

Edward J. Bristow

# PROSTITUTION



The Jewish  
Fight against  
White Slavery  
1870-1939



# PREJUDICE

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The Jewish Fight against  
White Slavery 1870-1939

*With 15 Photographs*

Between 1870 and 1939 Jews played a conspicuous role in white slavery, as the prostitution of that era was called. Not only was this participation conspicuous, but it was, for the Jews, historically unprecedented, geographically widespread, and—in an age of pandemic anti-semitism—fraught with collective political dangers.

Drawing on archival sources in eight countries, Edward J. Bristow reconstructs the lost story of Jewish white slavery and explores the response to this phenomenon by Jews around the world. Tracing the origins of Jewish prostitution in central and eastern Europe, Bristow shows how the appearance of procurers, prostitutes, and pimps resulted from the social, economic, and religious upheaval of the late nineteenth century. Following the participants in commercial vice as they fanned out across five continents,

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PROSTITUTION  
AND  
PREJUDICE

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# PROSTITUTION AND PREJUDICE

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*The Jewish Fight against  
White Slavery 1870-1939*

EDWARD J. BRISTOW

PROSTITUTION  
AND  
PREJUDICE

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To the memory of my father  
and to my mother





## Acknowledgements

This study developed directly from my earlier book on the history of social-purity movements in Britain. In the course of preparing a chapter for that study on the international movement against white slavery, a crusade that emanated from Britain, I uncovered a bewildering number of references to Jewish traffickers and a surprising interest in the problem by British and German Jews.

There was a story to be reconstructed, and for a number of reasons I was in a position to undertake the task. That earlier research had provided me with a knowledge of where to locate sources on international prostitution. Residing in England put me in close proximity to those materials; and at the outset a sabbatical year in Jerusalem and New York gave me the opportunity to track down the Jewish sources. It was no easy decision to go ahead with a full-length study on this sensitive theme. At first I envisioned an article, then a series of articles; finally it became clear that only a book would do justice to the subject. The reasons for publishing—my understanding of the subject's significance—are described in the foreword.

Given the geographical scope of the study, financial support was essential. I would like to thank the American Philosophical Society for a grant from their Penrose Fund that facilitated research journeys to Warsaw and Paris; and the National Endowment for the Humanities for a Summer Stipend that supported the gathering of material in Vienna and East Germany.

Essential too were specific references and advice relating to regions about which I claim no expertise. In South Africa I should like to thank Professor Charles van Onselen of the Witwatersrand University, and Mr Gustav Saron of the Board of Jewish Deputies, for generously sharing with me the fruits of their own research. A long correspondence with Professor van Onselen was particularly valuable, and his own contribution to this subject is eagerly awaited.

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Turning to the sources, I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of individuals and institutions for making accessible the documents on which the study rests. In this regard I should like to mention the Jewish Welfare Board, London; the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris; the Bundespolizeidirektion, Vienna; the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, the Staatsarchiv Hamburg; the Staatsarchiv Potsdam; the Staatsarchiv, Merseburg; the Director of the State Archives, Warsaw; Mrs Irma Kopp Krents of the William E. Wiener Oral History Library, American Jewish Committee; The American Jewish Historical Society; the California Historical Society; the Leo Baeck Institute, New York; the Archives Nationales, Paris, for making available normally

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# Map

Jewish Eastern Europe Before 1914.

## Abbreviations

For frequently cited institutions, sources and collections in the footnotes

AAN	Polish State Archives, Warsaw
AIU	Alliance Israélite Universelle Archives, Paris
AJC	William E. Wiener Oral History Library, American Jewish Committee
AJHS	American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts
AN	Archives Nationales, Paris
CU	Columbia University Manuscript Collection, New York
Comm. of 14	Committee of Fourteen Collection, New York Public Library
Comm. of 15	Committee of Fifteen Collection, New York Public Library
HU	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Hebrew University, Jerusalem
ICA	Séances du Conseil d'Administration, Jewish Colonization Association, London
IOL	India Office Library, London
JA	Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women
JAGM	JA Gentleman's Subcommittee Minutes, JWB
JMC	Judah Magnes Collection, HU
JWB	Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, Collection, Jewish Welfare Board, London
L of N	League of Nations
LBI	Leo Baeck Institute, New York
MA	Archives de la Région de Provence—Cote D'Azur, Marseille
NVA	National Vigilance Association Collection, Fawcett Library, City of London Polytechnic
PP	Prefecture de Police, Paris
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew, England



- SH                    Auswanderungsamt I, II F14 and Band 7,  
                          ‘Massnahmen Gegen Mädchenhandel’,  
                          Staatsarchiv Hamburg
- SP                    A. A. Atken, Band 9 Polizei 36 Adh II  
                          1913-28, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Potsdam,  
                          GDR
- USDS                US Department of State Papers, National  
                          Archives
- USIS                US Immigration and Naturalization Service  
                          Papers, National Archives
- USJD                US Justice Dept. Papers, National Archives  
                          and Suitland, Maryland Federal Records  
                          Center
- VPA                 Staatspolizeiliche Agenden, Mädchenhandel,  
                          Polizeiarchiv, Wien

## Foreword

Between 1880 and 1939 Jews played a conspicuous role in 'white slavery', as the commercial prostitution of that era was dramatically called. Not only was this Jewish participation conspicuous, it was historically unprecedented, geographically widespread, and fraught with collective political dangers. It extended well beyond teeming ghettos like those of Warsaw and Odessa in the old heartland of Jewish settlement in eastern Europe, and beyond new areas of settlement like New York's Lower East Side and London's Whitechapel. Nor was Buenos Aires, the one place that has always been well-known in connection with Jewish white slavery, particularly distinctive. Here is Arthur Moro, an officer in the leading anti-white-slavery group, London's Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, sketching both the geographical and political dimensions of the problem in 1903:

We have positive evidence that to almost all parts of North and South Africa, to India, China, Japan, Philippine Islands, North and South America and also to many of the countries in Europe, Yiddish speaking Jews are maintaining a regular flow of Jewesses, trafficked solely for the purpose of prostitution. We know that they were taken to brothels owned by Yiddish speaking Jews. We fear unfortunately this horrible blot on the reputation of our race, exists in most places of the world where there is the chance of these unscrupulous men and women making money by the sacrifice of young Jewish girls.<sup>1</sup>

Why reconstruct this painful story of the white-slave traffickers, their women, and their opponents? The primary reason is that the whole episode is such a singular lapse from the celebrated tradition of Jewish sexual purity that it calls out for description and for explanation. This is the purpose of the first two parts of the following study. In Chapter One we describe the negligible history of Jewish involvement with prostitution before the great social, economic, and religious changes of the last century. In Chapter Two we trace the origins of Jewish commercial prostitution in what was then the heartland of Jewish life in central

<sup>1</sup> Report by Moro in 31 October 1903, ICA vol. 1.

and eastern Europe. The appearance of this uncharacteristic phenomenon was the result of a combination of interrelated factors whose impact on individual, family, and community are explored in Chapter Three: widespread destitution that sometimes reached Asiatic intensity; discrimination that ranged from disabling economic restrictions to pogroms; massive migrations from town to city and from country to country; the weakening of traditional social, religious, and parental controls in overcrowded urban concentrations. So well known are these facts of Jewish life, as well as the connection between prostitution and these kinds of forces, that the appearance of Jewish pimps, prostitutes, and brothelkeepers is hardly surprising. Then with their origins traced and explained, we follow the movements and describe the habits of these people as they fanned out across five continents between about 1875 and 1914. That is the task of Part Two.

Naturally the Jews were only one of many groups to share in this form of enterprise and nowhere did they achieve anything like a monopoly in any aspect of commercial vice. They did, however, maintain an important position in brothelkeeping and procuring in parts of eastern Europe, Argentina, Constantinople, New York, and elsewhere; and they dominated the international traffic out of eastern Europe, especially in Jewish women. Yet to place these developments within the right context, it helps to point out that there were more French prostitutes in Paris than Jewish prostitutes throughout the world. Overseas at Buenos Aires, The Rand, Manchuria, and other stops on the international vice circuit, the French were equally well-represented in all aspects of commercial vice. Italians and Greek traffickers sent their tribute to the voracious brothels of the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, in terms of participants, the Chinese and Japanese played the biggest role of all in 'white slavery', thus demonstrating that the term itself was a Eurocentric misnomer. The Jewish involvement in this enterprise was far from unique and can only be understood as part of the general phenomenon of nineteenth-century world migratory prostitution.

That is a subject also undertaken at the outset, in Chapter One, where we discuss how in the last century, with the advent of the steamship and the telegraph, and migrations that created

colonies of unmarried men, prostitution became a multi-national enterprise. Given the mid-century genesis of Jewish brothelkeeping, procuring, and prostitution in the Russian Pale of Settlement, Galicia, Hungary, and Romania, and given too the massive migrations out of these places after 1880, it was almost inevitable that Jews would make their contribution to white slavery at the international level.

There are other reasons for reconstructing this forgotten story, among them the intrinsic interest of discovering communities of people whose existence one had never dreamed of, or should we say, feared. Yet these 'unclean' or 'impure' ones as they were sometimes stigmatized by reference to the laws of ritual purity, were all too familiar a feature on the Jewish landscape at the turn of the century. In some places they established their own communal institutions, like synagogues and burial grounds. In cities like Warsaw, New York, and London the respectable Jewish poor knew them well because the unclean ones might live next door, sometimes as good neighbours and other times as persecutors of their children.

Of course they were a very tiny minority of the Jewish people. But at any given time between 1880 and 1939 the unclean ones still would have numbered in the thousands. Who were they? How did they come to be in Mozambique or the outer Philippine Islands or, for that matter, running brothels in Minsk? Were they observant? What was their relationship to the rest of the Jewish underworld? Were the women recruited by force and fraud, or did they choose prostitution as an alternative preferable to the sweatshop or unemployment and abject poverty? Did the men and women accumulate capital and filter into respectable occupations and enterprises? These questions are at the heart of the discussion in Parts One and Two; to pose them is to suggest the compelling nature of the subject, which in some respects is analogous to the discovery of an unknown and remote tribal culture cut off from the light of history. Only in this case the loss was a question of historical amnesia, all too understandable in the context of modern anti-semitism.

The actual lives of the deviant individuals and the institutions they formed is but one aspect of the story. Since we are not considering some lost tribe but rather the Jews at a crucial

point when their own and world history were fatefully intertwined, there is a basic political dimension here. In an age of pandemic anti-semitism a Jewish pimp was a political as well as a social fact, as recognized in Arthur Moro's apprehensive statement above. Central to our study are the political questions of how white slavery was exploited by anti-semites, and of how Jews reacted to the appearance of this issue.

After all, if there were ritual-murder trials in this period based on superstitions of medieval origin that Jews murdered Christian children to obtain their blood for the baking of unleavened Passover bread, what about the potential of an accusation that actually had some basis in fact? Naturally anti-semites failed to acknowledge that Jewish traffickers normally recruited Jewish women. The young Hitler in Vienna was particularly influenced by the accusation that Jews trafficked in Christians. By tracing the coverage that racists gave to white slavery, and by emphasizing how this charge represented a sexualization of the ritual-murder accusation or blood libel, with which it was frequently paired, we hope to register a contribution to the study of anti-semitism.

The situation created an agonizing dilemma that is the subject of the third part of the book. Under the gathering clouds of racism, knowing that some of the Jewish recruits were victims of force and fraud, how did communities and leaders respond? Bertha Pappenheim, the German-Jewish feminist, pinpointed the political problem. 'If we admit the existence of this traffic our enemies decry us; if we deny it they say we are trying to conceal it.'<sup>2</sup>

Some leaders and notables shrank from the issue. There were much more serious ones to worry about, including murderous pogroms, starvation, and the dislocation and relocation of millions of people. Others, like Israel Zangwill, the novelist, threw up their hands in despair: 'It is not possible for Jews to try and stamp out this evil; it is not possible for them to police the world.'<sup>3</sup> Reactions could be spontaneous and violent. In a number of places Jewish vigilantes and

<sup>2</sup> *Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women. International Conference, 22-24, June 1927 London. Official Report*, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Official Report of the Jewish International Conference on the Suppression of the International Traffic in Women and Children ... (1910)*, p. 45.



workers defended their honour by launching violent attacks on pimps and prostitutes. In a half-dozen cities around the world Jewish communities banned or completely ostracized the unclean ones.

Many elements in the Jewish world squarely confronted the problem, basing their intervention on two typically nineteenth-century assumptions. The first, that Jewish women were silently suffering victims of prostitution, was far from being uniformly correct, but was in fact true in a minority of cases. The second assumption, that anti-semitism could be mitigated by improving the behaviour of deviant Jews, and particularly by Jews openly and conspicuously combatting the traffic, was based on a mistaken understanding of racism, on a kind of 'rationalist fallacy' about prejudice. Still, the Jewish movement coalesced and evolved a strategy involving legal, political, travellers' aid as well as social work through the dual institutions of Jewish sectarian committees and the less conspicuous non-sectarian national committees that sprang up across Europe and the Americas.

This second approach was possible because white slavery was more than a Jewish problem; it was, as we shall observe, one of the leading social issues of the age. The supremacy of an obnoxious system of state-regulated prostitution nearly everywhere, the popular if false belief that most prostitutes had been recruited through deceit, the partly symbolic use of the prostitution question by feminists, and the development of widespread concern with public health issues like venereal disease, all combined to make white slavery into one of the most popular social questions across the western world. Should third parties be permitted to procure and to live off prostitutes, especially across international borders? Around this issue there spread from England in 1899 an international crusade of considerable influence, and one whose work was later inherited by the League of Nations.

The Jewish contribution was central to the whole reform movement. Without the energy, money, and connections of Jewish philanthropists and social workers, the interdenominational campaign would not have spread as it did. At the sectarian level of Jewish organizations, the response was limited by the series of more urgent calls on their scarce resources:

relief of pogrom victims, aid to migrants, the building of Palestine, and the rebuilding of Jewish life in war-ravaged eastern Europe after 1918. The work was limited too by the intractable nature of commercial prostitution. Still, by 1910 the fact was that 'almost all the large Jewish organizations in the "developed states" and even in Russia and the Orient have promoted Jewish committees against the white-slave traffic ...'<sup>4</sup>

In addition to many of the major relief and voluntary organizations, all kinds of individuals became involved in the struggle: New York, Chicago, and Warsaw socialists and the London, Paris, and Vienna Rothschilds; orthodox rabbis like the revered Osias Thon of Cracow and the reform rabbis Judah Magnes of New York, Emil Hirsch of Chicago, and Henry Berkowitz of Philadelphia. With its symbolic and emotive content, the question was of particular importance to the early Jewish womens' organizations; they struggled against white slavery in France, Latvia, Poland, and Hungary. They played a particularly important role in the United States, where under the guidance of Sadie American, the Council of Jewish Women built an elaborate edifice to protect vulnerable immigrants. At the same time in Germany, Bertha Pappenheim judged correctly that white slavery was the most effective issue around which to mobilize her generation of Jewish women.

Thus the final rationale for this study: to trace the Jewish position in and contribution to a complex international reform movement that cast together feminists and paternalists, Jews and anti-semites; and that not only stimulated a long succession of hysterical public panics about procurers on the prowl with hypodermic syringes, but that also engendered a wave of humane anti-procuring legislation and effected more than the occasional rescue of innocents.

The willingness to study Jewish crime and the existence of that crime is sometimes said to mark the entry of Jewish life into normal times. Thus the poet Bialik made a famous remark about the appearance of horse thieves at Tel Aviv. Horse thieves are one thing and white-slave traffickers quite another. The prevalence of Jewish brothelkeepers and procurers in

<sup>4</sup> *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Anti-Semitismus*, 17 August 1910.

eastern Europe, the small communities of pimps and prostitutes all over the world—these developments were an aberration. As mentioned above and explored below, this uncharacteristic development was related to a cluster of formidable but temporary forces that affected Jewish life in the last century, including massive migrations, economic misery, the weakening of the family, the weakening of religion, and persecutions. In Part Four, we see that the aberration was self-correcting in the West where a new social equilibrium was established and where the aspirations of Jews were not blocked. In eastern Europe, where life for the Jewish masses became increasingly miserable between the wars, white slavery survived until 1939.

Until recently investigators have been slow to tackle this subject. Indeed, one standard work on the great Jewish migrations refers to one of the central institutions in the struggle against white slavery, London's Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, in unfortunate Aesopian terms. It is said to carry out 'special tasks.'<sup>5</sup> This reluctance to deal with shameful subjects is grounded in the long tradition of *chillul hashem* (profanation of the name), or avoidance of actions that might disgrace or endanger the Jewish community. In the context of active anti-semitism such an attitude can be understood. Furthermore, given the importance of sexual rectitude in the Jewish tradition, a more bitter case of *chillul hashem* could hardly be imagined.

Jean-Paul Sartre understood this and translated *chillul hashem* into the language of authenticity. He tells of a Jew who meets a Jewish prostitute; Sartre suggests the psychological aversion that some might have to the subject:

A Jew goes to a house of prostitution, chooses one of the women, and goes upstairs with her. She tells him she is a Jew. He finds himself impotent, and very soon is overcome with an intolerable sense of humiliation that expresses itself in spasms of vomiting ... it is rather the sense that he is contributing personally to the humiliation of the Jewish race in the person of the prostitute and consequently, in his own person. In the last analysis it is he who is prostituted, humiliated; it is he and the whole Jewish people.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Mark Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety* (Philadelphia, 1948), p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York, 1964 ed.), p. 90.

That the crushing burden of life in eastern Europe and the dislocations of one of history's great migrations produced a relatively small amount of vicious and immoral behaviour in the new and old worlds can hardly now be thought a collective danger or disgrace. Writing of the relationship between grinding poverty and prostitution, Ben Zion Hoffman, the Polish-American socialist, lamented in 1906 that 'it is not cheap anti-semitism when all the papers and organizations that deal with the slave traffic remark that Jewish girls from Russia and Galicia comprise a large part of the living merchandise.'<sup>7</sup> Familiar with social realities, he reminded his coreligionists, 'The laws of nature are stronger than Jewish modesty. The laws of nature do not differentiate between Jews and Christians.' The story can now be told and set in perspective.

