluntern and Hottingen. Luxemburg continued to work for the Polish revolutionary underground in Zürich and met her lifetime comrade Leo Jogiches. In 1898, Luxemburg moved to Germany, received citizenship and became a leading figure of the revolutionary left wing of German Social Democracy. She remained active in the Polish movement, wrote for various socialist newspapers, and also assumed responsibilities in the Socialist International. In 1916, Luxemburg co-founded the *Spartakus* group which eventually developed into the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). She was murdered by German army officers in January 1919.<sup>4</sup>

*Machlin, David*, 1879-1952. Machlin was born in Odessa. He was enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy (II) at the University of Zürich from WT 1904 until WT 1905/06, and apparently demanded his diploma only in 1910. Machlin was a central figure in the *Foreign Committee of the Bund*. In 1906, Machlin was expelled from Swiss territory for his allegedly 'anarchist' doings and for trying to build a bomb, even though he protested that the *Bund* was a Social Democratic organization and that he had nothing to do with terrorist activities. He returned to Russia and was active in Bundist circles. After the establishment of the Soviet Union, Machlin was repeatedly arrested. He probably died in a labor camp in Kasachstan.<sup>5</sup>

*Medem (-Birenzweig), Gina*, 1888-1977. Gina Birenzweig was born in Russian Poland. She was an active Bundist both in Swiss exile and in the Russian Empire and later married her comrade Vladimir Medem. She moved to Bern to study at the Faculty of Philosophy in 1904/05. After the 1905 revolution, Gina Medem returned to Russian Poland for political work but had to escape imprisonment and again moved to Switzerland in 1909. Not much is known about her life after Vladimir's death; but she seems to have stayed in the United States of America, earned her money as a journalist and joined the Communist Party.<sup>6</sup>

*Medem, Vladimir*, 1879-1923. Medem was born in the province of Courland. His family was very assimilated; Vladimir was baptized into the Orthodox Church as a child in order to save him from discrimination. Medem in fact identified as a Russian and a Marxist during his youth; he was expelled from Kiev University as a consequence of his leading role in the student riots of 1899. Settled in Minsk, Medem became close friends with Bundist activists. His increasing

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. „Farbstein, David Zevi“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, Zweig-Strauss 2002, Farbstein 1954, and *Protokoll des 1. Zionistenkongresses in Basel vom 29. bis 31. August 1897*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. „Luxemburg, Rosa“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, Netti 1966.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mayoraz 2010 and *Matrikeledition der Universität Zürich*, <http://www.matrikel.uzh.ch>.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. G. Medem 1950.

association with the *Bund* also marked his 'return to Judaism'. After imprisonment, Medem escaped to Bern. He studied at the Faculty of Philosophy from WT 1901/02 until WT 1902/03, but his main interest was political work for the *Bund*. He became secretary of the *Foreign Committee of the Bund*, attended various congresses of the *Bund* and of the Russian Social Democratic Party and contributed to different socialist periodicals. Vladimir Medem was deeply concerned with the fate of the Jewish masses and one of the early proponents of the *Bund's* 'national program'. After his return to Russia, Medem was imprisoned in 1915 and only released when the German army took Warsaw. He became the ideological leader of the *Bund* in Poland but had to leave Eastern Europe due to his critical attitude towards the Bolshevik government. Medem died in New York City.<sup>7</sup>

*Weizmann, Chaim*, 1874-1952. Born near Pinsk in the *Pale of Settlement* as son of a poor Jewish timber merchant, Weizmann received traditional Jewish education and experienced a proto-Zionist environment already as a child. In order to circumvent the NC for Jewish students in Russia, Weizmann enrolled at the Darmstadt Polytechnic in 1892 and transferred to Berlin after one year. In Berlin, he joined the *Russisch-Jüdischer Wissenschaftlicher Verein*, the first Zionist student organization founded by Russian-Jewish students at a university in the West, and became friends with Nahman Syrkin, Leo Motzkin and others. In 1898, Weizmann moved to Switzerland in order to complete his doctorate in Chemistry at the University of Fribourg. He became frequent guest to the Russian-Jewish student colony in Bern, where he engaged in the political struggles between internationalist socialists, Bundists, and Zionists. In 1901, at the age of 27, he was called to Geneva as assistant lecturer. Weizmann was torn between his academic career and his dedication to the *World Zionist Movement*. Just before the fifth Zionist Congress in Basel (1901), Weizmann and other young Russian Zionists founded the 'Democratic Fraction' which opposed Herzl's political Zionism and promoted practical work with regard to the building of cultural and social institutions in Eretz Israel. Weizmann represented a practically-oriented, revolutionary form of Zionism common among Russian-Jewish students in the West. In 1904, Weizmann moved to England for both his career as Chemist and for his Zionist work. He eventually became one of the most important leaders in the Zionist movement and twice served as president of the WZO (1920-31, 1935-46). After the establishment of the State of Israel, Weizmann was elected as its first president.<sup>8</sup>

*Syrkin, Nahman*, 1868-1924. Syrkin was born in Mogilev and received Jewish education by a private tutor. His family moved to Minsk in 1884, where he eventually graduated from a Russian state school. Syrkin joined the local *Hibbat Zion* group but also maintained ties with revolutionary circles. He had to leave Russia for imminent arrest and went to Berlin (1888), where he was a founding member of the *Russisch-Jüdischer Wissenschaftlicher Verein*. It was during his time in Berlin that Syrkin developed his theory of a complete synthesis of socialism and Zionism, for

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. „Medem, Vladimir“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, and Medem 1923 (3 vols.).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. „Weizmann, Chaim“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, and Weizmann 1949.

which he became well-known. Syrkin attended the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1897); he was the vociferous ideologist of socialist Zionism and often caused scandals for his attack on the 'bourgeois' and orthodox dominance of the WZO. In 1904, Syrkin seceded from the WZO and was active as leader of the territorialists. He emigrated to the United States in 1909 and there joined *Po'ale Zion*. Syrkin also settled in Switzerland for some time; he was enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in Zürich (WT 1897/98) and transferred to Bern together with his future wife (ST 1898-ST 1899). In Bern, Syrkin was first active member of the Akad. Zionistenverein but left the same due to differences regarding evaluation of the WZO. He remained politically active as leader of a *Zionist Socialist* circle of the Bern colony.<sup>9</sup>

*Zhitlovsky, Chaim*, 1865-1943. Zhitlovsky was born in a *shtetl* near Vitebsk. He became a socialist at the age of 15 and joined the Russian populist movement. The pogroms of the early 1880s, according to his own account, initiated his 'return to Judaism'; he began to study the history of the Jewish people and to promote the Yiddish language and culture as basis of a Jewish national identity. Zhitlovsky rejected Zionism as reactionary movement; he believed that Jewish life was possible in the diaspora and that it should be organized on the basis of socialist principles. In 1888, Zhitlovsky moved to Berlin and then settled in Zürich for three years (1888-1891). He was enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy in ST 1891, but was mainly engaged in politics. In 1892, he moved to Bern and continued studying philosophy (WT 1892/93-ST 1893). In Bern, Zhitlovsky helped found the *Russian Socialist Revolutionaries* (SRs) in exile and published socialist literature in Yiddish. In 1903, he left Bern and toured the US in order to convince the Jewish immigrant masses of his ideas. After 1908, Zhitlovsky made New York City his permanent home. Zhitlovsky became known as the chief proponent of Diaspora nationalism and the theoretician of Yiddishism. With his synthesis of Jewish nationalism and socialism, he influenced the political programs of all Jewish national parties emerging among Eastern European Jewry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly that of the *Bund*. As Weinberg writes, Zhitlvosky, throughout his life, searched "for an appropriate ideological formulation that would incorporate his opposing views"<sup>10</sup> of socialism and Judaism. He also represents a perfect example of the young, secularized Russian-Jewish generation of the 1890s and 1900s; Zhitlovsky moved in between ideas in his search for the right solution to the 'Jewish question'. After a flirt with *Hibbat Zion*, he was an activist in the general Russian revolutionary movement, provoked the establishment of the SRs, became a member of the *Bund* for few years, and after the Kishinev pogrom became a proponent of *territorialism*. Later, he struggled with his position towards the Soviet Union. The only constant in his ideology remained the two pillars of Jewish nationalism and socialism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. „Syrkin, Nachman“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, “Syrkin, Nahman” and “Socialist Zionism”, *Historical Dictionary of Zionism*, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Weinberg 1996: 91.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. „Zhitlovsky, Chaim“, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2006, Weinberg 1996: 83-144, and Zhitlovsky 1935.

### **3 List of Governing Emperors of the Romanov Family from 1762-1917.**

- Catherine II *the Great*, 1762-1796
- Paul I, 1796-1801
- Alexander I *the Blessed*, 1801-1825
- Constantine I, December 1825 (disputed)
- Nicholas I, 1825-1855
- Alexander II *the Liberator*, 1855-1881
- Alexander III *the Peace-Maker*, 1881-1894
- Nicholas II, 1894-1917

# 4 The Most Common Jewish Surnames in the Russian Empire.

## Appendix B The Most Common Jewish Surnames in the Russian Empire at the Beginning of the 20th Century

In Table B.1, the 10 most frequently used Jewish surnames are given for each of the 11 guberniyas with the greatest Jewish population for the years indicated. One of the most useful sources for studying Russian Jewish surnames are the lists of voters for *Gosudarstvennaya Duma* (Russian parliament) published in 1906, 1907 and 1912. The data in Table B.1 were obtained primarily from these lists. For those guberniyas for which the complete lists of voters were not available, calculations were made using different sources for different districts. For Vilna and Minsk guberniyas, lists of voters for two different years were used. For Kiev and Kherson guberniyas, address books for Kiev (*Ves' Kiev*, 1916) and Odessa (*Ves' Odessa*, 1914), respectively, were used. These cities are the largest cities in their guberniyas. Address book information was added to data for other districts for which lists of voters are available. For Podolia, *Ves' Yugo-Zapadnyy Krai* (1914) was used for five districts; this data was added to that obtained for the other seven districts from the 1912 lists of voters. Because of the variety of sources used, the figures can be used only to estimate the proportion of frequency of surnames.

Table B.1  
Most Common Jewish Surnames for Eleven Guberniyas of the Russian Empire

Vilna (1906, 1912)	Kovno (1907)	Kherson (1906, 1914)	Mogilev (1912)
Levin	Levin	Kagan	Kagan
Kats	Kagan	Rabinovich	Gurevich
Gurvich	Kaplan	Grinberg	Pevzner
Gordon	Kats	Feldman	Levin
Kagan	Shapiro	Brodski	Levin
Altperovich	Shapiro	Levin	Ginzburg
Shapiro	Fridman	Vainshlein	Rabinovich
Kaplan	Sher	Goldshberg	Levitski
Rabinovich	Segal	Goldshlein	Dvorkin
Abramovich	Rabinovich	Kats	Khojfits
Grodno (1912)	Minsk (1907, 1912)	Vitchesk (1913)	
Kaplan	Levin	Kagan	Kagan
Levin	Lavshits	Levin	Gurevich
Lev	Kagan	Gurevich	Pevzner
Epshtejn	Kaplan	Ginzburg	Levin
Kagan	Epshtejn	Ioffe	Ginzburg
Goldsherg	Shapiro	Rabinovich	Rabinovich
Fridman	Fridman	Sverdlov	Levitski
Shapiro	Fridman	Rapport	Dvorkin
Rabinovich	Rabinovich	Shapiro	Khojfits
Vainshlein	Gonelik	Lavshits	Lishits
Volhynia (1906)	Kiev (1907, 1916)	Podolia (1912, 1914)	Bessarabia (1907)
Kats	Kagan	Kats	Kagan
Feldman	Rabinovich	Lerner	Shvartsman
Shapiro	Ostrovski	Rabinovich	Rabinovich
Melamed	Zaslavski	Kagan	Kojman
Kagan	Brodski	Geilberberg	Kojman
Vagner	Shapiro	Kats	Grinberg
Shapiro	Kats	Beznik	Vaisman
Fridman	Feldman	Shvarts	Feldman
Lerner	Fridman	Shvarts	Feldman
Finkelshtein	Yampolski	Spektor	Lerner
		Gel'man	Geilberberg

Sources: Gosudarstvennaya Duma voter lists, 1906, 1907 and 1912; *Ves' Kiev*, 1916; *Ves' Odessa*, 1914; *Ves' Yugo-Zapadnyy Krai*, 1914.

Lists for other regions of the Russian Empire were also consulted. These included lists for cities or towns with relatively large numbers of Jews within the Pale with large Jewish populations (Riga, Kremenchuk and Ekaterinoslav), three cities outside the Pale with large Jewish populations (Riga, Petersburg and Khar'kov) and the guberniya of Courland. Generally speaking, Jews from Courland were the only group descended from individuals who had lived in that region prior to the 18th century, when surnames were assumed in the Russian Empire. For all other regions, listed in Table B.2, a majority of the Jews who were residents at the beginning of the 20th century were descendants of Jews who had migrated into these regions during the 19th century.