<sup>7</sup> Ben Zion Hoffman, *Die Froyenhandel und 'Prostitutzia'* (Yiddish: The Trade in Women and Prostitution) (Warsaw, 1906), p. 20.

**Part One**

**White Slavery  
and the Jews**



## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *Jewish Purity*

In October 1907, 'after much heart-searching', London's sober *Jewish Chronicle* decided to publish an exposé entitled 'The Burning Shame of a Terrible Scandal'. Amongst other things, the murder of a Jewish prostitute in the West End had convinced the editors to air a subject that they described as 'too terrible for words'. Drawing upon intelligence from voluntary workers, the paper described how 'almost every populous centre of Europe and America gives evidence of the extent to which Jewesses immolate themselves to the Moloch of illicit being'.<sup>1</sup>

In geographical terms even this was an understatement. The exposé interests us, however, because of what the *Jewish Chronicle* added about the activities of the Jewish procurers. They were said to be 'afflicted with what is really an *inversion* of certain special characteristics with which Jews are endowed'. Inversion was a well chosen term for this shocking and uncharacteristic development. There was nothing in the experience of Jews to prepare them for the revelation that a small number of their coreligionists lived by running brothels, procuring girls, and practising prostitution. Sexual purity was a factor central to Jewish self-identity. As reform Rabbi Henry Berkowitz of Philadelphia remarked, 'These were evils unknown and undreamed of in my boyhood days.'<sup>2</sup>

Jews had nurtured an ideal of sexual purity, with its emphasis on restraint, moderation, and family integrity, since the entry of the Israelites into the land of Canaan. There they found a local fertility cult that was highly erotic in nature. The Canaanite population believed that the revival of fertility each spring depended upon sexual intercourse between the gods Baal and

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 October 1907. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>2</sup> *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, vol. xx (1910), p. 300.



Ashtart, whose efforts could be assisted by human participation in sexual ceremonies and sacred prostitution.

It has been said that 'only as a religion has to meet the challenge of its opposite does it discover its own nature and potential strength'.<sup>3</sup> Baal and Yahweh were irreconcilable and from the beginning Jewish law emphasised that while sexual pleasure was perfectly healthy and normal, it could be pursued legitimately only within marriage. Some idea of the seriousness with which this ideal was later held can be gathered from the ruling of the rabbinical conference chaired by Rabbi Akiba in 135 CE, when the Emperor Hadrian was drowning the disastrous Bar Kochba revolt in blood. To save one's life all the laws should be deemed suspended, except those against idolatry, murder, and licentiousness. With this ruling from the time of the Roman persecutions in mind, some defenders of the Jewish name feared later that white slavery 'robs us of the one impregnable defence behind which we sheltered in the darkest days of our martyred history'.<sup>4</sup> Naturally the actual sexual behaviour of a people must fall short of such a lofty and unattainable ideal. When we examine the role of prostitution in Jewish life before the nineteenth century, however, the oldest profession normally plays a smaller part than it does in surrounding communities.

That there were Jewish prostitutes in the Biblical and Talmudic period is hardly in doubt. Throughout the Old Testament harlots are reviled and after the destruction of the first Temple in 586 BCE, for example, the prophet Ezekiel used prostitution as a metaphor for the sins of the Jews. Thus, 'She did not give up her harlotry which she had practised since her days in Egypt.' This is the kind of negative evidence that usually points to the persistence of an abuse. There are also direct descriptions of prostitutes in ancient Palestine soliciting in the streets and from their doorways, playing the harp, and bathing in public pools.<sup>5</sup> It is most unlikely, however, that

<sup>3</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1957), p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, May-June 1910, editorial. On Jewish sexual purity, Louis Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (New York, 1948). Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 1 (New York, 1952), pp. 146-7; vol. 2, pp. 217-25, 290-1, 319.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek, esp. Ch. 16, 23. Prov. 7:10-23; Isa. 23:16; I Kings 22:38. Also, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (EJ), vol. 13 'prostitution', pp. 1243-4.

prostitutes were as numerous among the Jews as among other Near-Eastern peoples.<sup>6</sup> Religious prostitution was proscribed; secular prostitution was devalued; and following the destruction of the second Temple, the Romans could find no better form of humiliation than to force Jewish women into brothels, a number of whom committed suicide.<sup>7</sup>

During the Middle Ages Jewish prostitution was even more limited and localized.<sup>8</sup> No better testimony can be provided for the reality of the ideal of purity than the apparent absence of Jewish brothels in Europe before the fourteenth century. These institutions appeared first in the Spanish and Italian communities, where the sexual behaviour in the general culture was very lax. It was not only that the attractions of the surrounding society tempted young Jewish men. In some instances Spanish and Italian communities acted to protect wayward individuals and their collective selves from the vengeance of outside authority. The penalty for sexual intercourse between Christian and Jew usually was death for the Jew. Surviving regulations for a brothel in Avignon established in 1347, under the official patronage of Queen Joanna of Naples and Provence, contain the following stipulation: The madam 'shall not give access in the bordel, to any Jew, and that if it be found that any Jew has entered there by a ruse and that he has there known any woman, that he shall be imprisoned and shall have the lash at the hands of all the city.'<sup>9</sup> In fact in 1408 a Jew from Carpentras was so publicly whipped.

That culprit was relatively lucky. In 1498 a Roman Jew was cut to pieces for having sexual relations with a gentile woman.<sup>10</sup> To protect such wayward individuals from the wages of sin and also to guard the whole community against the collective mob violence or official punishments that sometimes followed

<sup>6</sup> Epstein, *Sex Laws*, p. 162. *EJ*, vol. 13, p. 1244. For another view, Vern and Bonnie Bullough, *Prostitution. An Illustrated History* (New York, 1978), pp. 27-9.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Bloch, *Die Prostitution* (Berlin, 1912), p. 603.

<sup>8</sup> For the following, Epstein, *Sex Laws*, p. 162. *EJ*, vol. 13, pp. 1245-6. Salo Baron, *The Jewish Community*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1942), pp. 312-13. Abraham A. Neuman, *The Jews in Spain*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1948), p. 12. Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Dufour, *History of Prostitution*, vol. 2, trans. Samuel Putnam (Chicago, 1926), pp. 498-9.

<sup>10</sup> Sam Waagenaar, *The Pope's Jews* (La Salle, Illinois, 1974), p. 81.

individual transgressions, some Jewish authorities in Spain and Italy did little to discourage those women who took up the oldest profession. With the possible exception of Rome, where poverty was a problem by the fifteenth century, the number of these women seems to have been very small. A thorough search of Venetian records from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries turned up only one Jewish prostitute, and she was a convert to Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

During those same four centuries small numbers of Jewish prostitutes also appeared in central Europe. There was considerable poverty in the Prague community, the largest of its time, while German Jewry was troubled by relative underemployment and overpopulation. During this period the most familiar mechanism of recruitment in the history of western prostitution appeared among the Jews.<sup>12</sup> Poor females migrated from the provinces to large cities like Hamburg and Prague looking for work as domestic servants. Hamburg was particularly popular because of its large number of substantial Jewish households and girls flocked there in groups. Adrift in an urban environment without the full panoply of social controls that were in force in the tightly-knit communities they had left behind, some succumbed to poverty and seduction.

Communal leaders were concerned about this development. Ordinances for the Prague community in the eighteenth century state that any householder found keeping a whore should be fined twenty gold coins, and that such women should not be kept as wet nurses.<sup>13</sup> This last rule may refer to servants who had given birth to children out of wedlock. But that is exactly the kind of transgression about which the community was so unforgiving that it sometimes pushed the mother into real prostitution.

On the whole Jewish authorities energetically resisted prostitution wherever it appeared. That goes also for Italy and Spain, where the utilitarian argument for the social value of Jewish prostitutes was never widely supported. The great Nach-

<sup>11</sup> Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews in Venice* (Philadelphia, 1930), p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> Rudolf Glanz, *Geschichte des Niederen Jüdischen Volkes in Deutschland* (New York, 1968), pp. 156ff. Gustav Schönfeldt, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Pauperismus und Prostitution in Hamburg* (Weimar, 1897), p. 152.

<sup>13</sup> Isaac Rivkind, 'A Codex of Prague Ordinances', *Reshumot IV* (Hebrew) (1926), p. 350.

manides, the most illustrious of all Spanish rabbis, ruled categorically in the thirteenth century that there was no excuse for Jewish girls ever being permitted to practise prostitution. Furthermore, it was no more acceptable for men to visit prostitutes. To the argument that Jewish brothels would have the virtue of limiting mixing with Christians, Judah ben Asher wrote at about the same time that there was no use saving the body of Israel at the cost of its soul.<sup>14</sup>

Where there were Jewish brothels they were attacked and closed, as in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany and France. Where landlords rented premises for immoral purposes they were fined. Where there were Jewish streetwalkers they were harassed. Four times in eighteenth-century Hamburg the Jewish elders were given the right to banish prostitutes from the city.<sup>15</sup> This is in stark contrast to the behaviour of their counterparts in the church. True, Christian authorities tended to fluctuate wildly in their treatment of prostitutes. Locating them in the Jewish ghettos was one of the milder manifestations of their contempt. Yet there is no counterpart in the Jewish communities to the basic Christian trend towards legal toleration. Before they were pulled down by Wat Tyler and his Kentish rebels in 1381, the notorious Southwark Stews in London were supervised by the See of Winchester. At the same time the Archbishop of Mainz was drawing revenue from his extensive brothels.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, while there were Jewish prostitutes in the Middle Ages, Jews seem to have played little discernible part in commercial prostitution. While Jews were active in the early-medieval traffic in slaves in the Mediterranean and south-eastern Europe, there is no evidence that their cargoes were delivered into prostitution, as was the custom of some of their Muslim and Italian counterparts.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Isaac ben Sheshet, *Sefer She elot u-Teshubot* (Book of Responsa) (New York, 1954), p. 425. Judah ben Asher, *Zikron Yehudah* (Memory of Judah) (Berlin, 1846), Responsa 17.

<sup>15</sup> *EJ*, vol. 13, p. 1246. Baron, *Jewish Community*, vol. 2, p. 214. Isador Kraeauer, *Geschichte der Juden in Frankfort*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt, 1927), p. 293. Schönfeldt, *Hamburg*, p. 158-9.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance* (Dublin and Totowa, New Jersey, 1977), p. 78. Bullough, *Prostitution*, p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> Salo Baron, *Social and Religious History*, vol. IV, pp. 187-96. James Cleugh, *Love Locked Out* (London, 1963), pp. 134-6.



Later in central Europe the requirement that Jewish women be baptized before being allowed to practise licensed prostitution had a very important implication. It broke the nexus between Jewish prostitutes and the Jewish men who might have become their pimps. There was no shortage of such men, the famous 'Gaulner' or Jewish bandits, who operated in Germany between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Pimps frequently have other criminal interests; but the *Gaulner* bands had nothing to do with prostitution. The German police were highly complimentary about the respectable family lives of these bandits, who returned home to keep the sabbath with their wives and children.<sup>18</sup> In eighteenth-century Germany, Jewish prostitutes were usually baptized and entered the retinues of Christian criminals. The extended Jewish family gangs that were to deal in vice and theft were a product of more recent times.

What of eastern Europe, increasingly the focal point for Jewish population between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries? In Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Hungary, social controls over individual moral behaviour remained very strong in what were most tightly-knit and self-governing communities of limited size. In the seventeenth century Prague's 10,000 Jews still formed the largest Jewish community anywhere, an important fact easily overlooked.<sup>19</sup>

There was little opportunity for behaviour as deviant as prostitution in an environment where one Russian Jewish *Kahal*, or local community, went so far as to protect the good name of a girl by recording that her hymen had been ruptured accidentally.<sup>20</sup> As in medieval Christian Europe, the presence of Jewish penitentials requiring severe penances for sexual sins obviously testifies to breaches in the law. So does the creation of Boards of Morals and the obligation of Jews to bring information to them. Thus, in late-eighteenth-century Minsk it was ordered that 'under threat of ban ... whosoever is aware of even the shadow of a perpetrated sin, whether committed by a man or woman, shall make it known to these three persons of

<sup>18</sup> Glanz, *Geschichte*, p. 161, and *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> On the traditional social controls, Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis, Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, Schocken ed. 1971).

<sup>20</sup> Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772-1844* (New York, 1970 reprint), p. 245.

the Board'. This machinery parallels that of the church or bawdy courts which heard hundreds of thousands of cases in pre-Reformation England. Yet everything we know indicates that Jewish deviants in this era still had a fully internalized sense of what was expected of them. They typically asked for the appropriate penances, something that would have struck parish officials attached to the bawdy courts as extremely odd indeed.<sup>21</sup>

Prostitution in the tightly knit, traditional, and relatively small-scale Jewish communities of eastern Europe was entirely insignificant before the great transformations of the nineteenth century. It warrants not even a footnote to the history of the period. And as we shall observe, it remained insignificant in the small *shtetl* communities of a few thousand souls, the backwaters which were preserved in amber for a bit longer while teeming cities like Warsaw, Lodz, and Odessa grew up between them. Thus at Gorodnia in the 1880s, a small place in Russia about one-quarter Jewish, a prostitute had her head shaven and front door daubed with paint.<sup>22</sup>

It was this sort of common moral order, with 'the old human restraints of public opinion, long sustained in smaller communities', whose loss Jane Addams regretted when she surveyed urban prostitution in the United States.<sup>23</sup> Amongst Jewish communities before the mid-nineteenth century, only in London is there evidence that the old restraints had evaporated to the point that commercial prostitution gained a foothold.

It is easy to see why London was the early exception. By the eighteenth century the English community was the laxest religiously in the Jewish world.<sup>24</sup> Social controls were extremely weak, partly because no autonomous communal institutions emerged after the resettlement of the Jews in England in the 1650s. Furthermore, the Anglo-Jewish élite, who should have set the tone, was influenced by the enlightened culture, and, in some cases, the liberal sexual mores of the period. Into this

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Katz, *Tradition*, p. 147.

<sup>22</sup> Dr C. von Stürmer, 'Die Prostitution in den Städten Russlands,' *Dermatologische Zeitschrift*, Ergänzungsheft 3u Band VI (1899, Berlin), p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), p. 219.

<sup>24</sup> For the following, Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830* (Philadelphia, 1979), Ch. 3-6.

context between 1750 and 1814 there migrated some 10,000 poor Jews from Germany, Holland, and Poland.

This formidable combination of unbalancing factors—secularization, urbanization, and poverty—was bound to create a criminal class, and since prostitutes did not have to convert, there was no reason why commercial vice should be absent. By 1802 Jewish prostitutes were familiar enough among Londoners for the playwright Thomas Dibden to include a popular song about three of them in his *Family Quarrels*. Even more, Jewish brothelkeepers and procurers were commonplace in parts of the East End. The authorities at Aldgate complained in 1817, for example, that ‘this parish has found considerable difficulty in indicting brothels; the parties frequently change their abode, and it is difficult to get at the real occupier, they being Jews of bad character, and go by different names.’ Typical of the breed were Wolfe and Hanna Cohen, who were convicted in 1813 of running five brothels, procuring young girls and training them for prostitution, and picking pockets. The most celebrated of the breed was Ikey Solomons, the model for none other than Charles Dickens’ Fagin. With his wife Ann, Solomons built a criminal network in the 1820s that included a chain of brothels.<sup>25</sup>

The problem persisted through the following decade and in 1837 the Chief Rabbi, Solomon Hirschel, threw his support behind the London Society for the Protection of Young Females. Hirschel reported that Jewish traffickers in girls were virtually excommunicated from Jewish life.<sup>26</sup> When white slavery appeared elsewhere after 1880 such social ostracism of white slavers by respectable Jews was attempted in places as far apart as Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg, Constantinople, and Omaha. Religious ostracism, however, is an empty sanction in a secular age, and at the same time the London Society attempted prosecutions.

<sup>25</sup> *Second Report of the Committee of the Guardian Society* (1817), Appendix 3. *Second Report from the Committee of the State of the Police of the Metropolis. Parliamentary Papers* (1817), vol. 7, evidence of Dandson Coates, Edward Forster, William Lewis Newnan. *Times*, 14, 27 September 1813. J. S. Levi and G. F. S. Bergman, *Australian Genesis* (London, 1974), Ch. 11.

<sup>26</sup> C. Duschinsky, *The Rabbinate of the Great Synagogue, London from 1756-1842* (London, 1921), pp. 131-2. ‘Report of the London Society for the Protection of Young Females’, in Michael Ryan, *Prostitution in London* (London, 1837), pp. 136-44, 193-4.



One target was Leah Davis, a Mile-End brothelkeeper whose thirteen daughters were all said to be either prostitutes or madams. Fantastic? An anti-semitic exaggeration? Most likely, though later family gangs in white slavery were often very large. However, J. B. Talbot, the secretary of the London Society for the Protection of Young Females, was prone to wild anti-semitic assertions and he insisted absurdly at the time that there were '7400 Jews engaged in this traffic, who are living on the degradation of Christian girls'.<sup>27</sup>

These early decades of small-scale Jewish involvement in East-End prostitution are especially instructive because they anticipate many features of the main involvement after 1880. Some of the causes were the same—migration to a new urban culture, loss of traditional religion, poverty. On both occasions there were family and inter-generational Jewish gangs. The early Jewish reactions of ostracizing the vicious and prosecuting them were repeated later. There was also an uneasy relationship between concerned Jews and Christian reformers and the spreading of anti-semitic exaggerations, problems that would also plague later Jewish activists.

Finally, like later and more extensive outbreaks of white slavery outside eastern Europe, this early London episode was self-correcting. Economic opportunity, upward mobility, and attrition from venereal disease seem to have eliminated the problem by mid-century. This pattern repeated itself in London in the generation after 1880 and also in many other western cities where Jewish prostitution temporarily flourished. In the early 1880s a knowledgeable East-End rector was able to tell Chief Rabbi Adler that he had never heard of Jews in the immoral traffic.<sup>28</sup> This observation would soon be overtaken by events.

On the continent reports of substantial Jewish involvement in prostitution surfaced in the 1860s, became more frequent in the following decade, and were disturbingly commonplace by the 1880s. The history of the reality parallels the chronology of these reports. Modern Jewish white slavery was born shortly after mid-century and reached its full maturity towards the end of the century.

<sup>27</sup> Ryan, *Prostitution*, pp. 136-44, 193-4.

<sup>28</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 92-3.

Jews themselves were responsible for the first thorough airing of the problem. In 1867 the Parisian Journal, *Archives Israélites*, reported with alarm that 'in Paris, London, Brussels, Hamburg, Vienna, Warsaw, and Cracow, in what it is advisable to call the "demimonde", in public places and even in houses of prostitution, one encounters more Jews than Christians, according to the proportion that exists between the two populations.'<sup>29</sup> This shocking revelation was occasioned by the desire to win support for a new Jewish refuge for local orphans and morally endangered Jewish girls, the first of many such institutions to appear where Jewish prostitution became a problem. That there was some need for this kind of social work in Paris is borne out by the fact that the small Jewish population there generated more pauperism per capita than the population at large.<sup>30</sup>

Even before the 1860s Jewish prostitutes were familiar enough in Paris to have served as the basis for something of a literary convention. Esther in Balzac's *Splendour et Misères des Courtisanes* is but the most famous of such fictional characters. The mid-century was an age of brothels where fixed clienteles demanded ethnic variety and Jewish prostitutes were part of the normal bill of fare. Among the French their reputations were high. In his *Mademoiselle Fifi*, a short story set during the Franco-Prussian War, Guy de Maupassant makes the prostitute Rebecca an exemplar of patriotism and moral courage. Later, after white slavery became an international issue, one French legal expert himself credited the old psychological canard about minority group sexuality, that Jewish women were 'the most highly demanded for their spirit and for their grace in all the world'.<sup>31</sup>

By the 1860s beautiful and shrewd Jewish courtesans were able to climb to the top of their profession in many European capitals. In Paris itself the celebrated La Païva, actually the Russian Thérèse Lachman, lived in a magnificent house on the *Champs Élysées* complete with an onyx staircase, marble tub, and jewelled bath taps. Her bed alone was said to cost 10,000 francs.

<sup>29</sup> *Archives Israélites* (1867) XXVIII, pp. 711 ff.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* C. J. Lecour, *La Prostitution à Paris et à Londres* (Paris, 1882, 3rd ed.), p. 238. AIU, File France IH. Zosa Szajkowski, *Poverty and Social Welfare Among French Jews. 1800-1880* (New York, 1954), pp. 50-2.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Appleton, *La Traite des Blanches* (Paris, 1903), p. 36.

While nothing could quite compare with this Second-Empire self-indulgence, Vienna in the 1860s had its Rosa Hannover, daughter of a Hungarian thief by the name of Segall. Before being ruined in a scandal, the beautiful Hannover earned a fortune in the Austrian capital. In the 1870s St Petersburg had its Sendele Blueffstein, thought to have been born in Lemberg. Sendele led a remarkable career first as mistress of a son of Jacob Poliakov, the Jewish magnate, then as a brothelkeeper and procuress, and ultimately as a double agent for the Czar's political police. Until her death in 1881, Budapest offered, among others, Resi Luft, favourite of the notable police chief Alexius von Thaiss, who was also married to a former Jewish prostitute. In the 1870s too Sonia Sawicka, originally from Lublin, was famous in the *demi-mondes* of Warsaw and Moscow.<sup>32</sup>

Where there are celebrated courtesans and madams there are bound to be the proletarians of the street from whom they have risen. Is there any evidence that the *Archives Israélites* revelations about the proportions of Jewish prostitutes were accurate? We have just noticed that in the third quarter of the century there was no problem at all in London. In eastern Europe, however, Jewish prostitution undoubtedly had surfaced by the early 1870s. While statistics about registered prostitutes are never decisive because they describe only the public sector and are subject to the vagaries of police enforcement, they still reflect a clear tendency when gathered from four scattered cities. Thus for Warsaw in 1872, 17 per cent of registered prostitutes were Jewish (177); for Lemberg and Cracow in 1877, 27 per cent (41) and 29 per cent (57); for Vilna in 1873, 47 per cent (71).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> S. C. Burchell, *Imperial Masquerade* (New York, 1971), pp. 77-8. Julius Kemeny, *Hungara. Ungarische Mädchen Auf dem Markte. Enthüllungen über den Internationalen Mädchenhandel* (Budapest, Sachs and Pollak, 1903), *passim*. and especially pp. 130-2, 270-62. W. Zaleski, *Z Dziejow Prostytuji W Warszawie* (From the History of Prostitution in Warsaw) (Warsaw, 1923), pp. 47-8. See note 12, Ch. Two for a discussion of the last source.

<sup>33</sup> *Wykład Chorób Wenerycznych, podług dzieł Zeissl, Reder; i innych. Ułożony Przez Studentów Medycyny Cesarzowskiego Warszawskiego Uniwersytetu* (Seminar on VD According to the Books by Zeissl, Reder and others. Collected by the Medical Students of Warsaw University) (Warsaw, 1874), pp. 408-10. *Dwutygodnik Medycyny Publicznej. Organ Towarzystwa Lekarzy Galicyjskich* (Biweekly of Public Medicine. Organ of Galician Doctors) vol. 2, (Cracow, 1878), pp. 327-8. On Vilna, Jan Maurycy Kaminski, *O Prostytuji* (On Prostitution) (Warsaw, 1875, second edition), p. 137.

The claim that Jewish women were over-represented in prostitution across the continent seems to hold true only for Vilna, the northern city where the highest level of Jewish culture coincided with the deepest poverty. It is symptomatic, however, that when Warsaw's Polish-language weekly, *Israelita*, took up the subject in 1874, it too over-estimated the extent of the local problem, claiming that two-thirds of Warsaw's prostitutes were Jewish.<sup>34</sup> In reality this proportion was never approached anywhere and we can explain the exaggerations as deriving from the shock of sympathetic observers at this novel symptom of distress and social breakdown. Still, the figures for Lemberg and Cracow are not comforting—in each case one point below the Jewish proportion of the population—and at Warsaw the problem was serious enough to have evoked a practical response from at least part of the community. Beginning in the 1860s nine shelters were established to care for poor Jewish children, with seven attending to the training of girls. Notably these early institutions, with their emphasis on moral education, simple homemaking and vocational training, were modelled after the Parisian prototype of the 1860s. Since their regime did not follow the religious law nor offer kosher food, however, the effort was hindered by lack of support from the religious establishment, a problem that was to trouble later experiments in the same field in Warsaw.

Especially in France the statistical hyperbole turned out to be a gratuitous gift to early racism. Gougenot des Mousseaux picked up the story about the hordes of Jewish prostitutes in time for the 1869 edition of his *Le Juif, Le Judaïsme et la Judaisation*, where prostitution was portrayed as part of the 'morality of the Talmud in action'. The same report found its way into the dozens of editions of Drumont's influential *La France Juive*, where by the time of the Dreyfus case, the Jewish prostitute is portrayed as 'a marvellous instrument of information for Jewish politics'.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Israelita*, 25 October 1874. See also Kaminski, *On Prostitution*, pp. 137-8, for mention of the author's discussions with the editors of *Israelita*. Also on the shelters, Jacob Shatzky, *Geshichte von Yidn in Warshau* (Yiddish: History of the Jews in Warsaw), vol. 3, (New York, 1957), pp. 172-92.

<sup>35</sup> Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Le Juif, Le Judaïsme et la Judaisation* (Paris, 1869, 1st ed.), p. 124. Edouard Drumont, *La France Juive*, (40th edition n.d.) vol. 1, pp. 88-9.



The 1860s and 1870s were the years when Jewish prostitutes entered the ranks of the fallen and when the framework for Jewish commercial participation—brothelkeeping and procuring—was created. Domestic routes of supply were put down between brothels and the international routes were laid out. All of this will be described in the following chapters. Before we can make sense of Jewish commercial vice, however, we have to take a look at the larger picture. How extensive was commercial vice at the time? Why did prostitution ultimately become multinational and migratory? Which other groups besides the Jews participated in that overseas commerce in women? And what exactly did people mean by ‘white slavery’ anyway?

### *Nineteenth-Century Prostitution*

Mediaeval rabbis were aware of a purity gap between their people and the population at large. It was this certain knowledge of Jewish moral health that enabled them to be more frank about the inevitable moral lapses than their successors were. While this purity gap narrowed in the nineteenth century, it did not disappear. That is because the period turned out to be a golden age for prostitution virtually everywhere.

Prostitution kept pace with the growth of cities in the last century and became a uniform and familiar element of urban landscape throughout the western world. Unfortunately, statistics relating to the subject are notoriously untrustworthy. As we shall see when we tackle the Jewish aspect of the subject, there are formidable obstacles to deriving accurate numbers. Do part-time prostitutes count? What factors do we use in estimating clandestine prostitutes where the police required registration? What relationship do arrests bear to total numbers? Estimates vary radically. For London in 1839 the range of guesses falls between 7,000 and 80,000; for Paris in the 1860s 30,000 and 120,000; for Chicago in 1910 5,000 and 68,000.<sup>36</sup>

One recent suggestion proposes the rule of thumb that major cities of the time harboured one prostitute per dozen sexually active men. The feasibility of this or some similar ratio is supported by the findings of Dr Abraham Flexner, the renowned American physician who was commissioned by the Rockefellers

<sup>36</sup> Mark Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1980), p. 20. Reay Tannahill, *Sex in History* (London, 1980), p. 356.

to study European prostitution shortly before the First World War. Flexner found that with the exception of England, the demand for prostitutes was virtually universal among urban males. This was reflected among Berlin students and young clerks by a rate of venereal disease that was shockingly high. Also in France visits to prostitutes started in the school years and in the 1860s it was reported that 'on school holidays and the Thursday half-holiday the brothels swarmed with school-boys.'<sup>37</sup>

On the European periphery it was a similar story. In Russia all the manifestations of prostitution intensified towards the end of the century, when 'the incidence of venereal disease, child prostitution, abduction, white slavery ... rose majestically.' The timing of this unenviable spurt is instructive. Russia closed the vice gap with the West when its industrialization and urbanization on the western pattern began accelerating under Count Witte.<sup>38</sup> Overseas in regions of white settlement there were additional factors at work. In places like the United States, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa, the heavy inward migration of men yielded an imbalance in the sex ratios of the populations. There was a chronic shortage of women in frontier regions, mining camps, and cities that was rectified by prostitution.<sup>39</sup>

The steady drift of women into prostitution was due to a number of factors: socially, to disorientation and rootlessness following migrations from countryside to city; economically, to working-class poverty and low wages; psychologically, to the effects of family disruption. Our later discussion of the causes of Jewish prostitution will provide the occasion to explore the nuances of this subject and to investigate what weight to assign to these factors. Since they all apply to the Jewish case, however, it is important to emphasize here just how widespread these forces were.

The theme of the vulnerable country girl in the city was familiar very early in the social development of modern Europe.

<sup>37</sup> Tannahill, p. 356. Abraham Flexner, *Prostitution in Europe* (New York, 1914), pp. 41n., 366. Theodore Zeldin, *France. 1848-1945* (Oxford, 1973), p. 306.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Stites, 'Prostitution and Society in Prerevolutionary Russia', unpublished Paper, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> On this generally, Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York, 1970), pp. 99, 157. On the question of sex ratios in the US, Ivan Light, 'The Ethnic Vice Industry, 1880-1944', *American Sociological Review* 42 (1977), 464ff.

We have already seen the plight of some of the sixteenth-century Jewish migrants to Hamburg. Two centuries later Hogarth gave classic graphic expression to this subject in his *Harlot's Progress*. Visible is one Mother Needham meeting wagons arriving in London from the provinces and procuring country girls with promises of lodging and employment. In fact the real Mother Needham was pilloried and pelted to death for just such crimes in 1730 by an enraged London mob. As European cities expanded this phenomenon became general. French prostitutes frequently came from outlying districts. In Sweden, peasant girls who migrated to Stockholm each autumn were sometimes observed in the 1870s to wind up in brothels.<sup>40</sup>

Also in Russia, peasant migrants to St Petersburg, Odessa, and other burgeoning centres typically formed the major portion of recruits to urban brothels. In terms reminiscent of Hogarth but appropriate for the railway age, the fate of a new arrival in the capital from a bleak Russian village has been described in the following terms:

Arriving green at the Nicholas Station ... she stood wide-eyed and bewildered in her felt boots with her bag of belongings. One of the recruiters who haunted this station at all hours in search of fresh females from the villages, approached her, promised to get her a job and placed her in a 'hotel'.<sup>41</sup>

As we shall see, these entrapments of innocent victims did not occur as frequently as the stage-army of Victorian travellers' aid workers believed. But they did occur in a minority of cases. More than once Jewish volunteers chased traffickers from railway platforms where they awaited incoming trains. Much more frequently, however, recruitment to prostitution was delayed and at least partially if not entirely voluntary. New immigrants might drift into a 'state of irrelation', free of the old social controls and without the experience, values, and advice required to avoid the pitfalls and novel attractions of the urban

<sup>40</sup> Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, pp. 25-6, 58-9. Alain Corbin, *Les Filles de Noce. Misère Sexuelle et Prostitution* (Paris, 1978). *British, Continental and General Federation for the Abolition of Government Regulation of Vice. Fourth Annual Report* (1878-9), pp. 11-12.

<sup>41</sup> Stites, 'Prostitution', p. 13.



environment.<sup>42</sup> Or simply looking for better money and a less menial station in life than that available in the normal range of womens' work—the factory, domestic service, the laundry— young women would meet others already in the life, or male procurers, and gradually take up prostitution as a least bad choice.<sup>43</sup>

Whether we are talking of migrants or longer urban residents, it has long been clear that at least for western prostitution, poverty is usually not a sufficient cause on its own. Surveying statistical returns from France, Belgium, and England for the nineteenth century, Havelock Ellis concluded years ago that while low wages and unemployment were important, additional factors were needed to explain why some working-class women joined the sisterhood of the streets and others did not.<sup>44</sup>

Prostitutes may have had higher material expectations and a lower tolerance for servile labour than others in their class. Experts at the time pointed to this in their frequent references to prostitutes' presumptuous love of finery. Thus a British physician in the 1870s:

As a medical man I will give my opinion as to what encourages prostitution; idleness and the love of finery. Some girls won't work if they can help it; they will take the easiest way of obtaining money and they will have their dress; they must have their false hair ... and their long trains to their dresses like their mistresses.<sup>45</sup>

This observation had its prewar counterpart in the belief that certain girls could not withstand the temptations of working in a department store. With its merchandize a constant enticement they would be easy prey for procurers. Anti-white-slavery committees were in constant communication with the directors of the great stores in New York and the '*grands magasins*' of Paris. And it does appear to be the case that procurers believed like-

<sup>42</sup> The term is from Barbara Sherman Heyl, *The Madam as Entrepreneur* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1979), p. 26.

<sup>43</sup> Two recent works are of great value in clarifying prostitution as a voluntary choice: Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (Cambridge, 1980). Ruth Rosen (ed.), *The Mamie Papers* (London, ed., 1979), introduction.

<sup>44</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 6 (Philadelphia, 1913), pp. 254ff.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in E. M. Sigsworth and T. J. Wyke, 'A Study of Victorian Prostitution and Venereal Disease' in *Suffer and Be Still*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington, Indiana, 1973), p. 82.

wise, since they plagued Gimbels Department Store in New York.<sup>46</sup>

The element of truth in these exaggerated fears is that in the only terms they could express it, prostitutes wanted something better. In Lincoln Steffens' story of the New York ghetto, '*Schloma, daughter of Schmuhl*', the invitation to the new recruit puts this in the Yiddish idiom: 'Es ist besser wie packin pants.' Mamie Pinzer a marvellous and sensitive woman who drifted into prostitution in Philadelphia put it this way early in the century, 'I just cannot be moral enough to see where drudgery is better than a life of lazy vice.'<sup>47</sup>

The propensity to outrun conventional norms and choose prostitution as a vocational alternative frequently was related to the disturbed family histories of these women. Cross-cultural studies by the League of Nations and other investigations of Britain and America concur in showing a very high correlation between prostitution and the absence of at least one parent.<sup>48</sup> The mechanism at work might be the lack of strong emotional bonds to parents, making it easier to violate normal expectations of proper behaviour. Or, it might be a question of punishing a parent for inadequate love.<sup>49</sup> All of this has a bearing on the Jewish experience to be explored below.

For a complex of reasons, therefore, the supply was present to meet the demand. What of the male appetite for prostitutes? Here again migrations played a part. Before they were fully integrated into urban life and moralized into respectability, the new urban proletariat provided a major source of business for prostitutes. The existence 'of a vast masculine proletariat in a state of sexual misery' has been proposed for France, for example, though perhaps this misery was mitigated by the relatively liberal working-class attitude to pre-marital sex.<sup>50</sup> In

<sup>46</sup> *Glaikheyit* (Yiddish), 5 December 1913 published by Ladies Vest and Dressmakers Union. For Paris, Mme. Eugene Simon to ICA, in 18 September 1911 ICA, vol. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Lincoln Steffens, '*Schloma, Daughter of Schmuhl*', *Chapbook V* (1896), pp. 128-32. Rosen, *Mamie Papers*, xxi.

<sup>48</sup> *Enquiry into Measures of Rehabilitation of Prostitutes Part I. Prostitutes: Their Early Lives*, 1 July 1938, League of Nations, 31. Rosen, *Mamie Papers*, xxv. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, Ch. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, Ch. 1. Charles Winick and Paul Kinsie, *The Lively Commerce* (New York, 1972), pp. 84ff. Heyl, *Madam*, pp. 12-15.