Table B.2  
Most Common Jewish Surnames in Other Parts of the Russian Empire

Chernigov (1906)	Poltava (1912)	Kremenchuk (1912)	Ekaterinoslav (1912)
Levin	Krichevskij	Levin	Levin
Palei	Zaslavskij	Brodskij	Kagan
Kaplan	Struckij	Gurevich	Brodskij
Frenkel'	Brodskij	Rabinovich	Vershinski
Nepomnyashchij	Sokolov	Bezalkov	Goldsherg
Rapport	Nikel'berg	Kaplan	Shapiro
Rabinovich	Rabinovich	Shmeljanski	Rabinovich
Kaganov	Orlov	Kanavskij	Ginzburg
Gurevich	Boguslavskij	Kagan	Umanckij
Kaganov	Amshilavskij	Shor	Ostrovskij
Courland (1906)	Riga (1907)	Petersburg (1902)*	Khar'kov (1915)**
Yakobson	Levin	Ginzburg	Gurevich
Veynberg	Yakobson	Levin	Levin
Kan	Ioffe	Rabinovich	Kagan
Berman	Gurevich	Kagan	Rabinovich
Minkelson	Kan	Rozenshal'	Ishbits
Yudelovitch	Fridman	Gordon	Ginzburg
Ioffe	Rapport	Lar'e	Kreivitskij
Blumberg	Bezin	Lar'e	Kats
Feldman	Shapiro	Rapport	Shapiro
Feldman	Rabinovich	Gurvich	Epshtejn

\*Source: *Adressnye imeny i imena-Peterburga*, 1902.

\*\*Source: *Ves' Khar'kov*, 1915.

The composition of the lists of the most common Jewish surnames for big cities was generally quite different from that of the townlets of the same district. The population of large cities, including Vilna and Kiev, derived from multiple socially and economically inspired migrations—including such events as the forced expulsions of Jews from villages during the 19th century. On the other hand, the populations of the provincial townlets were composed mainly of descendants of Jews who had lived in the same or neighboring district prior to the 18th century. Perhaps the most dramatic example is seen in the juxtaposition of surnames from Kiev and its surrounding townlets as shown in Table B.3.

The lists in Table B.3 have only one name in common: Kagan. The Kiev list is comprised of surnames that were common in many regions of the Russian Empire. Other than Kagan, the major surnames of the townlets all include the suffix *skij* and are derived primarily from place names; the only exception is Kasganski.

The most frequently used Jewish surnames can be organized into several distinct groups. The first group includes surnames including Koben or Levite origin, such as Kagan, Kagan, Kan, Kats, Levin, Ley, Levit, Segal. The second group is comprised of rabbinical surnames, such as Shapiro, Lavshits, Gal'perin, Gurlevich, Epshtejn, Ioffe, Margolis, Rabinovich. Surnames from these two groups were found in considerable numbers in many regions of Russia. The frequency of other surname types varied by region. Occupational surnames were especially common in Volhynia; Melamed, Vagner, Lerner, Shmidler, Kessel'man, Kolyar. Surnames based on personal characteristics were common in Bessarabia.

## 5 Types and Patterns of Jewish Surnames in the Russian Empire.

(Notes AM, based on Beider, *Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire*, 1993: 1-70.)

### General characteristics: (pp. 1-14)

- Government ukases of 1804 and 1835 required that Jews adopt surnames and do not change them. Technically, there was no regulation concerning the selection/ construction of surnames. But the *Kahal* authorities who were in charge of implementing the surname process in the newly adopted parts of the Russian Empire apparently resorted to some obvious methodology in constructing surnames.
- The quite artificial nature of the surnaming process for Jews in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia produced unique features for Jewish surnames. Artificial and toponymic surnames, in particular, are much more common among Jews than Christians.
- Many Jews did not use, and sometimes did not even know, their surname, but continued to use nicknames or traditional schemes ('X ben Y' in Hebrew; 'X bar Y' in Aramaic; 'XY's' in Yiddish) as specification of their identity.
- Name changes were technically illegal until 1917 (with a few exceptions, e.g. for baptized Jews). Hence, most Jews in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century bore the same surnames that their ancestors had adopted 100 years earlier.
- Diminutives and nicknames point to Jewish origin. Apparently, the Church wanted to differentiate and referred to Jews in diminutives, which the Church found ridiculous but which Jews turned into endearment. Nicknames are often based on occupation, personal characteristics, place names, etc.
- Yiddish suffix -l is very common in Lithuanian territories (e.g. Berel, Yankel)
- Double names are characteristic for Jews; Slavic Christians rarely had double names.

### Types of Jewish Surnames:

- 1) **Surnames indicating Kohen or Levite origin.** (pp. 17-19)
  - Kagan/ Kogan/ Kogon
  - Kan/ Kahn/ Cahn/ Kon/ Kohn/ Cohn
  - Kogen/ Kogin/ Kojgen/ Koin/ Kagane/ Kane
  - Rare patronymic surnames derived from Kohen origin are: Kaganovich, Kaganskij, Kaganovskij, Kaganov.
  - Kaplan (Polish for 'priest'); Kaplanov, Kaplanovich, Kaplansky are patronymic surnames derived from Kaplan/ Kaplun.
  - Pleban (another Polish word for 'priest')
  - Kats/ Katz is an abbreviation of 'Kohen Tsedek'
  - Levin/ Lev / Levit/ Levi/ Levy/ Lewi/ Loewy

- Patronymic surnames, not common: Levitov, Levitin, Leviev, Levizon
- (Levinson)
- Segal is an acronym for 'Segan Leviyah' (associate of the Levitic order)
- Patronyms derived from Segal/ Sigal relatively common: Segalchik, Segaliovich, Shagalov, Sigalov, Sigalovich)

## 2) **Rabbinical surnames.** (pp. 19-21)

- Very common → cf. list of most common names!
- Derived from place names: Auerbach/ Averbach; Bacharach; Bloch; Broda; Epstein; Ettinger; Frankel/ Frenkel; Gordon; Günzburg/ Ginzburg; Halberstadt; Heilpern/ Galperin; Horowitz/ Gurevich/ Gorovits; Katzenellenbogen; Landau; Lipschütz/ Lifshits; Luria; Mints; Morawtschik; Rapoport; Spira/ Shapiro; Treves.
- Based on the Hebrew lexicon: Ashkenazi; Chefetz; Jaffe/ Ioffe; Margoloth/Margolis; Schor; Teomim; Zak.
- Rabinovich

## 3) **Surnames derived from toponyms.** (pp. 21-29)

- Quite common, because naming people after their place of origin is useful in the formation of new surnames. Almost all Jewish surnames in the Russian Empire were based on places in the Pale of Settlement. Usually either without a suffix or with Slavic suffixes –skij, -er, -in, -ov, -an, -shchik, -ets.

## 4) **Patronymic surnames** (pp. 29-35)

- Surnames derived from masculine given names; if the first name is based on Hebrew/ Aramaic or Yiddish/ German lexicon, surname is almost certainly Jewish.
- Common patronymic elements used in constructing Jewish surnames are Slavic suffixes: -ovich, -ov, -in, -skij, -uk, -chik, -chuk, -enko, -enok, -an.
- German or Yiddish elements for suffixes: -zon, -s, -kind, -shtam, -ele, -khen, -i.
- Surnames that end in -berg, -tal, -feld, -shtejn, and which have Jewish given names as first part are considered patronymic-artificial names.
- Hebrew or Yiddish first names are sometimes used as surnames without suffix added, e.g. Wolf, Salomon, Marx.

## 5) **Metronymic surnames** (pp. 35-39)

- A very important group of surnames for Jews in the Russian Empire but rare among other ethnicities in Europe; thus, a surname derived from a female given name generally points towards Jewish heritage.

- Suffixes used in Metronymic surnames include -in, -ovich, -ov, -ich/ its, -uk, -chuk, -skij, -enko or the Yiddish possessive -s. Others are -zon, -er, -gauz, -man. Sometimes artificial extensions such as –stejn are also added to feminine given names.

6) **Occupational surnames** (pp. 39-46)

- Most commonly used suffix (added to adjectives or nouns) is the Slavic -nik.
- Also used: -ovik, -shchik, -tel', -ant, -ets, -uta, -or, -an/un.
- German/ Yiddish suffixes: -er, -maister/mejster, -makher, -firer, -halter, -giser, -shnajder, -brener.
- Surnames derived from tools and workplaces such as Gluz, Grinshpan, -varg ('werk'), -gandel, -koif/kauf.
- The suffix -man was a very productive element in the formation of Jewish surnames, hence there is a large group of names that involves -man! Often added to an object produced (shukh), a work implement (nudl), or a workplace (apteyk, mark, lern).

7) **Surnames derived from personal characteristics** (pp. 46-51)

- Physical features, character, family relationship, social rank, description of dwelling, pet names were not rare among Slavs, either, but if they are Yiddish the Jewish heritage is of course practically guaranteed.
- The above names could also be amended by a suffix.

8) **Artificial surnames** (pp. 51-57)

- Jewish surnames in this group are usually based on German/ Yiddish lexicon and only seldom on Slavic one.

9) **Acronymic surnames** (pp. 57-59)

- Apparently a group of surnames only used by Jews!
- Traditional abbreviations used to designate people of Kohen or Levite origin such as Kats and Segal.
- Abbreviations used to designate certain occupations (Mam, Mats, Shabad, Shats, Shub).
- Artificial surnames constructed from the acronymic names of famous Jewish scholars: names beginning with the element Mahar (MHR), names beginning with R (abbr. for *rabbi*) such as Ran, Rats, Rits, Rambakh.
- Surnames beginning with BR (for *ben ravi*); most of them begin with bar- and are rather short.
- Surnames beginning with Kahr- (for *khatan ravi*); also rather short, one or two syllables added only.

#### 10) **Characteristics of Jewish Surnames** (pp. 60-70)

- Patronymic surnames Abramov, Aleksandrov and Markov, as well as matronymic surname Manin were used by Jews and Russians alike.
- Some surnames derived from Slavic words designating objects or utensils for work, personal characteristics and animals may also be used by Slavic Christians.
- Surnames derived from Ukrainian place names may be Jewish or Ukrainian.
- In rare cases, German and Jewish surnames overlap; but mostly, the vowels and diphthongs differ in Yiddish and German and classification is easy.
- Surnames which are **exclusively Jewish**: Those featuring Hebrew lexical elements; those with distinctly Yiddish elements; surnames merging elements from different languages (Slavic, Yiddish, German, Hebrew, Aramaic); rabbinical surnames (semantics!); surnames indicating Kohen or Levite origin; patronymics and matronymics from biblical names not used by other European peoples (e.g. Gershon), from biblical names in their specifically Jewish form (e.g. Avrum instead of Abraham), or from Jewish given names formed in the post-biblical period (e.g. Menakhem); artificial compound surnames with Jewish given names as first part, with a part based on rabbinical surname, created from plants indigenous to the Near East (e.g. Tsederbaum), or with unusual/ unexpected semantics (e.g. Shtivelberg).