<sup>50</sup> Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, p. 276.

overseas areas of white settlement like South America and South Africa transplanted proletarians and peasants found little solace in that more liberal attitude. Prostitutes were brought in because there were just not enough females to go round.

Moving up the social scale, the nexus of middle-class client and poor woman was at the heart of commercial vice. In part this was due to the practice of gentlemen to defer marriage until they were well established. This is one of the factors behind the remarkable pool of 2½ million persons of both sexes between the ages of twenty and forty-four who were single in Britain in 1851.<sup>51</sup> Among them was a cohort of middle-class men who, with women of their own class sexually taboo, would have been the true 'miserables' of the age had it not been for prostitutes.

Furthermore, the importance of prostitution did not diminish after marriage. There was an important psychological syndrome at work promoting the whore. St Thomas Aquinas' 'cesspool in a palace', Bernard Mandeville's 'Bog-house in a garden', and similar vivid images down through the ages reveal a recurrent disparity that dominated nineteenth-century society in particular: the disparity Freud discovered between love on the one hand and sex on the other. It led to the idealization and sexual anaesthetization of middle-class women and the projection of the erotic onto working-class prostitutes. One of the great historians of the century, W. E. H. Lecky, did violence to his reputation by articulating the classic Victorian statement embodying this attitude; for Lecky the prostitute is 'ultimately the most efficient guardian of virtue. But for her the unchallenged purity of countless happy homes would be polluted ...' This state of mind was characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon world but not limited to it. In France, for example, 'pleasures in sexual intercourse could not in such circumstances be sought with them [wives], who were dedicated to motherhood.'<sup>52</sup>

As prostitution emerged as a highly profitable enterprise it also became more ramified. Almost everywhere there was a complex division of labour, with the proliferation of procurers, pimps, and brothelkeepers. If prostitution is the oldest profes-

<sup>51</sup> J. F. C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians, 1832-51* (Panther, ed., 1973), pp. 25-6.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Cominos, 'Late-Victorian Sexual Respectability and the Social System', *International Review of Social History* 8 (1963), 18-48 and 216-50. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, pp. 52-3. Zeldin, *France*, pp. 291-2.

sion then procuring is the second oldest. And in the favourable business climate of the nineteenth century, procuring entered what was to be its golden age. Recruiters frequented railway stations, ports, and VD wards; they stationed themselves at prison gates to greet released prostitutes; they placed fake job advertisements in newspapers and established bogus employment bureaux to ensnare the unsuspecting; in the Jewish case they commonly married innocent girls and deposited them in foreign brothels.

Procurers were essential because they could provide girls when and where they were required. The basic dynamic of the commercial vice system was constant motion; movement between brothels was at the very heart of the system. Some estimates for France in the nineteenth century place about half of all brothel stops at two months or less.<sup>53</sup> Rapid turnover was due to a number of factors. Where the clientele was regular it demanded variety, and the high rate of VD among the inmates frequently put them out of work, at least temporarily. Furthermore, moving prostitutes around enabled the men who had seized control of commercial vice to exercise maximum power over their workers. Women away from familiar territory were sometimes at a disadvantage to start with. In part this was because of the virtually universal custom of brothelkeepers which ensured that their inmates ran up substantial debts to the house for lingerie, laundry, cosmetics, and the like. When these debts were 'assumed' by a pimp or procurer, the prostitute was rendered even more dependent on those who lived off her labour. At the 1914 trial of Samuel Lubelski, a trafficker so notorious that he was known as the 'King of Myslowitz', an important transshipment point for Jewish immigrants in German Silesia, Germany's foremost police expert on the subject explained that 'a great role in the recruiting for tolerated houses is played by changing from brothel to brothel. In this case it is customary for the procurer to assume the debts that the girl made in the earlier house.'<sup>54</sup>

State regulation was another factor that opened up prostitutes

<sup>53</sup> Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, pp. 109-12. Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 15-16. Joseph Schrank, *Prostitution in Wien*, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1886), p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> *Hamburger Echo* 4 July 1914, cutting in folio 78, SH.



to control by exploiters.<sup>55</sup> The actual registration of prostitutes was required in ancient Rome and then sporadically in Europe until the eighteenth century. With the breakdown of all police supervision in the early years of the French Revolution, Parisian whores were alleged to have become increasingly bold and offensive, standing nude in their windows and imitating copulation. The French Directorate responded by introducing new regulations and under Napoleon's rule the full power of the state bureaucracy was brought into play.

The resulting code was long known as 'the French System' and over the course of the century it was adapted to local conditions virtually everywhere but in the Anglo-Saxon world, where public opinion was more reluctant to sanction legalized vice. Even in England, however, state regulation under the Contagious Diseases Acts was in effect in scheduled garrison and seaport towns from 1864 to 1886, while in the United States St Louis and Cincinnati experimented with similar systems.

The 'French System' was meant to fight venereal disease, keep good public order, moralize the streets by limiting prostitution to a closed environment, and control the underworld. In practice the system was in varying degrees inefficient, brutal, and corrupt. The cornerstone of the edifice was inscription and the forming of dossiers for each participant. Once so registered, women were confirmed as professional outcasts and could extricate themselves from the machine only with the greatest difficulty. One of the few official ways out was the refuge or rescue home, so forbidding and sanctimonious that by the eighteenth century they were known as 'sacred prisons'.<sup>56</sup>

Inscription meant frequent medical examination and compulsory treatment for the infected in hospitals. We now know that at its most efficient the regime was hopeless. The requisite scientific information was not yet available for adequate diagnosis and treatment of the venereal diseases. Diagnosis of gonorrhoea requires microscopic rather than clinical examination and early syphilis often went undetected before the development of the Wasserman test in 1907. Even co-operative women could

<sup>55</sup> On state regulation, Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, *passim*. Bullough, *Prostitution*, Ch. 13. A. J. B. Parent-Duchatelet, *De La Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris*, vol. 2 (1857), Ch. 6. Flexner, *Prostitution*, Ch. 5. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, Ch. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, p. 64.

slip through the net and it was perfectly clear that regulation encouraged the activities of specialists whose craft was to get infected whores through the examination. Sometimes syphilitic disfigurements were hidden by tattoos.

Nor were medical examinations optimal even by the standards of the day. Dr Flexner was utterly revolted by the lines of prostitutes at Parisian headquarters being examined by two doctors who never bothered to wash their gloves or instruments. The whole system may actually have been responsible for spreading venereal infection by giving the stamp of approval to women who were released from hospital after primary syphilitic symptoms had cleared but before a cure had been effected. They went into the waiting hands of procurers or clients.

The special morals police, who used the threat of prison to keep the system ticking over, were responsible for another equally dubious accomplishment. Wherever they appeared the class of clandestine or illegal prostitutes blossomed. Later even the Nazis failed to extinguish secret prostitution despite the threat of the concentration camp.<sup>57</sup> In St Petersburg while there were about 3,000 inscribed women just before the revolution, there may have been at least ten times that number in secret prostitution. Throughout the Russian Empire the weight of the police was particularly heavy, especially since they sometimes utilized prostitutes as spies, or gave free reign to pimps whom they employed as *agents provocateurs*. But everywhere the police were figures of fear. Even England, where the police were far less abusive than anywhere else, had its notorious Inspector Annis, whose fanaticism sometimes led to very marginal cases being dragged into the police net in the port of Devonport. In France it is not for nothing that Zola has Nana jump from a window to escape from the morals police; in 1876 reformers made a *cause célèbre* out of the bullying and suicide of two inscribed prostitutes in Paris.<sup>58</sup>

Some of the other functions ancillary to the actual act of prostitution—brothelkeepers, procurers, pimps—begin to emerge. In both the regulated and clandestine sectors they protected their women not only from unruly customers, but from

<sup>57</sup> Hans Peter Bleuel, *Sex and Society in Nazi Germany* (New York, 1973), pp. 225-9.

<sup>58</sup> Stites, 'Prostitution,' p. 12. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, p. 82. Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, pp. 326ff.

the police. While these professionals could be more brutal than the police, most pimps also lent their women emotional support. This was important because where there was state regulation, the women, inscribed or not, were normally outcasts and cut off from the support of the general working-class community. In this difficult social situation the emotional bonds between pimp and prostitute could be strong. Bascom Johnson, the League of Nations investigator who probably knew more about prostitution between the wars than anyone in the world, wrote that he had

come across a number of examples in which the prostitutes continued to send money to their pimps for several years when separated by half the world. In such cases I suppose the relationship approximates to real marriage and is accompanied by enough consideration and affection of both sides to cement this relationship into something not altogether degrading.<sup>59</sup>

This was certainly the case with many of the Jewish partnerships, as we shall observe.

On the other hand, those who lived off prostitutes might be appendages of the police, used sometimes as in Russia and Poland for political purposes; or more commonly, just expected by the authorities to pay tribute or to keep good public order. Referring to the Jewish madams of Bombay in 1913, the Commissioner of Police observed that 'their presence is essential to the due control of the women, who would otherwise fight among themselves, thieve, require constant police interference. The "Mistress" ... stands therefore as monitor and guardian between the male clientele and the girls of her brothel.'<sup>60</sup> The logic of regulated prostitution everywhere was to prevent disorder, not to stop illicit sex.

Finally, there is another situation to examine relating to the function of pimps. Where state regulation failed to take hold, as in Britain and the United States, the alternative was periodic police repression which made it very difficult for street women

<sup>59</sup> Bascom Johnson to Frederick Sempkins, 16 December 1932. Box 106. S 62 G. NVA.

<sup>60</sup> S. M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, Judicial Dept. Bombay, 2 January 1913. L/P & J/6/1207. IOL.



to find lodgings and carry on their work. It is instructive that English prostitutes managed to keep control of their own destinies until police throughout the country began cracking down systematically following the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. At that point pimps, or bullies, entered the picture in increasing numbers, offering emotional support and practical help. As an official noted at the time, 'Prostitutes like to have a man with them whose presence enables them to get apartments, to have protection from robbery and violence and to have companionship in their off time.'<sup>61</sup> When the New York police launched one of their periodic cleanups in 1901 there was the same result. On Elizabeth Street in the Lower East Side, pimps took to moving into tenement flats with their women and playing with neighbouring children to fool investigators into believing prostitutes were really local mothers.<sup>62</sup>

In the late-nineteenth century commercial prostitution changed in one crucial respect. Routes of supply lengthened and the traffic became international. There were several powerful reasons for this. On the one hand, the popularity of brothels diminished among clientele and inmates, both of whom began to find them confining. Everywhere in Europe the number of bordellos dropped dramatically. Between 1868 and 1893 the number of licensed brothels in Odessa fell from 76 to 16; between 1889 and 1908 the number of licensed houses in Warsaw fell from 17 to 8. In Paris between 1840 and 1900 the fall was from 140 to 50. Naturally there were clandestine houses in these places. But there was a change in sensibility and commercial vice was shifting to flats, brasseries, and cabarets.<sup>63</sup>

This change of taste squeezed the profits of commercial vice, based as they were on the economies of scale of the large brothel. Fortunately for the entrepreneurs, the sex imbalances created overseas by the disproportionate emigration of European men meant that there was a foreign requirement for prostitutes.

<sup>61</sup> Arthur Lee to Reginald McKenna, 7 July 1912, and Minute. HO 45/10576/17846. PRO.

<sup>62</sup> 22 March 1901. Report on 73 Elizabeth St. Comm. of 15.

<sup>63</sup> Ellis, *Sex*, vol. 6, pp. 302-3. Ivan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time* (London, 1908), p. 337. Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, p. 172. Stürmer, 'Prostitution', p. 98. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, Ch. 7.

The steamship and the telegraph made it possible to respond to the new market situation. There is an uncanny parallel between the real crisis of commercial prostitution and the alleged crisis of capitalism in the same period, each resolved by expansion overseas.

Even before the development of long-distance supply routes, intra-European trafficking was common. It was encouraged by officials. In Romania, for example, local women had legal protection in brothels, that is, except Romanian women of Jewish extraction, who had no citizenship. Foreign nationals could be held by brothelkeepers until they paid off debts and by the 1870s this led to an influx of Hungarian women.<sup>64</sup> Ottoman officials cared little about what went on in Turkish brothels so long as the inmates were foreign. There too an import trade appeared by the 1860s. Even the police commissioner of London could be quite cynical about foreigners; in 1902 he wrote, 'As there must always be prostitutes, it is perhaps less demoralizing to have foreign than Englishwomen and if you get rid of the former their places will be taken by Englishwomen. The foreigner is more amenable to control ...'<sup>65</sup>

By that time prostitutes had become as migratory as when they followed medieval fairs and armies. As one distressed opponent of state regulation reported from Buenos Aires in 1889, 'In America, the tolerated houses are like branches of those of Europe ...'; and from Brazil ten years earlier, where new shipping services had brought in a greater variety of women than the familiar Portuguese and Azorians, 'Alas! The streets of Rio are like those of London and Paris.'<sup>66</sup>

Nor was this movement of females to compensate for male overpopulation limited to the West. Procurers were busily buying poor girls from their families in the country districts of Japan and shipping them off to brothels in Australia, Singapore, Penang, India, and elsewhere. The same fate befell many hundreds of Chinese girls purchased from poor parents or kidnapped and sent off to California to serve the needs of Chinese

<sup>64</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 109-10.

<sup>65</sup> Minute by E. R. Henry in 'White-Slave Traffic—Repatriation of Women', 14 November 1905. Mepol 2/558. PRO.

<sup>66</sup> *Le Bulletin Continental*, October 1889, February 1879.

labourers sojourning there.<sup>67</sup> The plight of these individuals, sometimes mere children, could be grim indeed. Some perished while being smuggled to Australia or America, crushed or burnt to death in coal bunkers. One group of Japanese prostitutes were discovered on a ship to Hong Kong mad with starvation, having bitten a hole in a water pipe and torn their procurers apart. By the end of the century Chinese prostitutes in America were subjected by the well-organized Chinese underworld gangs, the famous Tongs, to a regime of semi-slavery. Discipline was enforced by whipping, torture by fire, banishment to brothels in mining regions, and finally murder.

Such horrors were rarely visited upon Europe's peripatetic prostitutes, of whom there were thousands. Hungarians in Romania. Greeks in the Levant. Poles and Austrians in Turkey and Russia. Germans and Belgians in London. French in South America, the Low Countries, North and South Africa. Italians in South America and Egypt. And Jewish women scattered across five continents.

### *White Slavery*

In the environment of regulated and migratory prostitution, the issue of 'white slavery' swept the West like wildfire late in the nineteenth century. Just what was white slavery all about? Outside the Orient, were women really abducted into prostitution on a regular basis? As for the phrase itself, white slavery was first used in the context of prostitution in the 1830s by Dr Michael Ryan, a London reformer. Referring to the local campaign against vice, Ryan noted that

it has been proved in several cases that have come before our public magistrates, especially at the eastern end of town, that the infernal traffic in question is still carried on to a great extent, principally by Jews. These white-slave dealers trepan young girls into their dens of iniquity, sell them to vile debaucheries ...<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Lucie Cheng Hirata, 'Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America', *Signs* 5 (1979), 3-28. D. S. C. Sissons, 'Karayaki-San: Japanese Prostitutes in Australia. 1887-1916', *Historical Studies* (Melbourne) 17 (1977) 323-41 and 474-88.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Ryan, *Philosophy of Marriage* (London, 1839), p. 14.

Following the abolition of black slavery in the British Empire in 1833, white slavery seemed a natural enough metaphor. Notice also both the early exaggerated association with the Jews, and the connection with 'trepanning', or decoying and entrapping. Yet during the 1830s there was still a more common meaning for the term, illustrated by the factory reformer Richard Oastler's ironic cry in his *Slavery in Yorkshire*: 'The white slave monster works his youthful victims ... How kind! To keep the little white-slave girls 13 hours without time or rest.'<sup>69</sup>

Finally in the 1870s white slavery and its continental counterparts, *traite des blanches* and *Mädchenhandel*, became firmly associated with prostitution. These terms were adopted by reformers pressing for the abolition of state regulation. In 1870 Victor Hugo wrote to Josephine Butler, the famous leader of the movement to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, 'the slavery of black women is abolished in America, but the slavery of white women continues in Europe and laws are still made by men in order to tyrannize over women.'<sup>70</sup>

Notice, however, that there is no mention of decoying and entrapping here. By 'the slavery of white women' Hugo meant the entire apparatus of state-regulated vice, and it was generally the whole miserable regime of licensed prostitution that reformers meant by white slavery. Thus Josephine Butler wrote in 1875 to H. J. Wilson, one of her chief parliamentary lieutenants, of the new-abolitionist campaign against continental regulation,

... the continuance of this work begun abroad (is) of great importance not only for other countries but for our own. Indeed, in defeating White Slavery in England alone, we should be merely lopping off a branch of the poisonous tree...<sup>71</sup>

By the end of the 1870s the term changed connotation as the new abolitionists threw caution to the winds and altered their focus. In their rhetoric and in public opinion white slavery

<sup>69</sup> Richard Oastler, *Slavery in Yorkshire* (1836), Goldsmith's Library, University of London.

<sup>70</sup> Victor Hugo to Josephine Butler, 20 March 1870 in Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London, 1911 new ed.), p. 13.

<sup>71</sup> Josephine Butler to H. J. Wilson, 8 March 1875, Josephine Butler Collection, Fawcett Library.

decisively took on the suggestion of recruitment to prostitution by force or fraud. Why was this? While Josephine Butler had succeeded in organizing an International Abolitionist Federation (IAF) with particularly vocal chapters in France and Switzerland, the movement was accomplishing very little against the entrenched police and medical advocates of licensed vice. Then in 1879 Alfred Dyer, an evangelical ally of Butler's, whom we shall encounter later railing against Jewish brothelkeepers in India, published his sensational revelation that young British girls were being held captive in Belgian brothels. The evils of enforced and juvenile prostitution were immediately taken up by the IAF as inevitable components of the regulated system and were continuously attacked.<sup>72</sup>

The shift to white slavery as enforced prostitution was partly tactical, to add fuel to the sagging new-abolitionist cause. But if the truth be known, once conjured up this issue took on its own irresistible momentum. The image of female abduction and ruination was so symbolically supercharged, so psychologically overloaded, that the reformers themselves, to say nothing of the public, got carried away with their own rhetoric. As the new abolitionists insisted at the time, the Brussels brothel scandal represented 'the opening of a door which cannot again be closed upon us and which will lead us to the very heart of the abomination. Wherever there is slavery there is a slave trade.' Aimé Humbert, the renowned Swiss statesman and Josephine Butler's chief continental ally, added with typical compulsive hyperbole that 'the gross barbarities and the stupid cruelties of negro slavery grow pale by the side of these horrible revelations ...'