# 6 Number of Students from Russia enrolled at the University of Zürich 1865-1914.

Semester	Students Total	Foreigners Total	Russians Total	Russians Medicine	Russians Phil I and II	Russians other Faculties	Germans
SS 1865	228	?	18	7	7	4	?
WS 1865/66	225	62	10	3	7		
SS 1866	238						
WS 1866/67	254		10	3	7	0	
SS 1867	230						
WS 1867/68	209		8	2	6		
SS 1868	217						
WS 1868/69	231		4	3	1	0	
SS 1869	240						
WS 1869/70	260	?	19	15	4	1	
SS 1870	275	?	19	13	6		
WS 1870/71			18	12	6		
SS 1871	297						
WS 1871/72			42	29	12	1	
SS 1872	355	145n (61w)	74	61	13	0	
WS 1872/73	437 (110w)	211 (96w)	138	101	36	1	22
SS 1873	438 (114w)	230 (112w)	145 (100w)	113	30	2	35 (5w)
WS 1873/74	316 (28w)	101 (26w)	35 (11w)	28	7	0	23
SS 1874	340 (33w)	109 (31w)	27 (13w)	17	10	0	37
WS 1874/75	no numbers						
SS 1875	324 (37w)	105 (27w)	21 (10w)	15	6	0	40
WS 1875/76	330 (33w)	100 (31w)	22 (11w)	17	5	0	30
SS 1876	332 (30w)	111 (27w)	22 (9w)	16 (7w)	6 (2w)	0	43 (2w)
WS 1876/77	314	96 (21w)	16 (6w)	13 (6w)	3	0	35 (2w)
SS 1877	324	104 (14w)	11 (4w)	7 (3w)	4 (1w)	0	49 (1w)
WS 1877/78	328	76 (16w)	10 (3w)	9 (3w)	1	0	32 (2w)
SS 1878	353	95 (17w)	10 (4w)	9 (4w)	1	0	48 (1w)
WS 1878/79	308	66 (13w)	6 (1w)	5 (1w)	1	0	28 (2w)
SS 1879	345	89 (10w)	6	4	2	0	51 (2w) - v.a. Phil.
WS 1879/80	319	70 (13w)	8 (1w)	6 (1w)	2	0	31 (3w)
SS 1880	337	94 (12w)	12 (1w)	7 (1w)	5	0	58 (4w)
WS 1880/81	344	86 (8w)	13 (1w)	10 (1w)	3	0	52 (3w)
SS 1881	349	113 (8w)	13 (2w)	8 (2w)	5	0	70 (3w)
WS 1881/82	351 (14w)	83 (12w)	14 (4w)	12 (4w)	2	0	46 (4w)
SS 1882	355 (17w)	96 (15w)	13 (3w)	11 (3w)	2	0	53 (5w)
WS 1882/83	366 (24w)	102 (22w)	24 (10w)	18 (7w)	6 (3w)	0	36 (3w)
SS 1883	436 (34w)	165 (27w)	31 (13w)	25 (12w)	6 (1w)	0	87 (6w)
WS 1883/84	459 (51w)	146 (40w)	46 (17w)	29 (12w)	15 (5w)	2	50 (6w)
SS 1884	447 (45w)	145 (35w)	29 (11w)	18 (9w)	10 (2w)	1	70 (9w) - Mehrheit Phil.
WS 1884/85	433 (44w)	125 (34w)	32 (13w)	18 (11w)	13 (2w)	1	46 (8w)
SS 1885	437 (45w)	126 (30w)	27 (11w)	14 (8w)	11 (2w)	2	46 (7w)
WS 1885/86	456 (48w)	114 (32w)	24 (8w)	11 (6w)	12 (2w)	1	46 (7w)
SS 1886	471 (53w)	142 (37w)	24 (12w)	11 (7w)	12 (5w)	1	73 (10w)
WS 1886/87	481 (54w)	132 (38w)	27 (12w)	15 (10w)	11 (2w)	1	56 (10w)
SS 1887	526 (53w)	158 (38w)	27 (13w)	16 (11w)	10 (2w)	1	72 (10w)
WS 1887/88	509 (66w)	149 (53w)	37 (20w)	20 (14w)	15 (6w)	2	60 (12w)
SS 1888	508 (64w)	173 (51w)	47 (21w)	28 (15w)	18 (6w)	1	65 (12w)
WS 1888/89	515 (70w)	171 (60w)	65 (30w)	41 (22w)	23 (7w)	1 (1w)	57 (14w)
SS 1889	514 (67w)	179 (58w)	59 (29w)	41 (24w)	17 (4w)	1 (1w)	55 (14w)
WS 1889/90	501 (73w)	168 (64w)	68 (34w)	48 (27w)	19 (6w)	1 (1w)	48 (14w)
SS 1890	549 (72w)	193 (62w)	65 (31w)	41 (23w)	23 (7w)	1 (1w)	64 (14w)
WS 1890/91	537 (68w)	170 (55w)	60 (23w)	32 (16w)	26 (6w)	2 (1w)	57 (19w)
SS 1891	546 (65w)	181 (55w)	60 (26w)	35 (21w)	23 (4w)	2 (1w)	60 (17w)
WS 1891/92	543 (67w)	192 (58w)	70 (27w)	36 (19w)	30 (7w)	4 (1w)	61 (16w)
SS 1892	556 (70w)	213 (62w)	67 (31w)	35 (21w)	27 (8w)	5 (2w)	70 (16w)
WS 1892/93	583 (98w)	229 (90w)	81 (44w)	47 (34w)	31 (8w)	3 (2w)	74 (22w)
SS 1893	600 (111w)	255 (101w)	85 (48w)	47 (35w)	35 (11w)	3 (2w)	85 (25w)
WS 1893/94	627 (123w)	252 (113w)	94 (53w)	52 (39w)	37 (12w)	5 (2w)	82 (33w)
SS 1894	670 (128w)	299 (117w)	92 (54w)	54 (41w)	29 (10w)	9 (3w)	117 (33w)
WS 1894/95	668 (132w)	276 (121w)	97 (56w)	51 (41w)	40 (12w)	6 (3w)	97 (36w)
SS 1895	673 (125w)	304 (112w)	99 (57w)	51 (40w)	43 (14w)	5 (3w)	113 (33w)
WS 1895/96	668 (140w)	304 (128w)	121 (72w)	61 (50w)	55 (20w)	5 (2w)	91 (32w)
SS 1896	672 (141w)	337 (129w)	115 (71w)	58 (49w)	52 (20w)	5 (2w)	118 (36w)
WS 1896/97	674 (132w)	306 (117w)	106 (70w)	70 (58w)	33 (10w)	3 (2w)	110 (33w)
SS 1897	688 (143w)	317 (126w)	110 (71w)	68 (58w)	38 (12w)	4 (1w)	122 (38w)
WS 1897/98	713 (166w)	333 (150w)	135 (91w)	87 (77w)	48 (14w)	0	97 (36w)
SS 1898	701 (164w)	317 (144w)	126 (85w)	87 (77w)	35 (5w)	4 (3w)	98 (35w)
WS 1898/99	713 (169w)	299 (146w)	119 (86w)	91 (78w)	26 (6w)	2 (2w)	93 (38w)
SS 1899	731 (175w)	334 (153w)	129 (87w)	92 (77w)	33 (8w)	4 (2w)	101 (38w)
WS 1899/1900	737 (170w)	330 (150w)	118 (85w)	93 (81w)	30 (5w)	2 (1w)	93 (33)
SS 1900	731 (174w)	355 (156w)	144 (97w)	93 (84w)	44 (10w)	7 (3w)	116 (28w)
WS 1900/01	700 (137w)	289 (115w)	103 (69w)	74 (64w)	25 (8w)	4 (1w)	98 (23w)
SS 1901	703 (132w)	284 (109w)	102 (70w)	69 (58w)	29 (11w)	4 (1w)	97 (22w)
WS 1901/02	670 (121w)	239 (97w)	98 (67w)	67 (57w)	27 (9w)	4 (2w)	66 (16w)
SS 1902	764 (151w)	298 (113w)	125 (84w)	81 (69w)	37 (13w)	6 (2w)	93 (18w)
WS 1902/03	899 (219w)	403 (194w)	223 (155w)	149 (127w)	62 (22w)	11 (6w)	100 (20w)
SS 1903	945 (255)	469 (232w)	265 (193w)	195 (170w)	58 (18w)	12 (5w)	130 (18w)
WS 1903/04	955 (243w)	440 (220w)	251 (183w)	176 (159w)	62 (18w)	10 (4w)	112 (20w)
SS 1904	991 (241w)	487 (220w)	278 (182w)	176 (154w)	79 (20w)	21 (8w)	123 (19w)
WS 1904/05	1037 (253w)	516 (223w)	305 (184w)	179 (151w)	94 (24w)	31 (8w)	122 (17w)
SS 1905	1084 (245w)	572 (217w)	328 (176w)	179 (137w)	115 (32w)	32 (6w)	146 (15w)
WS 1905/06	1131 (248w)	582 (213w)	325 (166w)	182 (138w)	120 (25w)	22 (3w)	127 (13w)
SS 1906	1283 (276w)	728 (243w)	424 (189w)	223 (136w)	153 (43w)	46 (9w)	157 (15w)
WS 1906/07	1339 (332w)	756 (293w)	455 (231w)	263 (180w)	145 (46w)	45 (5w)	135 (19w)
SS 1907	1418 (360w)	779 (319w)	480 (250w)	262 (182w)	167 (65w)	49 (3w)	139 (25w)
WS 1907/08	1489 (384w)	763 (335w)	459 (257w)	262 (194w)	156 (58w)	39 (4w)	130 (26w)
SS 1908	1471 (397w)	760 (346w)	464 (269w)	266 (202w)	158 (62w)	40 (5w)	134 (26w)
WS 1908/09	1474 (353w)	736 (311w)	469 (255w)	262 (194w)	156 (53w)	51 (8w)	115 (22w)
SS 1909	1470 (346w)	737 (299w)	467 (251w)	260 (186w)	154 (57w)	52 (8w)	117 (22w)
WS 1909/10	1474 (318w)	704 (263w)	447 (216w)	234 (152w)	156 (58w)	56 (6w)	90 (19w)
SS 1910	1448 (311w)	681 (247w)	402 (200w)	212 (142w)	134 (53w)	55 (5w)	107 (18w)
WS 1910/11	1451 (290w)	649 (226w)	362 (175w)	193 (121w)	124 (50w)	45 (3w)	105 (16w)
SS 1911	1405 (258w)	590 (188w)	301 (133w)	148 (84w)	110 (42w)	41 (5w)	118 (18w)
WS 1911/12	1421 (226w)	557 (164w)	307 (115w)	159 (64w)	109 (46w)	37 (3w)	86 (16w)
SS 1912	1383 (221w)	557 (152w)	285 (104w)	144 (57w)	112 (42w)	26 (3w)	103 (15w)
WS 1912/13	1480 (216w)	574 (140w)	299 (98w)	151 (54w)	121 (39w)	26 (4w)	103 (14w)
SS 1913	1501 (217w)	604 (130w)	304 (90w)	158 (47w)	123 (40w)	23 (3w)	130 (14w)
WS 1913/14	1688 (217w)	711 (128w)	434 (86w)	285 (43w)	119 (39w)	30 (4w)	98 (15w)
SS 1914	1667 (211w)	720 (113w)	422 (72w)	289 (35w)	106 (34w)	27 (3w)	111 (15w)
WS 1914/15							