There followed a series of outbursts of mass publicity about how white slavers lurked everywhere, waiting to lure unsuspecting females into bondage. Between 1880 and 1885 there were five long years of agitation in England, culminating with, in quick order, W. T. Stead's excessive and popular newspaper series 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'; followed by the most unique mass demonstration of the period, with tens of thousands marching behind Salvation Army bands in Hyde

<sup>72</sup> Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, pp. 86ff, for the following three paragraphs.



Park for the protection of virgins; and finally legislation raising the age of consent and tightening up the law against procurers.

On the continent and in America the image of white slavery also took hold of reformers and the public. By 1881 there was talk of a diplomatic conference on the subject. There was also a massive expansion of travellers' aid work by middle-class ladies across Europe and America. Institutions like *L'Union Internationale des Amis de la Jeune Fille*, the International Catholic Girls' Protection Society, and the Travellers' Aid Society posted volunteers at ports and railway stations. The rationale for this popular form of ladies' philanthropy is clear from the promotional letter for the Travellers' Aid Society, established in London during the stormy year 1885. The TAS was

to meet the country girl at the threshold of our wicked city and have her over to one or other of the befriending societies—not allowing her to be entrapped within sight of a haven. We know girls are giddy and self-willed—we know they will come to London—we know they can be and easily are led by kind words—we know that deep plots are laid for their destruction—made by a 'flattering tongue'. God helping us they shall not be unwarned and unaided.

The perceived dangers of the city and of men had taken on very extreme proportions.<sup>73</sup>

By 1899 conditions were right for the second and by far the most significant airing of the white-slavery question, and one in which Jewish reformers would play a major part. Out of England came yet another evangelical and philanthropic imperialist, the very able William Coote, a social-purity leader along the lines of his more famous American contemporary, Anthony Comstock. Coote travelled around the western world organizing support for a new movement, just as Josephine Butler had done in 1875. This time, however, the focus was not state regulation but white slavery, procuring prostitutes especially over international borders. The idea was received enthusiastically, no doubt in part because it gave regulationist governments the opportunity to appear to do something about vice.

<sup>73</sup> Loose in Minutes of the Travellers' Aid Society General Committee (1885-93), Fawcett Library.



By 1914 there were chapters in a dozen countries; patronage from royalty and political leaders including the prime ministers of Hungary, Italy, and Portugal; and two diplomatic conventions pledging signatories to strengthen their laws against procuring and to combine to defeat the international traffic.<sup>74</sup>

Coote's original supporters included Claude Montefiore, the philosopher of Liberal Judaism, and Samuel Cohen, secretary of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (Jewish Association). These individuals and their colleagues abroad were neither uninformed do-gooders nor hysterical prudes who suspected that traffickers with hypodermic syringes lurked around every corner. They were, however, shaped by the prevalent Victorian assumptions of their day, that prostitution could never be a rational vocational choice made in a situation short of starvation, and that, where chosen, it was due to a misunderstanding of what life in the game would be like. Following a tour of South America in 1913, Samuel Cohen reported very soberly that while the clandestine houses contained some unwilling victims, in the licensed brothels 'most of these women had led a life of prostitution before going to South America, and that they went voluntarily. I feel sure, however, that false representations were made to them ... and now they cannot get out due to debts.'<sup>75</sup>

In other words, commercial prostitution was not only immoral; it was inherently cruel especially in its migratory variety, since prostitutes abroad were said to be at such a disadvantage. Bertha Pappenheim, the German-Jewish feminist leader, compared the 'voluntaryness' of such a choice to that of the young foreign legionnaire, who had no idea what he was getting himself into.<sup>76</sup> There was some truth that debts, language difficulties, and reliance upon pimps for travel assistance placed many prostitutes abroad at a severe disadvantage. A later League of Nations study referred to the 'well-known incapacity of prostitutes particularly foreign prostitutes in a strange country, to manage their own affairs.'<sup>77</sup> As we shall see, however,

<sup>74</sup> Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, Ch. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women. *Report of the Secretary on his visit to South America*, (1913), p. 33.

<sup>76</sup> Bertha Pappenheim, *Sisyphus Arbeit II* (Berlin, 1929), p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> League of Nations. *Report of the Special Body of Experts on the Extent of the International White Slave Traffic*, Part Two (1927), p. 16.

there was no general rule and many prostitutes abroad did very well for themselves. This did not prevent reformers from seizing upon migratory prostitution, so visible at the turn of the century and so embarrassing to the Jews, as the worst form of an inherently exploitative business; nor did it prevent them from using the issue in an instrumental way, to work up world opinion against sexual vice so that commercial prostitution itself could be attacked. Since national sentiments varied widely on the tolerability of prostitution, however, it was necessary to proceed step by step and to create the preconditions for future gains.

Thus the first two international agreements of 1902 and 1910 succeeded in getting white slavery recognized as a juridical concept in international law, but only at the price of consensus at the minimal level. That meant that signatories agreed to adjust domestic law to punish procurers who led abroad under any circumstances females under the age of twenty, or who used force or fraud to procure for abroad any female regardless of her age.<sup>78</sup> Shortly after this was agreed at an international diplomatic conference of 1910 held in Paris, anti-white-slavery leaders began pushing for the next advance. Claude Montefiore told the 1913 International Congress For the Suppression of White Slavery, a very big affair held in London, that there was

need of enlarging the connotation of the terms white-slave traffic and the white-slave trader ... a trafficker must be regarded not only as a man who exports and sells his victims to a life of shame, but also a man who receives them and keeps them and uses them, and not only so, but the individual man who keeps one individual woman on the streets ...<sup>79</sup>

This far the movement never got, though in 1933 an international convention was agreed which declared illegal the procuring of voluntary adults for overseas.

White slavery therefore had a meaning in international law

<sup>78</sup> There is a massive amount of documentation from all the interested foreign ministries on the making of the international conventions. The subject can be followed in the *Vigilance Record*. It is summarized in *Traffic in Women and Children. Past Achievements. Present Tasks. International Bureau for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children* (London, 1949).

<sup>79</sup> Cited in *Vigilance Record*, July-August 1913.

that changed over time. It also carried the popular connotation of abduction. And the leading reformers thought of it as synonymous with commercial prostitution.

Naturally just as in the 1880s, when the introduction of the issue in London raised the spectre of 'constant disappearances of young and pretty girls of the working classes', whenever reformers raised the white-slavery flag the public panicked.<sup>80</sup> The reintroduction of the issue all over the West at the turn of the century opened up a Pandora's box of subliminal fears, led to public panics reminiscent of the Middle Ages and ultimately reinforced anti-semitism.

First of all, the sheer quantity of publicity was astonishing. Commercial interests seized hold of the idea as a profit maker. Typically, after the Swiss and Danish National Committees For the Suppressison of White Slavery subsidized a silent film on the subject, commercial film makers followed with 'White Slave 2 and White Slave 3'. This was the beginning of a successful commercial genre that carried on in the West through the 1920s. Music-hall productions on the same theme packed houses in London while Italians staged a five-act melodrama. As we shall see, there were Yiddish plays, tracts, novels, short stories, and serials as well. In the United States alone it was claimed by 1914 that over one billion pages had been published on the subject. There was a colourful series of tracts with such titles as *The Great War on White Slavery; or, Fighting for the Protection of Our Girls: Truthful and Chaste Account of the Hideous Trade of Buying and Selling Young Girls for Immoral Purposes*. Fiction on the same theme sold out. By 1912 *The House of Bondage* was in its fourteenth edition. And all the while there was sustained and often distorted coverage in the world's press.<sup>81</sup>

What had been tapped? At a political and social level the white-slavery movement coincided with widespread fears about the quality of the racial stock. It was the cutting edge of a widespread mobilization by purity leagues and politicians to ensure the health and efficiency of populations in an era of international rivalry: preparedness through purity. Havelock Ellis mentioned in 1912 that 'During the past ten years one of those waves of enthusiasm for the moralization of the public by law has been

<sup>80</sup> *Justice*, 18 July 1885.

<sup>81</sup> Files Sle, Sll, Slq, NVA. Connelly, *Response*, Ch. 6.

sweeping across Europe and America.<sup>82</sup> He meant anti-obscenity statutes, higher ages of consent, and anti-procuring legislation, all meant to strengthen the racial stock by reducing venereal disease, solidifying marriage, and even combatting the enervating solitary vice, masturbation.

Where fear of conspiracy was part of the national subconscious, as in the United States, white slavery fitted perfectly. Here there were widespread fears, typically, of a vast ring stretching from Atlantic to Pacific under one 'Big Chief'. Such apprehensions were reinforced by the native suspicion that cities were naturally corrupt. Progressives in America pointed to prostitution and the entrapment of girls as the most dramatic example of urban immorality and the loss of traditional values, a perspective that was shared in rapidly industrializing Germany.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, foreign immigrants were crowding into American cities, as they were to a lesser extent into London, Berlin, and Vienna. In all of these places the connection was drawn between white slavery and Jewish immigration, a connection that had some basis in fact.

White slavery was useful to feminists and the issue played a clear part in their agitations. Helen Bullis, the knowledgeable immigration inspector at Ellis Island, put this in perfect perspective when replying in 1914 to an enquiry about a rash of reported abductions: 'Awfully sorry I can't furnish you and our friends the Suffragists more ammunition against that vile brute, Man, who so justly deserves extermination: I feel myself a sad failure.'<sup>84</sup> Paradoxically, the uses of white slavery cut both ways. In that age of female emancipation it was also comforting for men and for parents of adolescent daughters to subscribe to the belief in white slavery, with its connotation of female helplessness. It recalled simpler days before wives and daughters demanded personal and political rights. During a spate of abduction reports in 1912, Frederick Bullock, head of Scotland Yard's special white-slavery office, explained this dynamic:

To all such instances it has become fashionable to attack the stigma of the white slave traffic; but is it not reasonable to suppose that with the

<sup>82</sup> Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (London, 1927 ed.), pp. 286-7.

<sup>83</sup> Cited in *Vigilance Record*, April 1909. Richard J. Evans, 'Prostitution, State and Society in Imperial Germany', *Past and Present*, no. 70 (1976), 127.

<sup>84</sup> Helen Bullis to Frederick Whitin, 8 January 1914. Comm. of 14, Box 13.



modern desire for independence and liberty of action which has become so characteristic of women it is not only the *man* who is to blame for some of the deplorable consequences which follow in the search for a free and uncontrollable life?<sup>85</sup>

With these observations it becomes clear that one has to scratch deeply below the surface to explain the tenacity of this issue. Not only did white slavery have its social and political uses; the massive body of films, plays, novels, tracts, and newspaper accounts were themselves symptomatic of, and then activated in others, widely held fears and fantasies about the emancipation of women, and perhaps too about even deeper matters. Psychoanalysts have shown how adults can harbour unresolved infantile fears of the omnipotent menacing father. Old folk tales about gypsies robbing children and classic fairy tales like Jack and the Beanstalk, for example, are symbolic cultural expressions of this emotion. By symbolizing these fears and providing *ersatz* father figures like the gypsy or the devouring ogre in Jack, these tales can help children overcome both the fears themselves and the anxiety inherent in the wish for retaliation. The white-slavery story serves a similar purpose, except for adults. Those with unresolved hate for their fathers project this emotion onto the dark and beastly trafficker and clear their consciences.<sup>86</sup>

This is not all. While the issue cannot be explored fully here, there is evidence that some adolescent girls may be subject to fantasies of sexual surrender. Of this sensitive dawn of sexuality it has been said 'sexual awareness is still mainly fantasy, an age at which erotic longing, terror and anguish all blend and ferment together. The emancipation of the modern girl, far from putting a stop to such fantasies, actually encourages them ...'<sup>87</sup> That many of the reported abductions and druggings were connected with contemporary novelties that had both

<sup>85</sup> 'White-Slave Traffic', memorandum by Frederick Bullock, 12 June 1913, in Mepol 2/1312. PRO.

<sup>86</sup> Erich Fromm, 'Zur Psychologie des Mädchenhandels und Seiner Bekämpfung', *Zeitschrift für Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege* (November-December 1929), pp. 294-303. This forgotten article by the young Fromm is of value for the subject. Also generally, Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* (London, 1967), pp. 256-9. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York, 1976), pp. 190-4.

<sup>87</sup> Edgar Morin, *Rumour of Orleans* (London, 1971 ed.), p. 46.

frightening and stimulating facets, like the dark cinema and the powerful motor car, lends credence to this argument.

These potent social, political, and psychological factors help explain not only the popularity of the anti-white-slavery movement between 1899 and 1914, but the smouldering fears that flared up every so often in the West between then and the 1970s. Between 1912 and 1914, for example, there was a remarkable stream of hysterical complaints by young women in America. The popular press picked up the stories and reinforced the panic. Every social class was involved, from Radcliffe and Wellesley students allegedly accosted in Boston department stores, to a Barnard girl doped in a candy store, to a Bayonne, New Jersey, telephone operator allegedly overcome on the Fulton Street subway.<sup>88</sup> Reformers actually carried on a serious correspondence with medical experts who were divided about whether a fiend with a hypodermic syringe could effectively employ it in the manner claimed. One physician found the prospect quite possible, especially in view of 'the extreme scantiness of women's apparel'.<sup>89</sup>

At the very same time, according to Frederick Bullock

a remarkable manifestation of anxiety was exhibited in regard to the dangers run by women and girls in the streets of London, for which there was in fact no justification or foundation. All sorts of stories, sensational and wholly improbable, were repeated from mouth to mouth of sudden disappearances, abductions and attempts to entice and allure innocent girls.<sup>90</sup>

Similar flareups occurred between the wars all over the West. In Germany at the end of the 1920s the Jewish social worker Max Kreutzberger called white slavery 'the public fear of the last decade'. There were popular tales in England about 'Heinrich the Satyr', said to be responsible for luring 4,000 girls to their doom; about old ladies with hollowed-out rings fitted with a needle and quick-acting curare poison. In Poland

<sup>88</sup> Correspondence and cuttings in Box 13, Comm. of 14. Especially Helen Bullis to Frederick Whitin, 24 November, 4 December 1913, 8 January 1914. Police Dept. City of New York, 23 December 1913. Memorandum for Second Deputy Commissioner.

<sup>89</sup> Extensive correspondence, *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Bullock, 'White-Slave Traffic.'



and Romania there were stories about a slave-ship plying between Black Sea ports from which girls were thrown overboard after they were ruined.<sup>91</sup>

Needless to say, some of this hysteria was tinged with anti-semitism. The public was alerted to Jewish involvement in the white-slave traffic by thorough newspaper coverage. In both the general and the anti-semitic press Jewish names were prominently displayed, except where victims too were Jewish. It is significant as a measure of consciousness that the New Jersey telephone operator who passed out on the subway and thought she had been drugged, noted that sitting opposite her there had been a handsome young man, 'apparently a Jew'.<sup>92</sup>

In fact, however, had there been no Jewish traffickers the same connection would have been drawn. The Jew was already mobilized as the universal scapegoat. Consider that in 1927 the German National Committee for the Suppression of White Slavery, which had been working cordially with the Jews for twenty-five years, subsidized a film in which the trafficker displays grotesque semitic characteristics. Or, take, R. W. Kauffman's best-selling *House of Bondage*, mentioned above. We are presented with Max Grossman, a white slaver and

member of a persistent race ... the hair on his head was black and curly ... his lips were thick when he did not smile and thin when he did, with teeth very white; and his gray glance had a penetrating calculation about it that made the girl instinctively draw her coat together and button it.

This a book which the head of the Cincinnati Vigilance Society said had influenced his friends.<sup>93</sup>

It is symptomatic that when a white-slave panic swept Orléans, Grenoble, and other French cities in the late 1960s, Jewish boutique owners were at the centre of the storm, charged, crazy as it may sound, with drugging teenage girls in their fitting

<sup>91</sup> Extensive cuttings and correspondence on white-slavery panics in Files S109 C and E, S127, S127A. Max Kreutzberger, 'Das Problem des internationaler Mädchen- und Frauenhandels', *Zeitschrift für Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege* (July-August 1929), p. 184. Withold Chodzko, *Handel Kobietami* (Traffic in Women) (Warsaw, 1938), citing *Kurier Poranny* (Morning Courier), 27 February 1932, on the brothel ship.

<sup>92</sup> Police Dept. Memorandum, 23 December 1913, Box 13, Comm. of 14.

<sup>93</sup> Kauffman cited in Connelly, *Response*, 118. *Vigilance*, April 1911, pp. 23-8.

rooms and spiriting them along underground passages to waiting submarines.<sup>94</sup> This fantastic nonsense, and the use even by purity workers of anti-semitic stereotypes, shows that the association of Jews with abduction was predetermined by the logic of white slavery. It did not depend upon the existence of Jewish procurers. Indeed white-slavery allegations were similar to the other notorious charges in the anti-semitic's arsenal: that Jews were by nature criminal, that they organized widespread conspiracies to corrupt and pollute the Christian world, and that they ritually murdered Christian children in order to obtain their blood for the baking of unleavened Passover bread.

This last allegation, the infamous blood libel, took root of course in the Middle Ages, but enjoyed a remarkable comeback when racial anti-semitism swept modern Europe. During the nineteenth century, mostly towards its close, there were no less than forty-two instances of the blood libel accusation across the continent. The parallels between the blood libel and white slavery are particularly striking. Each involves violence to a defenceless young person and the projection of hate onto a symbolic substitute for the evil father. White slavery was the sexualization of blood libel. Jewish spokesmen were very well aware of this parallel and they were worried about it. After all, if an unfounded accusation of ritual murder could result in the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, in which 139 Jews were either killed or seriously injured, what of white-slavery charges which actually had some basis in fact, and which involved the particularly sensitive issue of sexual victimization?