# 7 Number of Students from Russia enrolled at the University of Bern 1865-1914.

Semester	Students Total	Foreigners Total	Russians Total	Russians Medicine	Russians Phil I and II	Russians Other Faculties	Germans
WS 1864/65	180	4	1 (Polen)	1	0	0	1
SS 1865	177	6	2 (Polen)	2	0	0	3
WS 1865/66	235	10	4	4	0	0	4
SS 1866	no numbers						
WS 1866/67	no numbers						
SS 1867	224	18	5	5	0	0	6 (?)
WS 1867/68	242	10	3	3	0	0	5
SS 1868	242	10	3	3	0	0	5 or 6
WS 1868/69	234	15	4	4	0	0	1 (?)
SS 1869	226	10	2	2	0	0	3
WS 1869/70	261	10	2	2	0	0	4 or 5
SS 1870	271	11	2	2	0	0	4
WS 1870/71	271	12	2	2	0	0	4
SS 1871	270	13	4	4	0	0	5
WS 1871/72	266	9	3	3	0	0	4
SS 1872	267	12	1	1	0	0	5
WS1872/73	262 (3w)	12 (3w in Med.)	4 (1w)	3	0	0	5
SS 1873	272 (5w in Med.)	15	7	7	0	0	4
WS 1873/74	275 (26w)	47 (26w)	31	30	0	1	9
SS 1874	267 (34w)	53	39	34	3	2	8
WS 1874/75	285 (32w)	54	37	32	3	2	6
SS 1875	311 (27w)	51	31	28	1	2	6
WS 1875/76	282 (30w)	48	32	27	2	3	5
SS 1876	286 (27w)	47	30	26	2	2	10
WS 1876/77	311 (30w)	46	30	26	2	2	6
SS 1877	272 (18w)	27	15	13	0	2	5
WS 1877/78	295 (19w)	28	16	14	1	1	9
SS 1878	283 (16w)	32	19	18	1	0	5
WS 1878/79	304 (21w)	35	28	27	1	0	5
SS 1879	323 (17w)	41	27	25	2	0	8
WS 1879/80	342 (33w)	56	37	33	4	0	9
SS 1880	351 (31w)	66	42	37	5	0	10
WS 1880/81	360 (28w)	66	39	36	3	0	7
SS 1881	362 (22w)	56	31	29	2	0	11
WS 1881/82	385 (31w)	63 (30w)	42 (27w)	40 (27w)	2	0	8 (1w)
SS 1882	377 (30w)	60	40	38	2	0	
WS 1882/83	383 (35w)	64	39	34	5	0	
SS 1883	362 (36w)	59	28	26	2	0	
WS 1883/84	400 (36w)	57	34	31	3	0	
SS 1884	409 (42w)	69	46	43	3	0	7
WS 1884/85	437 (53w)	85	57	50	6	1	
SS 1885	430 (43w)	73	47	42	4	1	
WS 1885/86	490 (57w)	81	53	43	10	0	
SS 1886	482 (50w)	92	57	44	13	0	
WS 1886/87	539 (52w)	92	68	51	17	0	
SS 1887	512 (35w)	76	50	40	10	0	
WS 1887/88	527 (57w)	103 (51w)	73 (46w)	60 (43w)	12 (3w)	1	15 (2w)
SS 1888	497 (55w)	94	66	53	11	2	
WS 1888/89	503 (52w)	97 (50w)	73 (47w)	61 (43w)	11 (4w)	1	9 (2w)
SS 1889	529 (52w)	99 (47w)	74 (45w)	62 (43w)	11 (2w)	1	12 (1w)
WS 1889/90	567 (64w)	108	78	63	14	1	
SS 1890	no numbers						
WS 1890/91	546 (75w)	122	87	72	12	3	
SS 1891	560 (79w)	143	104	85	16	3	
WS 1891/92	534 (80w)	126 (69w)	93 (55w)	70 (50w)	22 (4w)	1 (1w)	11 (6w)
SS 1892	506 (77w)	142 (68w)	92 (53w)	63 (49w)	28 (3w)	1 (1w)	26 (5w)
WS 1892/93	567 (82w)	159	94	65	28	1	
SS 1893	533 (71w)	148	89	55	33	1	
WS 1893/94	566 (76w)	157 (59w)	87 (49w)	48 (35w)	39 (14w)	0	30 (6w)
SS 1894	564 (80w)	160 (60w)	80 (49w)	49 (35w)	31 (14w)	0	37 (9w)
WS 1894/95	630 (82w)	186 (63w)	97 (52w)	55 (38w)	41 (14w)	1	39 (8w)
SS 1895	604 (80w)	170	88	47	40	1	
WS 1895/96	625 (76w)	180 (55w)	93 (46w)	44 (36w)	48 (10w)	1	38 (5w)
SS 1896	588 (65w)	162	82	33	48	1	
WS 1896/97	668 (84w)	187 (61w)	105 (53w)	55 (38w)	50 (15w)	0	37 (5w)
SS 1897	649 (84w)	194	101	52	48	1 (1w)	
WS 1897/98	677 (85w)	191 (65w)	105 (57w)	56 (42w)	48 (14w)	1 (1w)	43 (1w)
SS 1898	661 (84w)	194 (59w)	101 (52w)	49 (36w)	50 (15w)	2 (1w)	50 (2w)
WS 1898/99	776 (117w)	247 (87w)	142 (73w)	73 (57w)	68 (15w)	1 (1w)	55 (5w)
SS 1899	817 (132w)	269 (106w)	158 (89w)	82 (72w)	75 (16w)	1 (1w)	57 (8w)
WS 1899/1900	893 (179w)	327 (143w)	194 (122w)	111 (97w)	80 (22w)	3 (3w)	61 (5w)
SS 1900	962 (193w)	362 (149w)	208 (119w)	117 (99w)	90 (19w)	1 (1w)	68 (9w)
WS 1900/01	1111 (303w)	496 (255w)	329 (221w)	208 (181w)	116 (38w)	4 (2w)	68 (11w)
SS 1901	1054 (276w)	448 (229w)	298 (201w)	195 (169w)	97 (29w)	6 (3w)	67 (8w)
WS 1901/02	1161 (364w)	542 (322w)	403 (299w)	290 (266w)	106 (30w)	6 (3w)	54 (5w)
SS 1902	1151 (339w)	532 (302w)	402 (284w)	283 (256w)	113 (32w)	5 (3w)	64 (7w)
WS 1902/03	1228 (410w)	606 (373w)	454 (344w)	330 (306w)	119 (36w)	5 (2w)	68 (7w)
SS 1903	1257 (379w)	599 (336w)	428 (320w)	301 (278w)	122 (41w)	4 (1w)	103 (11w)
WS 1903/04	1418 (492w)	727 (442w)	556 (425w)	394 (369w)	155 (53w)	7 (3w)	103 (12w)
SS 1904	1412 (471w)	734 (419w)	559 (405w)	376 (346w)	174 (56w)	8 (3w)	106 (9w)
WS 1904/05	1561 (538w)	846 (486w)	660 (474w)	440 (399w)	205 (72w)	14 (3w)	106 (7w)
SS 1905	1528 (514w)	825 (457w)	636 (443w)	422 (375w)	200 (66w)	13 (2w)	105 (10w)
WS 1905/06	1529 (475w)	784 (418w)	593 (402w)	379 (341w)	201 (60w)	11 (1w)	114 (13w)
SS 1906	1585 (486w)	819 (420w)	614 (402w)	372 (329w)	224 (71w)	14 (2w)	117 (12w)
WS 1906/07	1626 (506w)	837 (441w)	646 (416w)	394 (338w)	226 (73w)	22 (5w)	97 (14w)
SS 1907	1661 (515w)	877 (454w)	709 (430w)	408 (341w)	251 (81w)	46 (8w)	78 (15w)
WS 1907/08	1712 (519w)	882 (459w)	716 (436w)	420 (353w)	246 (75w)	47 (8w)	56 (11w)
SS 1908	1658 (471w)	825 (410w)	668 (387w)	369 (304w)	252 (78w)	42 (5w)	60 (12w)
WS 1908/09	1619 (420w)	751 (370w)	592 (348w)	327 (268w)	222 (75w)	40 (5w)	55 (10w)
SS 1909	1567 (399w)	690 (333w)	521 (308w)	279 (233w)	206 (72w)	35 (3w)	58 (9w)
WS 1909/10	1626 (345w)	698 (283w)	456 (263w)	262 (208w)	163 (54w)	30 (1w)	140 (13w)
SS 1910	1540 (326w)	612 (256w)	418 (238w)	249 (194w)	142 (43w)	27 (1w)	100 (11w)
WS 1910/11	1477 (290w)	516 (208w)	396 (189w)	204 (148w)	138 (40w)	23 (1w)	49 (10w)
SS 1911	1460 (271w)	483 (184w)	317 (158w)	183 (124w)	116 (33w)	16 (1w)	67 (15w)
WS 1911/12	1519 (252w)	451 (159w)	293 (137w)	185 (106w)	95 (30w)	12 (1w)	64 (12w)
SS 1912	1493 (230w)	455 (136w)	279 (116w)	174 (89w)	89 (24w)	16 (3w)	71 (8w)
WS 1912/13	1612 (203w)	490 (111w)	321 (97w)	215 (75w)	88 (20w)	17 (2w)	68 (6w)
SS 1913	1606 (190w)	532 (101w)	356 (86w)	262 (64w)	77 (20w)	17 (2w)	89 (8w)
WS 1913/14	1784 (192w)	662 (109w)	464 (80w)	368 (60w)	79 (18w)	15 (2w)	77 (5w)
SS 1914	1859 (191w)	707 (101w)	504 (76w)	403 (54w)	84 (20w)	17 (2w)	77 (6w)
WS 1914/15	1944 (189w)	692 (91w)	515 (70w)	415 (48w)	82 (20w)	18 (2w)	61 (5w)

## 8 Student Organizations and Political Groups identified for Bern and Zürich for the Years 1865-1915.

### 8.1 Organizations associated with the Russian-Jewish colony in Zürich.

#### *Student organizations at the University of Zürich.*

- **Bar-Kochba, akad. jüd.-nat. Verein**, est. 1911 and dissolved in 1913. In 1912, Bar-Kochba counted 27 members, all except one were from Eastern Europe! In WT 1912/13, there were only 10 members left. Meetings of Bar-Kochba took place at Schönbeinstrasse 10. (StAZH WII 12310, Platzer 1988: footnote 117)
- **Haschacher**, Jewish fraternity, est. 1903. Aims: Education of its members as men „die im Bewusstsein der nationalen Einheit der jüdischen Gemeinschaft entschlossen sind, für die würdige Erneuerung des jüdischen Volkes einzutreten“. (Platzer 1988: 49, footnote 117)
- **Hechaver, Zionist association**, first registered with the university in WT 1914/15. According to the documentation of the StAZH, Hechaver existed from 1914-1928. In 1915, the organization counted around 15 members, men and women, whose names indicate Eastern European origin. Hechaver's meetings took place at ‚Kaffee Friedeck‘, Soneggstrasse 17 (information of 1915). (StAZH WII 12310)
- **Hessiana**, est. 1898 by David Farbstein (and Arthur Mamelok) (Platzer 1988: footnote 20, Farbstein 1954: 200, and Zweig-Strauss 2002: 48). Farbstein claims he had founded „eine zionistische Ortsgruppe“ in Zürich, and additionally another Zionist student association called Hessiana. In a letter to Herzl quoted by Zweig-Strauss, though, Farbstein only mentions *one* association; he says he had founded „eine zionistische Ortsgruppe der akademischen Bürger Zürichs, Hessiana“ at a local meeting of Zionist students. Platzer refers to Farbstein and Mamelok as founders of Hessiana, „der ersten schweizerischen Zionistenvereinigung“ (1988: footnote 20). In his memoirs, Farbstein probably made two organizations from one...
- **Ibria** (akad.-literarischer Verein), est. 1907, re-activated in 1911. Until 1914, the association was definitely active, or at least registered with the university. It counted about 40 members in 1908/09, among them many women. (StAZH WII 12310)
- **Ivria, jüd.-akadem. Corps** (fraternity), 1914- (at least) 1918. In the year of its establishment, Ivria counted 8 members, all East European Jews. (StAZH WII 12320, Platzer 1988: 74-75) The statutes of 1914 promote a „national-jüdische Idee in der Form des Zionismus“ (Platzer 1988: 48, footnote 117). Former members of the Jüdischer Studentenklub founded Ivria, then a former member of Bar-Kochba and two of the Akda. Zionistenverein joined. (Platzer 1988: 62-63, 74-75).
- **Jüdischer Studentenklub**, est. 1912 and dissolved as consequence of the outbreak of war in 1914, according to the university authorities. Platzer claims the founding year was 1906. (StAZH WII 12320; Platzer 1988: 100=footnote 117) Zionist program, according to Platzer similar in outlook to the Akad. Zionistenverein in Bern. About 30 active members, mainly East European names. Meeting place of the club was Clausius-Str.66; in 1915 it moved to Ottikerstrasse 31.
- **Jüdische Studentenkasse Esrath Achim**, est. 1905/06, active at least until 1910. Men and women among its members, only East European Jews, about 15-20 members each semester. (StAZH WII 12320 und Platzer 1988: footnote 117)
- **Maccabaea**, founded in 1910. Like Kadimah in Bern, almost exclusively Russian-Jewish in its membership, with some students from Austria-Hungary. (Platzer 1988: 72-73) According

to Platzer, Maccabaea described itself as a national Jewish fraternity and was committed to the *Basel program*, but the statutes have not been passed down. In 1913, Maccabaea was suspended and merged with Kadimah in Bern. (Platzer 1988: 48, 59-60, 72-73).

- **Russ. Unterstütz. Kasse / Gegenseitige Unterstützungskasse russ. Studenten**, 1910-1925. The organization counted 140 members at its founding, and 172 in 1913. Its membership was comprised of men and women, about 90% of which were Jewish. The board members might serve as example: Gurewitsch, Spiwak, Lämmel, Liebermann, Nossowitsch, Okun, Sagalewitsch, Pusanow, Piwowarow, Lerner, Schrag, Blank. During the war, the organization only counted about 90 members and numbers dropped markedly after 1918. The address of this mutual aid society in 1923 was Sonnenquai 22. (StAZH, WII 12310)
- **(Name unknown)**, existed at least since 1894. According to David Farbstein's memoirs, he joined a Jewish student association when he moved to Zürich. (Farbstein 1954: 198)

(The fraternities generally seemed to have exhibited a conservative, Jewish national or Zionist position; they were certainly political organizations rather than religious ones. The many short-lived groups which identified as Zionist point towards strong differences regarding interpretation of the Zionist idea. Cf. Platzer 1988: 52-53.)

#### *Other organizations and congresses.*

- Zhitlowsky resided in Zürich from 1888 until 1891, and he was apparently working for a „fledgling Jewish socialist organization that had begun to publish works on socialism in Yiddish“ (Weinberg 1996: 94).
- **“Achdes”, local Bundist group**, at least since 1901 (Mayoraz 2010; Denz 2009: 63).
- **5th and 6th Congresses of the Bund** (1903 and 1905) took place in Zürich. (Medem 1923, Denz 2009)

## **8.2 Organizations associated with the Russian-Jewish colony in Bern.**

#### *Student organizations at the University of Bern.*

- **Akad. Zionistenverein**, existed at least since 1899, even though Platzer indicates 1903 as year of founding. The exclusion of Nahman Syrkin from this association was made public in „Die Welt“, No. 3, 1899, p. 11. The aim of the association was to unite all Zionist students and to create interest in the social and spiritual life of the Jewish people. The Akad. Zionistenverein stood in opposition to Kadimah! (Platzer 1988: 100, footnote 117)
- **Hashacher**, Zionist group founded by Chaim Weizmann and others, date unknown. Weizmann claims it was the first Zionist group in Switzerland, but if we believe Vladimir Medem that the founding of Hashacher took place in 1902, then Weizmann was wrong. The Akad. Zionistenverein existed since the late 19th century, and Zürich also had its own Zionist organization. (Weizmann 1949: 71, Medem 1923: 330-335)
- **Farayn far vissenschaft un lebn dem yidishn folks** (Association for the study and life of the Jewish people), est. 1892 and active at least until 1913/14. (Weinberg 1996: 94; Platzer 1988: 100= footnote 117)

- **Kadimah**, Jewish fraternity (duelling), est. 1901, no news as of 1909. Revival in WT 1913/14. Most members were Russian Jews, some from Austria-Hungary. (Platzer 1988: 70-72) Platzer claims that all Jewish fraternities at Swiss universities before WWI exhibited a right-wing Zionist position or were clearly oriented towards Jewish nationalism, and that their members were essentially foreigners. Kadimah was no exception (1988: 45). Its statutes of 1901 declare the following aims: „Die N.-J. St. Vereinigung Kadimah bezweckt die Hebung des jüdischen Selbstbewusstseins [...]“. In 1913, commitments to the *Basel program* (i.e. decisions of the First Zionist Congress of 1897) and to the Hebrew language were included in the statutes. Anyone who was not a “prinzipieller Gegner des Zionismus“ could apply for membership. Theodor Herzl apparently accepted honorary membership of Kadimah. Fights between the Akad. Zionistenverein and Kadimah are well documented; the first must have followed the ideas of Weizmann’s ‘democratic fraction’, while Kadimah was doubtless conservative in its Zionist position. Samuel Max Melamed, who denounced the Zionist students in Bern in the *Tagblatt*, was a member of Kadimah. (*Berner Tagblatt*, 9./18.Mai 1904, Platzer 1988: 47, 54-57)
- **Leseverein Saltykow** of Russian students, est. 1889. (Feller 1935: S. 390)
- **Studentenverein Ibriah**, est. 1911 (Platzer 1988: 100= footnote 117!)

*Other organizations and congresses.*

- **Bundist Group „Tsukunft“**, at least since 1902. (Sandrine Mayoraz)
- **SR student group** founded by Zhitlovsky and others, 1891? (Weinberg 1996: 94)
- **Yiddish group**, est. 1896, publishing socialist works. (Weinberg 1996: 97)
- Various offices of Russian and Russian-Jewish political parties; among them the Russian Social Democratic Party and all kinds of Zionist groups. (Medem 1923, Charney 1935, Weizmann 1949, G. Medem 1950)
- **7th Congress of the Bund**. (Denz 2009: 63)