Following a ritual-murder case in West Prussia in 1900, a German paper founded to combat anti-semitism noted apprehensively that 'whether the current exaggerations of the Jewish part in the shameful white slave traffic prove to be the same sort of material, remains to be seen.'<sup>95</sup> The extent to which this 'promise' was fulfilled is one of the themes explored in later chapters.

In the social politics of the period, white slavery was many things to many people. Perhaps the bitterest irony of all, however, is that while anti-semites added this charge to their list of

<sup>94</sup> Morin, *Rumour*, *passim*.

<sup>95</sup> *Im Deutschen Reich*, August 1902, p. 438. On ritual murder generally, Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism* (Schocken ed., New York, 1974).

calumnies, Jewish traffickers were dealing primarily in Jewish women. The Jewish Association recorded in a confidential report to its subsidizer, the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA), that of the twenty-eight real white slavery cases it handled in 1898,

both traffickers and victims were members of our race from Poland, Russia, Galicia, etc. Only in three instances Jews had in their power Christian girls. The Committee have noted that the traffic is, to a very grave extent, carried on by Jews and Jewesses, though not exclusively so. While our Secretary (Cohen) was on the track of Jewish traffickers at Southampton, he discovered and eventually rescued two Christian girls who were being trafficked by foreign gentile procurers.<sup>96</sup>

For the internal distribution of prostitutes to Jewish-run brothels on the continent and in postwar Argentina the proportion of gentiles was higher, but everywhere Jewish traffickers worked mainly with Jewish women.

Furthermore, not only did atrocious forms of white slavery actually occur in a minority of cases; there is also some evidence that outside Asia, Jewish women were procured more frequently by men than were prostitutes at large, a fact which if true would point to more deceitful recruitment than comradely assistance in finding a livelihood.<sup>97</sup> In the ghettos of new world and old, street-wise young men turned to procuring as a way up and out. Who else could they prey on than their own?

Across the following chapters we shall encounter many an involuntary Jewish victim, and of course others whose drift into prostitution represented a choice made from a grim set of alternatives. It was the plight of these largely unenviable women that was used by racists to demonstrate the so-called world Jewish conspiracy.

<sup>96</sup> 17 December 1899, ICA.

<sup>97</sup> L of N, *Rehabilitation of Prostitutes*, p. 50. The sample of twenty-five Jewish prostitutes in Argentina is very small. But nineteen of them mentioned procurers, a higher percentage than for the sample of 2659 at large.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Jewish Prostitution in Eastern Europe

### *Introduction*

By 1880 some five million Jews lived in the block of territory that included the western Russian Empire with Congress Poland, the eastern part of the Hapsburg Empire including Galicia, Bukovina, and Hungary, and Romania. Over the following sixty years many would struggle to escape from the poverty, pogroms, disabling anti-semitic legislation and wars that were endemic to the region. Nearly four million managed to emigrate to the Americas, Palestine, South Africa, Australia, and elsewhere. Yet the Jewish population replenished itself; migrations from the towns to the cities of eastern Europe were substantial and the region's Jewish population of six million in 1914 remained the greatest such concentration in the world.

In this heartland Jewish life was undergoing radical change compounded by a series of formidable forces: rapid urbanization, secularization, pauperization, religious persecutions. Not surprisingly forms of social pathology emerged, including entry into procuring, brothelkeeping, and prostitution. Without this local experience there would have been little participation in the overseas traffic. When lucrative opportunities arose in other parts of the world, the people were there to take advantage of them. The reasons for the development of Jewish commercial vice in eastern Europe are complex and best discussed systematically following a simple description of the problem's dimensions. That description for the Russian Empire and the Hapsburg Empire is the subject of this chapter.

To help in the task of estimating and locating the Jewish involvement in commercial vice there are some official statistics, a considerable amount of sympathetic social observation and reconnaissance, and a large amount of police intelligence. Taken together the evidence forms an incomplete but nevertheless convincing picture of heavy involvement in brothel-



Jewish Eastern Europe Before 1914



keeping and procuring and a lesser but still significant amount of Jewish prostitution.

First some preliminary observations. Generally the problem was far worse in large cities, though procurers did comb the smaller towns and villages for victims. There is some interesting testimony that describes how in the turn-of-the-century *shtetl*, or small town, prostitution was virtually unthinkable. When reminiscing about her childhood at Brestowitz, where she was born in 1895, Elizabeth Newman explained that one of the few ways that a Jew could get permission to live outside the Pale of Settlement in western Russia and Poland was if she registered as, 'excuse for the expression—a prostitute'. In other words after eighty years it was difficult to say the word.

Born at Sapetkin in 1910, Hanan Ayalti recalled nearly seventy years later one memorable violation of the social constraints of his youth. Following the death of a Sapetkin *shammes*, or synagogue attendant, his daughters practised occasional prostitution in the fields. One was dumb and the other symptomatically married a gentile.<sup>1</sup> One of the few exceptions that we know about to the demographic rule about little prostitution in small places in Sokolka, a town near Bialystock whose population of about 5,000 was half Jewish. In 1910 it reportedly had the highest per capita rate of prostitution in the Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Also as a rule where either the ultra-orthodox or the Hasidim held sway their influence would limit the amount of prostitution in places of small and medium size. At Chernikov in the Ukraine, a centre of the Lubavich Hasidim, with a population of about 14,000 Jews in 1910, it was reported that there were only three licensed brothels, one owned by a Jew and another by a convert, and that only four of eighteen licensed women were Jewish.<sup>3</sup> An episode in I. J. Singer's novel *Yoshe Kalb*, reflects this state of affairs. Set in Bilgoray, the Hasidic *shtetl* in Lublin province where he and his brother Isaac Bashevis Singer were born, it suggests that even the existence of one

<sup>1</sup> Hanan Ayalti interview, 15 December 1977, p. 79; Elizabeth Newman interview, 20 March 1978, p. 27. AJC.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Freund*, 6 May 1910 (Yiddish, Warsaw).

<sup>3</sup> *Der Freund*, 5 May 1910.



Jewish prostitute was unacceptable. The protagonist explains that once at Bilgoray

the owner of a brothel on the sands was sent for, and the Rabbi commanded him to drive away the one Jewish girl he kept among the gentile girls. The owner, a Jew with a Russian blouse hanging down over his wide trousers—he was half Russified having served for many years in the garrison in Podolia began to argue 'Rabbi he pleaded, I've got to have one Jewish girl, the swine have to have one'.

Threatened with a ban, the brothelkeeper drove the girl away.<sup>4</sup>

Still, orthodox girls did sometimes get caught up in prostitution. When Bertha Pappenheim, the outstanding German-Jewish feminist leader, and Dr Sarah Rabinowitch were sent on a tour of Galicia in 1903 to prepare the way for a crusade there against white slavery, they reported back that ultra-orthodox girls were vulnerable.<sup>5</sup> This was due to their total ignorance of sex and to the disparity in the way the orthodox educated male and female children. While boys were slaving away at their religious studies, twice as many girls received a more secular education in the official state schools, became bored with their male peers and open to outside influences.<sup>6</sup>

As we shall see throughout, most of these social observations can be documented with cases from real life. In 1900 Harry Hallberg, of Janow, near Lemberg in Galicia, married the younger Chaja Rochmes, daughter of a *shammes*, and took her to Buenos Aires where she became a prostitute.<sup>7</sup> Her traditional background made little difference and later we shall observe that there is even some evidence about the occasional bordello owner studying Talmud in rural Argentina.

One final general observation about the location of Jewish prostitution is in order. The phenomenon flourished at garrisons. This was true in Warsaw where the Russian army maintained a large presence, at Dvinsk, where one observer reported

<sup>4</sup> I. J. Singer, *Yoshe Kalb*, trans. Maurice Samuel (New York, 1965 ed.).

<sup>5</sup> Bertha Pappenheim and Dr Sara Rabinowitch, *Zur Lage der Jüdischen Bevölkerung in Galizien* (Frankfurt a. Main, 1904), p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> For the 1910 figures, 43855 girls to 22666 boys, *ICA. Betreffend Galizien*. Als Manuscript Gedruckt (1910), p. 37. Hebrew University Library.

<sup>7</sup> Austro-Hungarian Consulate, Buenos Aires, to Imperial Police Directorate Vienna, 15 May 1906 in 1906/3, VPA.

that there were a number of brothels around the market square and that prostitutes solicited soldiers nearby, and at Trembowla in Galicia, a small place where a troop of Austrian cavalry were stationed.<sup>8</sup>

To what extent can we quantify the general situation? Let us begin with procuring, the recruitment of women to prostitution. Information is most complete here because of the careful intelligence gathered in the course of the effort to combat international white slavery and because domestic and overseas procuring were two sides of the same coin. A general view of the situation can be gathered from lists of convicted and suspected international traffickers compiled by the white-slavery police in Berlin (1908), Hamburg (1905), London (1908).<sup>9</sup> These were points of transshipment for many traffickers and women on the way to South America and South Africa. Of the 578 individuals mentioned, some 214 or 37 per cent can be identified by name or police information as Jewish, by far the largest of any national or ethnic group.

What of the percentage? Jewish statisticians have pointed out that in interpreting criminal data one pitfall is that police may have sought Jewish lawbreakers more strenuously, and that these culprits may have been more noticeable and easier to catch.<sup>10</sup> Certainly Jewish defence committees across the continent helped the police identify and apprehend some of these people. Yet these considerations are more than outweighed by the simple fact that Jewish traffickers, like prostitutes, often changed their names, making it impossible to identify them. The figure of 37 per cent for traffickers known in Germany and England is modest, especially since Dr Louis Maretsky, the German B'nai B'rith leader and opponent of white slavery, told the B'nai B'rith executive in 1912 that 271 out of 402 traffickers on a later Hamburg police list were their

<sup>8</sup> On Dvinsk, Major W. Evans-Gordon, *The Alien Immigrant* (London, 1903), pp. 89, 140. The author was no friend of the Jews but the report seems accurate. On Trembowla, *Conférence Internationale pour la Répression de la Traite des Blanches* (6-7 Octobre 1909), pp. 128-9. The same brothel is mentioned here and in the Spiegelglas case, below.

<sup>9</sup> The Berlin and London lists were brought back by Inspector Marcus Braun (see below) and are in 52484/IG. USIS. The Hamburg list is on folios 47-53, SH. In doubtful cases persons have been excluded from the Jewish totals.

<sup>10</sup> Bruno Blau, 'Der Einfluss des Antisemitismus auf die Gestaltung der Kriminalstatistik', *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* (July 1906), pp. 109-10.

coreligionists, and added that in an overall compilation for central and eastern Europe and South America, 374 of 644 fit the same category.<sup>11</sup>

What of the origins of the 214 Jewish traffickers? The police could not place all of them; but from information supplied, the leading locales are as follows: Russian Poland, 35; the neighbouring Hapsburg provinces of Galicia and Bukovina, 35; the rest of Russia, 26; Hungary, 21; Germany, 15; Romania, 4. Warsaw was the most popular city of origin with 18. With some minor caveats, these returns accurately rank the areas of origin in order of the seriousness of the local problem of Jewish white slavery. The German traffickers were probably *Ostjuden* of long residence. Romania is underrepresented, since its traffickers would frequently bypass Germany and England by taking the southern route to South America; or they would make an altogether different trek to Egypt, Constantinople, India, and China.

These notorious procurers, many of whose vicious careers we can trace forward and backward from their appearance in the German and British police dossiers, did not spring out of the ground. They were part of a complicated industry whose dynamics were described in the previous chapter. In other words, the international traffic was anchored in commercial prostitution at home. The way this worked will become clear in the following two sections, which survey the situation first in the Russian Empire and then in the Hapsburg Empire. Vienna, to the west of the particularly troublesome region of Galicia, is treated separately at the end where we investigate how white slavery influenced the anti-semites of the imperial capital, one of whom was the young Hitler.

### *Russia*

Modern prostitution is an urban phenomenon and Warsaw has the largest Jewish population in Europe in 1900, over 300,000. In 1862 a *ukaz* of Czar Alexander II removed residence restrictions against the Jews throughout Poland and permitted them to acquire real estate in the city centres. There is some

<sup>11</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, June 1912. See also Louis Maretsky, *Reden and Abhandlungen* (Berlin, n.d.), 311, for still different data, namely 357 of 462 eastern European traffickers apparently Jewish.

evidence that by that time Jews were already involved in the purveying of prostitutes to Russian military encampments, and that with the barriers down, Jewish men and women moved into commercial vice in the centre of Warsaw. The opening up of residence came shortly before the Poles raised an insurrection against their Russian overlords in 1863 and were brutally crushed. Counter-revolution created even more opportunities for the entrepreneurs of vice. This is because the proliferation of brothels, a policy of calculated 'total shamelessness' according to a Polish account, was among the more gentle stratagems used by the Russian Governor General, Fedor Berg, to pacify Warsaw. From this point the authorities looked to the Jews to run at least part of the enterprise of commercial vice. It is a pity that we do not know more about these pioneers of white slavery. Nevertheless it is striking how both the Romanovs and the Hapsburgs, as we shall see in a moment, encouraged commercial vice as part of a programme of libidinous counter-insurgency against their other subject nationalities.

By all accounts the Russians in Warsaw were no joy to work with. It is true that following the 1863 insurrection Governor General Berg failed to impose any regulations on prostitution and refused even to concentrate brothels in one district. The local police medical committee was not permitted to begin its control of prostitutes until after his death in 1873. The Polish historian of this episode calls Berg 'pathological' in his quest to make Warsaw 'the merriest town'. Yet the Russians kept brothelkeepers in complete subjection and regularly raked off much of their profits. Russian soldiers occasionally even murdered local prostitutes.<sup>12</sup>

By 1889 there are official statistics that shed some light on the internal picture throughout the Russian Empire. An official census of prostitution for that year was based on returns filled

<sup>12</sup> These early years are discussed in the work of W. Zaleski, a writer on medical and public health questions. See especially his *Z Dziejów Prostytycji W Warszawie* (From the History of Prostitution in Warsaw) (Warsaw, 1923), Ch. 3-4. There are also cuttings on the same subject, apparently published in the *Warsaw Medical Journal*, in the Korotynski Collection, City of Warsaw Archives. Zaleski's work has to be used with caution. While he does not appear to be a systematic anti-semite, he makes a number of unflattering remarks. On the other hand, he praises Polish Jews for doing more to fight white slavery than Christians were willing to do, a judgement that may be a gratuitous compliment.



in by all brothelkeepers and prostitutes on the same date.<sup>13</sup> It shows that throughout the entire Pale of Settlement in Poland and European Russia, Jewesses ran 203 of 289 licensed houses, or 70 per cent of the total. The law called for women over 30 to do this work and the average age of the madams throughout the region was 39, suggesting that they had been in business for some time. This is confirmed by the additional fact that 38 of the 57 houses in the Warsaw and Odessa regions had been open for more than 10 years. Outside the Pale there were a few other black spots, including St Petersburg, where the figure was 18 out of 87.

While Russian statistics are usually considered to be unreliable, there is no reason to dismiss these, especially since the data on Jewish prostitutes do not seem to be inflated by any anti-semitic bias and the total number of brothels is very low. Unreported is the large sector of clandestine houses outside official police supervision, where there is no reason to assume that Jews were less fully represented. Only beyond the Pale of Settlement, as in St Petersburg, was there an advantage to registering with the police as a brothelkeeper or prostitute. The infamous yellow ticket, the prostitutes' official badge of shame, gave Jewesses the highly prized right of residence beyond the Pale. It should be noted, incidentally, that experts believed that Jewish women who permitted themselves to be so inscribed in order, say, to study in university, were sometimes forced into prostitution against their will.<sup>14</sup>

That Jews played a major role in brothelkeeping in the Pale is confirmed by many observers. Dr Louis Maretsky despaired of this fact in 1892. Medical writers described the prevalence of Jewish brothelkeepers in Warsaw, where the census data for the province in 1889 showed sixteen of nineteen houses in the declining licensed sector to be run by Jewish women. When *Der Freund*, a Warsaw Yiddish newspaper, surveyed a half-dozen places in the Russian provinces in 1910 on the eve of an

<sup>13</sup> *Statistique de L'Empire de Russie. XIII. La Prostitution à la date du 1/13 August 1889*, ed. A. Doubrowsky, Publication du Comité Central de Statistique, Ministère de l'Interior (St. Petersburg 1980). Virtually the entire study is in French and Russian. Slavonic Division NYPL.

<sup>14</sup> *Der Abolitionist*, January 1914, the interesting review of a novel by Alexander Amfiteatrow, *Der Gelbe Pass*. Also, Vittorio Levi, *La Prostitution Chez la Femme et La Traite des Blanches* (Naples, 1912), pp. 103-4.

anti-white-slavery conference in St Petersburg, it reported that, typically, Jews ran the three licensed houses in the small Ukrainian city of Proskurov and were deeply involved in the larger centre of Zhitomir. To the north at Dvinsk we have mentioned that Jewish brothels around the market square served the nearby garrison. At Minsk, Jews ran all fourteen tolerated houses, a far cry from the period a century earlier when a Board of Morals supervised behaviour there. Furthermore, the memoirs of a Jewish socialist make it clear that at least until inroads were made by the Jewish Bund, the socialist party founded in 1897, Jewish workers commonly frequented the Minsk red-light district, where it was very lively at weekends.<sup>15</sup>

With a Jewish population second only to that of Warsaw at the turn of the century and a geographical position giving it advantages in the overseas traffic, Odessa's Jewish underworld played a large part in commercial vice. This cosmopolitan Black Sea port had long had a reputation amongst the observant for its irreligion and sinfulness. By the 1860s a French visitor to Odessa wrote that Jews there were responsible for a white-slavery market in Russian women to Turkey. This is feasible, especially since we know that Jewish brothelkeepers were already in place at the other end in Constantinople. The 1889 census shows that Jewish women ran 30 of 36 licensed brothels in Kherson province, where Odessa was located. In 1908 the American Consul there claimed that 'the whole "business" of prostitution is almost exclusively in the hands of Jews'.<sup>16</sup>

Jewish trafficking was anchored in brothelkeeping. Women freelanced or kept houses while their husbands procured. Sometimes it was a case of overseas traffickers returning and drawing on the resources of the domestic infrastructure, which

<sup>15</sup> Maretsky in Unabhängiger Orden B'ne Briss, *Die Wirksamkeit des von der Grossloge für Deutschland U.O.B.B. ernannter Comitees zue Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels* (Hamburg, 1900), p. 56, hereafter cited as U.O.B.B. *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*. On Warsaw, Dr Fr. Giedroyc, *Prostytutki Jako Źródło Chorób Wenerycznych W Warszawie* (Prostitutes as a Source of VD in Warsaw) (1892), p. 28; Roman Buczyński, *Zarysy Stanu Moralnego Naszego Społeczeństwa* (Sketch of the State of Morality of Our Public) (Warsaw, 1885), p. 135. *Der Freund*, 16 April, 5 May 1910. Sholom Levin, *Unteredische Kämpfer* (Yiddish: Underground Struggle) (New York, 1946), p. 119.

<sup>16</sup> Piote Artamof, La Fite de Pellepore, *La Russie: Historique, Monumentale et Pittoresque I* (Paris, 1862), pp. 300-2. Mr Grout, American Consul, Odessa, in 'Braun European Report', 2 October 1909, 52484G. USIS.



were substantial. Jewish traffickers also supplied gentile-run houses. Consider the breadth of their operations, which extended through much of Russia. Minsk, for example, was a point of departure for other Russian cities. In 1913 the British Consul at Riga reported that the police at Vilna, a black spot for commercial vice since the 1870s, had arrested Genia Rosenfeld and Piecia Marmud, procuresses who specialized in entrapping servants and workers in dressmaking establishments. Their gang was alleged to buy and sell girls at Vilna, Minsk, Riga, and other northern places. At Ekaterinoslav in the south, the police caught up with one Gleser in 1903, said to be the region's chief supplier of licensed houses. Gleser's undoing was to be without honour among pimps. He sold young women to brothelkeepers and then lured them away in order to sell them again. The brothelkeepers' complaint led to his arrest. At the same time the police were looking for more conventional procuresses, including Gognia Hartzmann, who was repeatedly a major supplier for brothels in the Caucasus.<sup>17</sup>

This domestic infrastructure was useful for overseas traffickers like, typically, the well-known Israel Meyrowitz. We know a great deal about Meyrowitz because he managed twice to fall into the hands of the German police and to serve two prison sentences.<sup>18</sup> He was born in British-ruled East India to parents from Odessa and spent time in Alexandria and Constantinople before settling into Buenos Aires as a trafficker in 1877. A cosmopolitan merchant, he spoke eight languages. When stopped by the German police at the Breslau railway station in 1888, Meyrowitz had with him two Polish prostitutes, Perla Blawat from near Lodz and Marvella Witlovaska from Warsaw, the first Jewish and the second not. They had both just come from the brothel of one Silberstein in Petrikau, not far from the border, where Meyrowitz had paid their debts.

The girls testified that Meyrowitz had misled them into believing that he would find them good positions, they were vague about doing what, in Soznowitz on the Russian-German

<sup>17</sup> *Der Freund*, 16 April 1910. *Traite des Blanchés*, July 1901. VHC Bosanquet to Sir Edward Grey, 18 March 1913, FO371/1867/13573, PRO. Joseph Schrank, *Der Mädchenhandel und Seiner Bekämpfung* (Wien, 1904), pp. 56-7. Gognia Hartzmann, 1906/2; see also Feige Zipliakova, 1906/1, VPA.

<sup>18</sup> The police and judicial documents on Meyrowitz are on folios 6-32, SH.

border, or in Berlin. They insisted, however, that they had been duped and that against their will they were on the way to Hamburg to board a steamer for Buenos Aires. The court did not believe them and convicted Meyrowitz on a reduced charge of procuring rather than on white slavery, which in German law required the use of force or fraud. Perla Blawat soon entered a brothel run by one Isaac Blas in Kalish, just across the border back in Poland.

In Warsaw the Jewish involvement in prostitution so outraged the respectable portion of the community that in the revolutionary year of 1905, with all of the empire in political upheaval, Jewish workers there launched a murderous assault against their coreligionists' brothels, underworld dens, and cafés. This remarkable '*Alphonsenpogrom*' so named because local pimps were known as alphonses (also in fact the origin of the slang term 'ponce'), is an incident of the greatest value for the light it sheds on Jewish prostitution and its place in the life of the community.

There are many accounts of the Warsaw brothel riot.<sup>19</sup> It was widely covered in the European press and it became part of Jewish folklore. Those who were closest to it, for example the Bund organizer Litwak (Chaim Helfand), claim that the violence grew out of a feud at a wedding in rooms near the city landmark, the Iron Gate.<sup>20</sup> Greed overcame Saul Zytnitsky, pimp and foster father of the bride, and he tried to keep the newlyweds' 100 Roubles in gifts for himself. The bridegroom, a former street tough who had joined the Bund, objected and in the midst of the wedding a fight broke out between supporters of the two. The following day the feud escalated out of control. The Zytnitsky clan was very notorious in Poland and Argentina right up through the 1930s. It may be, however, that they had nothing to do with precipitating the riot. Another creditable account claims that the riot began when a butcher tried to free

<sup>19</sup> S. Schnitzer, *Pogrom Auf der Unterveilt in 1905* (Underworld Pogrom) (Warsaw, 1935). A. Litwak, *Vas Gevesen* (What Happened) (Vilna, 1925), p. 191-201. E. M. Frank, *Alphonsenpogrom in Warschau* (Alphonsenpogrom in Warsaw), Warsaw, 1908. Levin, *Kempfer*, pp. 265-6. All these are in Yiddish. There is also a very useful press digest in *Bulletin Abolitioniste*, June 1905. Also, *Vigilance Record*, June 1905.

<sup>20</sup> Schnitzer, *Pogrom*, pp. 55ff. Litwak, *Vas Gevesen*, pp. 196-7.

his fiancée from a brothel, but was beaten and then sought revenge.<sup>21</sup>

The exact origins are not important. In Warsaw and other cities throughout the Pale the Jewish working class had come to hate the underworld and any spark might have set off a conflagration. That underworld was powerful, well-organized, and supported by employers and the police. There was class struggle in the Pale between the emerging Jewish proletariat and its employers. With the outbreak of labour unrest in the mid-1890s, employers hired thugs to act as blacklegs and terrorize labour. At Dvinsk, for instance, the owners of Zaks' match factory used gangsters and pimps to attack strikers. At the end of the century in Warsaw the underworld not only broke strikes but levied tribute, called 'Alphonserei', used prostitutes to help shake down yokels newly arrived in the city, and generally 'held the workers in the iron clamp of fear'.<sup>22</sup>

With the organization of the Jewish Bund in 1897, which acted as a trade union and a political party, the workers began to fight back. The Bund recruited tough men, including butchers, shoemakers, and factory workers, and formed them into defensive units to fight not only pogromists but criminals. The Russian political police, the Okhrana, viewed the Bund as part of the revolutionary menace and they began using the Jewish underworld to monitor and to provoke the new movement. Not for nothing did Warsaw's Jewish prostitutes compose the folk rhyme,

Oh the pimps  
they are spies  
Provocateurs they are  
They go to workers' meetings  
and listen to speeches  
Then they go tell it to the police<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Le Bund*, 30 Mai 1905 (Berne), cited in *Bulletin Abolitioniste*, June 1905.

<sup>22</sup> Litwak, *Vas Gevesen*; Schnitzer, *passim*; Esra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 101 and *passim*. Henry Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia From its Origins to 1905* (Stanford, 1972), pp. 42, 101-2.

<sup>23</sup> Schnitzer, *Pogrom*, p. 58. There is a slightly different version of the poem in M. Wanwild (Moses Joseph Dickstein) *Bayne Yidn* (By Us Jews), 'gesungen fun tehom' (songs from the depths), section edited by P. Graubard.

With friends in such high places, the criminals went from strength to strength. While pimps and procurers in Warsaw are known to have engaged in general crime earlier, there is some evidence that before the early twentieth century thieves and pimps were part of two separate spheres. At that point one powerful underworld figure emerged, and with the backing of the Okhrana is said to have imposed discipline on both spheres, taxing brothels, organizing a small synagogue for the girls, madams, pimps, and thieves, and raising a very large force of thugs to fight the Bund. His name was Shilem Letzki and he was so powerful he was called King Shilem I.<sup>24</sup> He also turns up as a major Polish link with the Buenos Aires traffickers. For his people in Warsaw there was even a *din torah*, or rabbinical court, to settle disputes between pimps. Between the wars Abe Shulman, the Polish-American writer, observed such a trial presided over by a rabbi in the back room of a Warsaw bar.<sup>25</sup>

And so in May 1905 the resourceful underworld and the resurgent workers were at daggers drawn. On the morning after the initial outbreak of violence, let's say at the Zytnitsky wedding, about 100 criminals marched under the Russian flag yelling 'long live the Czar'. If there had ever been any doubt, this confirmed for the Bundist leaders that the criminals might be provoking labour into a fight which could end with the cossacks drowning their movement in blood. In fact, Litwak suspected that some of the rioters themselves were *agents provocateurs*, a point emphasized in Polish nationalist accounts of the episode.<sup>26</sup> Much to the distress of the Bundist leaders, events soon got out of hand as the workers spontaneously seized the initiative. For three days they rampaged through brothels, looting and destroying furniture, knifing, beating, and defenestrating pimps and prostitutes. After visiting Krochmalna street, where Isaac Bashevis Singer spent part of his youth and saw the poor prostitutes whom he later depicted in his short stories, the rioters turned south to the fancier avenues off the city's major artery, the Marszalkowska. There was no single

<sup>24</sup> Schnitzer, *Pogrom*, pp. 45-8.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Shulman interview, 8-9. AJC. Stanislaw Paleolog, *The Woman Police of Poland* (Association of Moral and Social Hygiene, London, n.d.), 7. As head of the Polish Women's Police between the wars, the author was an expert on white slavery. But her book has to be used with great care.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Zaleski, *Prostitution in Warsaw*, Ch. 6.



red-light district in the city and the rioters' destruction was visited upon ten widely scattered streets.<sup>27</sup>

The authorities never intervened in a major way but cossacks were known to be reinforcing the criminals in the Old Town where the pimps had withdrawn and established fortified positions. The Bund had to regain control or face a potential slaughter. As Litwak tells it, the Party's Central Committee met and decided both to try and save the prostitutes, who were really no more than exploited workers, and to stop the riot. The Bund leaders went into the brothels to protect the inmates, and Litwak himself saved some girls who were cowering under beds while teenagers were trying to beat them up. In the end the workers decided prudently not to attack the Old Town and the violence ran its course. Reuter, the British news agency, reported forty houses of ill fame demolished, eight persons killed and one hundred injured. Among the casualties was one dead prostitute.

The burden of blackmail, blacklegging, and criminal brutality explains the mob's fury. So too does the violence which the underworld did the Jewish name. For there is no doubt that in Warsaw the wildest stories about Jewish vice were in circulation. One set of slanderous letters in the press, for example, stated that 'most brothel owners are Jews with university education. All customers are Jewish. The girls are mostly servants—Christian.' Reuter observed that 'Jews became tired of hearing themselves called keepers of disorderly houses, thieves, userers and other opprobrious epithets, and resolved, as the police were receiving bribes from these classes and protecting them, to take the matter into their own hands and resort to drastic measures.'<sup>28</sup>

There is an interesting footnote to the riot. Some of the dispossessed alphonses fled Warsaw for the quieter confines of Lemberg across the border. In fact the border was no particular barrier to the traffickers and several gangs had branches in all three parts of partitioned Poland. In Lemberg four Warsaw pimps were arrested a few months after the '*Alphonsenpogrom*'

<sup>27</sup> On the geography of the riot, *Prawda*, cited in *Bulletin Abolitioniste*, June 1905. Also, *Kurier Polski*, 25 May 1905.

<sup>28</sup> Reuter cited in *Vigilance Record*, June 1905. For the anti-semitic letters in *Newest Courier*, Korotyński Private Collection, City of Warsaw Archives.



for procuring the beautiful daughter of a Jewish shoemaker. A week after one of the four went through a traditional ritual wedding with eighteen-year-old Chave, without any civil registration, the bridegroom informed his new wife that they would have to go to South America where he had a business. Her suspicious father confronted the son-in-law, who menaced him with a weapon before the gang was arrested.<sup>29</sup>

Warsaw's Jewish underworld survived the workers' assault very easily and in 1908 it was studied and surveyed by two overseas experts on international prostitution, Marcus Braun, a Yiddish-speaking American immigration inspector, and Herr von Treschow,<sup>30</sup> head of the special German anti-white-slavery police. Treschow reported that the centre of the trade was in Towarowa Street, to the west of the ruined establishments of 1905. As is so often the case, repression simply led to a relocation of the problem. Braun was particularly thoroughgoing, utilizing contacts with the police and the Jewish community to find his way to every known bordello in town, and using bribes to extract information from the women involved. Just how important Braun's knowledge of Yiddish turned out to be is illustrated by the following:

... at Warsaw I was enabled to inspect every known house of prostitution. The keepers of the houses, as well as the inmates were obliged to answer my questions in the same way as they would have been compelled to answer the questions of any Russian police official and in view of the fact that I was able to converse with them in their own language, I had no difficulty to obtain information.

Furthermore, Braun was told by leading members of the Jewish community that there had been no let-up in the reign of terror. When Jewish officials informed the police of cases of trafficking, the parties were arrested but usually freed and allowed to take their girls overseas. And

in many instances, the members of the congregation who had interceded on behalf of the unfortunate families, from which the girls were

<sup>29</sup> *Israelitische Wochenschrift*, 25 August 1905. *General Anzeiger*, 27 August 1905.

<sup>30</sup> 'Braun European Report', 2 October 1909, 52484G. Braun brought back the report of Herr von Treschow, which was based on a trip made 1 June-1 July 1908. It can be found in 52484 H. Of interest too in 52484 F is Braun's diary, which chronicles his meetings with Jewish notables across the continent. All in USIS.

taken away, were openly attacked and beaten by members of the 'Procurer's Fraternity' and threatened that if they did not mind their own business in the future, they would be killed.

What of prostitutes throughout the Russian and Polish Pale? The imperial census of 1889 reported that 1122 of 5127 licensed women, or 22 per cent were Jewish. This is substantially less than the Jewish proportion of the population through cities in the region which was about 50 per cent, though Jewish under-representation is somewhat narrowed by the fact that the Russian returns are for the entire Pale, not just cities where Jews mainly resided. Nevertheless, later returns for 1910 placed the percentage of Jewish prostitutes in cities where there were Jewish majorities at between 15 per cent and 16 per cent. Typically at Warsaw, for four years that we know about between 1872 and 1890 the percentage of Jewish women among registered prostitutes ranged from 17 to 23 per cent, while the Jewish proportion of the city's population was about one-third.<sup>31</sup>

Still, there were worse spots. At the industrial centre of Lodz some 285 of 847 women who registered between 1902 and 1904 were Jewish, at 34 per cent some nine points above the Jewish share in the city's population.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, of crucial importance is the clandestine sector, which by its nature is even more obscure than its tolerated counterpart. The first point to observe is that 1889 returns for the total numbers of licensed women are very low, and this holds true for known centres of Jewish white slavery like Warsaw (962 licensed prostitutes), Lodz (only 57), and Soznowitz (12). No doubt there were many more secret than licensed women. At Warsaw for example, more women on average were arrested on suspicion of practising secret prostitution in each year between 1889 and 1895 than were registered in 1889.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> On Warsaw, Buczynski, *State of Morality*, pp. 134-5; Giedroyć, *Prostitutes*, 25-8; *Wykład Chorób Wenerycznych, podług dzieł Zeissl, Reder i innych. Ułożony Przez Studentów Medycyny Cesarskiego Warszawskiego Uniwersytetu* (Seminar on VD According to the Books by Zeissl, Reder, and others. Collected by the Medical Students of Warsaw University), Warsaw, 1874, 408-10. The 1910 data is cited by Baron Alexander Gunzberg, *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 53-4.

<sup>32</sup> Dr L. Wernic, *Walka Z Chorobami Wenerycznymi i. Nierzadem* (The Fight Against Venereal Disease and Prostitution) (Warsaw, 1917), pp. 101-2.

<sup>33</sup> Stürmer, 'Prostitution', p. 158, Tabelle 4. Proper police surveillance of prostitutes in Lodz started only in 1894, rendering the 1889 data very low.

Any statements about the total number of clandestine prostitutes, or the Jewish proportions, would be mere speculation. But contemporaries who ventured these guesses tended to paint a bleaker picture than the official data would suggest. At Minsk in 1910, 67 out of 226 official prostitutes were Jewish. But half of the patients in the VD hospital were Jewish and local observers claimed the Jewish share of prostitution approached half. A dismayed Jewish physician at Minsk told of one mother who sold her fourteen-year-old daughter into prostitution and another who, when collecting her discharged daughter from the VD hospital, insisted that prostitution was a perfectly good profession.<sup>34</sup> At Zhitomir and Proskurov the total shares were said to be about 50 per cent and 60 per cent. As for Towarowa Street in Warsaw, Treschow, the German police official mentioned that 'the girls, who in some houses numbered thirty, were for the most part of Russian and Polish nationality, almost half Jewish.'<sup>35</sup> Impressionistic and possibly exaggerated? Yes, but hardly grounds for complacency.

What were their lives like? Prostitution is perhaps the most highly stratified occupation one can imagine. In Warsaw, for example, the ladder began at the bottom with the pathetic 'wolf-girls', vagrants who slept in the public parks and squares, and it extended up to the courtesans who enjoyed lives of comparative luxury. Even among regulated prostitutes there was a hierarchy; at Vilna in 1873 some thirty-eight of the 150 women lived outside brothels and earned up to ten times as much as the others who lived inside.<sup>36</sup> While we have little idea of how Jewish prostitutes were distributed along this ladder, the enthusiasm of many for travelling to Buenos Aires, Bombay, and Manchuria suggests that their conditions at home could not have been very pleasant.

Marcus Braun was told in one of the lower-class Jewish houses in Warsaw, where soldiers supplied much of the business, that the charge was 20 Kopeks, or about 10 cents per

<sup>34</sup> *Der Freund*, 16 April 1910.

<sup>35</sup> *Der Freund*, 5 May 1910. Treschow, 'Report'.

<sup>36</sup> Zaleski, *Prostitution in Warsaw*, p. 71; Kaminsky, *On Prostitution*, p. 163.

visitor. The girls kept one-third and from that paid for their clothing and laundry. In other words, about three cents a trick. What was the intensity of work? The madam replied, 40 or 50 and on the Holy Days, sometimes as many as 60 or 70'. Not to be taken literally; but other sources mention that on the day that they had their weekly bath Russian soldiers trooped to the brothels and that one prostitute was expected to entertain thirty visitors.<sup>37</sup>

The sheer physical misery of the poor prostitute is captured in one of the Yiddish folk rhymes of the period

Dark and slippery  
The rain pours down and my merchandize—take it  
for free—because  
I can't stand on my feet anymore

I sit on a chair and huddle myself in  
The cold goes through me  
Sitting I hear from afar a sound  
I see him coming  
Why are you sitting here so sullen?  
No one is going to come to you now  
My smile didn't help, my winks  
And he took me back behind the locked  
door<sup>38</sup>

Judging from the rich body of folk material relating to eastern European prostitutes, the hazards most feared were venereal disease and being jilted by a pimp whom one really loved after giving him the best years of your life. Of the toll that VD took on Jewish prostitutes there is evidence from all over, as there is for their faithfulness to the pimps who so often abused them. Thus,

I'm lying in Lazarus in my bed  
with a needle in me  
My friend Keila-Ethel comes in and says  
my groom is going with her

<sup>37</sup> Zaleski, *Prostitution in Warsaw*, p. 114. For other discussions of the intensity of work, see Winnick and Kinsie, *Lively Commerce*, p. 145. Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, p. 124, where the maximum mentioned is twenty-five.

<sup>38</sup> Wanwild, *Bayne Yidn*.

I scream and screech.  
 I turn my eyes to heaven  
 I'll see my 'groom' Itche  
 I'll soon put an end to him

Oy Itche, oy Itche live long  
 Tell why, why do I deserve this  
 I devoted myself to you  
 And now you discard me ...<sup>39</sup>

In every city, however, some made good. One Polish physician found it noteworthy that in 1890 a Jewish prostitute in Warsaw left the life and used her savings to open up a shop. Observers right around the world noted the frugality and work ethic of Jewish prostitutes: in Warsaw they were said not to waste their earnings on sweets; in Cardiff the police chief noted that they were serious and never entered pubs; in New York an anti-vice investigator described how 'Jewish girls never used opium'.<sup>40</sup> Whether the prostitute's puritan ethic was indeed stronger among Jews than others, or whether these observations are merely a reflection of the universality of the legend of Jewish commercial sense, must remain an open question. But as our story unwinds, there will be many additional cases of Jewish women building a nestegg for a better life out of a temporary life of vice.

What of prostitutes and the community? As we shall see, where the Jewish population was relatively small, as in Buenos Aires, Rio, and Constantinople, pimps and prostitutes alike were kept at arm's length by the respectable Jews and not permitted to participate in the normal religious life of the community. In these places and elsewhere there were separate synagogues and cemeteries for the 'unclean ones', compelling memorials to their pariah status among their coreligionists.

This total segregation did not apply in the larger Jewish centres like Warsaw, Odessa, New York, or for that matter Berdichev in the Ukraine.<sup>41</sup> It is true that Warsaw had its

<sup>39</sup> Wanwild, *Bayne Yidn*.

<sup>40</sup> Giedroyc, *Prostitutes*, pp. 27-8; Zalewsky, *Prostitution in Warsaw*, p. 117. Chief Constable Cardiff to the Lord Mayor, 28 September 1902, HO45/10354/149817, PRO. 'Parlour Houses, 108 W. 31st St., Mrs. Hyman', in Investigation. Field Reports on Prostitution, Comm. of 14.

<sup>41</sup> On the European cites, Jacob Botoshansky, in *Yiddischer Kemfer*, 19 January 1962.



underworld synagogue and the author Abe Shulman remembered seeing a madam taking her girls there: 'She would take all her girls to go to *Shul* on Yom Kippur and they surrounded her like hens ...'.<sup>42</sup> Yet there were many prostitutes living out of brothels in the Polish capital and, as in New York, some undoubtedly were more or less a part of the general community. Sholem Asch describes this in his novel of the Polish underworld, *Mottke the Thief*.<sup>43</sup> There is a sentimentally drawn but not unlikely relationship in *Mottke* between a prostitute and her neighbours, a poor cigarette maker and his family. They were sisters in toil.

### *The Hapsburg Empire*

The earliest information relating to the Hapsburg Empire is for Hungary, where the movement of Jews into the cities was substantial about the middle of the nineteenth century. At Budapest between 1840 and 1869 the Jewish population grew from 10,000 to 45,000.<sup>44</sup> By 1914 it was 204,000. Following the revolution of 1848, the authorities at Budapest adopted the same policy that was to recommend itself to the Russians in Warsaw, namely using commercial vice to distract the population from politics. At the Hungarian capital the introduction of 'bread and circuses' is associated with the appointment of Baron Prottman as police chief in 1853.<sup>45</sup> Prottman believed that 'If the people are amusing themselves, then they won't give a damn about politics.' Regulated prostitution had been introduced here in 1842 and now the number of tolerated houses was substantially increased.

Some of these concessions were acquired by Jewish madams like Resi Luft and Sarah Grossman, who were on friendly terms with the police and embarked on long and lucrative careers in commercial vice. The real breakthrough for the small but resourceful Jewish underworld came in 1865 with Prottman's successor, the remarkable Alexius von Thaiss. It was no longer a matter of reactionary politics; Thaiss promoted

<sup>42</sup> Shulman interview, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Sholem Asch, *Mottke the Thief* (New York, 1935).

<sup>44</sup> Nathaniel Katzburg, 'Hungarian Jewry in Modern Times', in Randolph Braham, *Hungarian Jewish Studies*, vol. 1 (New York, 1966), p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 27ff.

prostitution because he loved prostitutes. At the end of his twenty-year tenure the new-abolitionist opponents of state regulation said this about him:

It is a well known fact, and one in its time frequently denounced in the press, that under the administration of Thaiss ... not only numerous agents but even superior officers worked with white-slave-traffickers and favoured them in every way.<sup>46</sup>

Thaiss married Fanny Reich, a former prostitute, and if we can believe what appears to be a well-informed account of events that by their nature are mysterious, Fanny was soon running prostitution in the capital. She brought onto the police force such characters as Meyer Brick, her brother-in-law, who happened to be an accomplished housebreaker. Other relatives and friends picked up licenses for brothels and permission to open dance halls. From everyone Fanny and Meyer collected tribute.<sup>47</sup>

Residence restrictions against Jews throughout Hungary were abolished in 1859 and 1860 and this probably made it easier for Jews to filter into provincial brothelkeeping in places like Stuhlweissenberg. Following the natural course of events they moved into procuring also. At least some of this was undertaken in the Jewish districts of Pest. Notorious there was 'Lucky Sarah', one of the true pioneers of white slavery, called by one expert 'the founder of the Hungarian women's export trade'. Equally infamous was Sarah Grossman, an early madam who happened to be known as 'the Turk' because of her penchant for dispatching girls to the Sublime Porte. She frequented the Café Herzl, a gathering place for Jewish marriage brokers and their clients. It took the intercession of Chief Rabbi Meisl to have Grossman banned from the place.<sup>48</sup>

Jewish involvement in the domestic distribution of prostitutes is typified by Ignace Berger, arrested in 1876 for luring Pest working girls to provincial brothels. At the same time, the most notorious procurer in the region was Emmanuel Scherz, who went from keeping a licensed house at Stuhlweissenberg to

<sup>46</sup> *Bulletin Continental*, 15 April 1890.

<sup>47</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 31, 90, on Sarah Grossman.

trafficking through Hungary, to business overseas, first with a gang of twenty-three accomplices and finally in a famous partnership with 'Madame Herzog' of Trieste. Resi Luft went through the same progression. After building up capital in her lucrative Pest brothel, she moved into procuring. By the 1870s Luft employed a gang of local agents to collect women for the brothels of Pera and Galata, Constantinople's European quarters, and for Turkey's harems. A cosmopolitan collection of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traffickers from the Turkish route were known to use Budapest's Café Farber as a rendezvous.<sup>49</sup> Hungarian traffickers opened up the road to Buenos Aires in about 1870, as we shall see. It is important, however, to mention the limits of Jewish involvement in Hungarian vice. They were not in a majority amongst brothelkeepers. And in the 1870s at least, while there was a popular stereotype in the Budapest streets for the international white-slave trafficker, it was a Muslim stereotype associated with the Turks and Arabs who travelled the road to Constantinople.<sup>50</sup>

The impoverished Hapsburg province of Galicia, and neighbouring Bukovina, overtook Hungary by the 1880s. They were so notorious with German-Jewish social workers on this account that the goal of overcoming white slavery was actually central in some of the experiments in Jewish social work that were attempted throughout Galicia before 1914. The German Jews may have been patronizing towards their poor cousins in the east, but they were not blind.

Galicia was easily accessible to a stream of concerned German-Jewish social observers from the 1890s onwards. In 1902 Rabbi Rosenak of the German Union of Rabbis, the liberal group, was dispatched east to survey the situation and enlist the support of Galician rabbis for an attack on white slavery. His long report is valuable for pinpointing the connectedness of all the

<sup>49</sup> On the Emmanuel Scherz gang, *Bulletin Continental*, 15 May 1876. *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 28 March 1876. Comments of Moritz Fisher at *Conférence Internationale pour la Repression de la Traite des Blanches* (7-9 Octobre 1909, Vienna), pp. 159-60. Fisher was a Jewish private detective employed to fight white slavery. Also, Schrank, *Prostitution in Wien*, vol. 1, pp. 31-2.

<sup>50</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, p. 129.

components; and if his statistics are less than scientific they were believed by Germans and Galicians to reflect reality:

In fact I was assured by different doctors that there were between 30 and 50 per cent Jewish prostitutes. If this is terrible, it is even more startling if one speaks of the procurers of prostitutes. It is inconceivable how it could be that the owners of the tolerated houses are Jewish throughout. Now the existence of the Jewish procurers is explained. In connection with the Jewish brothelkeepers they probably feel more secure and therefore are bolder and more audacious in their trade. Two doctors in Kolomea confirmed my suspicion. In the presence of some rabbis they told me that they had accidentally learned the contents of a telegram. In it dispatched human merchandise was described. As a result two notorious white-slave traffickers in Kolomea, Israel Ufer and Abraham Feingold, were sentenced to 7 years and 2½ years.<sup>51</sup>

Rabbi Rosenak was followed in 1903 by two more investigators, Bertha Pappenheim, and Dr Sarah Rabinowitch, a physician from Mohilev in Galicia. They confirmed that 'the number of official houses is very large and ... the proprietors and occupants are mostly Jews ...'.<sup>52</sup> The only question is whether the number of Jewish prostitutes was as great as the dismayed travellers believed; given the preponderance of unregistered women, however, this is a question that cannot be answered. Official returns for Cracow in western Galicia show that 116 of 719, or 16 per cent of, prostitutes who registered between 1900 and 1909 were Jewish. This is less than the Jewish share of Cracow's population, which was falling from about 25 to 21 per cent during that decade, and it is much less than the 29 per cent figure for Jewish prostitutes in 1877 that we mentioned above. Based on the very high VD rate, however, the police estimated the secret sector to be at least as large as the official sector. In any case, all Jewish experts agreed that the problem was far worse at the eastern end of the province where three-quarters of Galician Jewry were concentrated. And atemberg, the east Galician capital, the clandestine sector was

<sup>51</sup> Rabbiner Dr Rosenak, 'Bericht über Meine Reise Nach Galizien', Bremen, August 1903, 9, G6/137, HU.

<sup>52</sup> Pappenheim and Rabinowitch, *Galizien*, p. 47.

estimated to be four times as large as the number of ladies carrying the official health book.<sup>53</sup>

Of the prominence of Jewish traffickers and brothelkeepers there is no doubt. From the files of the Austrian and German white-slavery police we can identify some 111 Jewish traffickers active in Galicia and the neighbouring province of Bukovina for the years 1904-8 alone.<sup>54</sup> For the 48 cases where the average age is known, it is 41 years old, pointing to professional criminal careers stretching back a couple of decades. Of the 111, 37 are women, some of whom kept brothels at some point or who were married to procurers. Others were married to thieves, who were relatively more numerous in backward Galicia than elsewhere in the empire.<sup>55</sup>

Not that it is always possible to place the thieves and procurers in separate spheres. Typically a number of these professionals combined crimes against property with crimes against women, stealing and procuring. There was no central organization in Galicia, but there was an interlocking network of individual enterprises and complicated family businesses. For example, Moritz Drucker, who ran a brothel in Stanislau in 1910, was one of four brothers, who along with their wives and sister, trafficked to Africa, Argentina, Egypt, and India.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the Druckers were tied in with Jacob Schild, whose career in Vienna will be explored a little later.

The movements of Solomon Spiegelglas show clearly the domestic vice network that served overseas traffickers.<sup>57</sup> In April 1905 this procurer appeared suddenly in the Galician town of Podhajce. Spiegelglas, who was based in Johannesburg,

<sup>53</sup> For Cracow, *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* (November, 1910), p. 166. For the VD rates and clandestine sectors, Hugo Herz, 'Die Kriminalität des Weibes Nach des Ergebnissen der neueren Österreichischen Statistik', *Archiv für Kriminalanthropologie* 18 (1905), 298. For a convenient review of Galician population data, Robert Wistrich, 'Austrian Social Democracy and the Problem of Galician Jewry, 1890-1914', *Leo Baeck Year Book XXXI* (1981), pp. 89-94.

<sup>54</sup> The data were computed from the files at the Vienna Police Archive and the Berlin and Hamburg lists mentioned above, note 9. The Vienna police had their own lists, but only those for Czernowitz, Lemberg, Tarnopol, Skole, and Stryj survive.

<sup>55</sup> Dr Hugo Herz, *Verbrechen und Verbrechertum in Österreich* (Tubigen, 1908), pp. 173-4, 185, 222. Also for example, list of Stryj suspects, 1907/1 VPA.

<sup>56</sup> Reconstructed from consular and police correspondence in Jacob Schild, 1910/1. VPA.

<sup>57</sup> Solomon Spiegelglas, 1906/1. VPA.



had in-laws in the neighbourhood and told people he was visiting Europe for his health. First he payed a visit to the annual Laszkowzke fair, where the inmates of a Czernowitz brothel were plying their trade. He tried to convince Bertha Milstein of the profits awaiting her in Africa: 'Bertha you are a wonderful girl. You can earn more than here', he told her. But she chose to stay in the old country and a few weeks later Bertha entered Alter Friedman's brothel in Buczacz, another east-Galician city.

In the meantime Spiegelglas and his butler tried the VD hospital at Podhajce, befriending two prostitutes who were under treatment there, including one who was an inmate of Alter Friedman's licensed house in Buczacz. During these weeks Friedman received word from one Meier Seidelman, who ran a bordello at Trembowla, that two girls were needed there in a hurry. A troop of cavalry were stationed at Trembowla and they must have returned to base. Friedman dispatched Bertha Milstein and Josephine Wilkowska from Buczacz to Trembowla to meet the urgent demand. Spiegelglas, who worked with this network of brothelkeepers still had not gotten his girls for Africa by the time of his arrest.

Places like Kolomea, Stanislau, Podhajce, Buczacz, and Trembowla, or Tarnopol, Stryj, and Skole where police had sixteen traffickers and brothelkeepers under surveillance in 1907, pretty much cover the map of eastern Galicia. But these were merely the outposts of the business, whose centres were Lemberg and Czernowitz. These two cities, with Jewish populations of 57,000 and 29,000 respectively on the eve of the war, were the pivots of the traffic, the bases for the elaborate gangs with connections to the interior and abroad. Bertha Pappenheim commented that there were entire streets in both whose residents were involved in white slavery and that certain families at Czernowitz, the provincial capital of Bukovina, had trafficked for years unhindered by the police.<sup>58</sup> Just so. The Viennese authorities knew of something like fifty traffickers before the war who were based at Czernowitz, all Jewish, and they were a very inbred lot extending over two generations. Members of

<sup>58</sup> Bertha Pappenheim in *Jewish International Conferences*, 1910 and 1927, pp. 149, 19-20.

this curious sub-culture were known as 'Bombien' because they sometimes supplied and lived temporarily themselves at the Indian port.

A few of them like Chave Blum, the widow of a wagon driver and sixty-eight years old when the police investigated her in 1912, ran local brothels. Chave was matriarch of one of the more modest and simple clans. Her son Chaim was a pimp who ritually married a professional prostitute and was deported from Constantinople in 1913. Another son, Baruch, ran a brothel in Buenos Aires. Chave's daughter Dwsosie married a thief and the couple also travelled out to Argentina.<sup>59</sup> By no means was Czernowitz and its hinterlands as economically depressed in this period as Lemberg and its environs. Furthermore, the strength of the movement of *Haskalah* (enlightenment), and of Zionism and the Bundist Party, all of which absorbed the energies of young people, render Czernowitz a surprise as the home of the 'Bombien'. These people simply existed as a self-perpetuating subculture, impervious to the forces which were stirring the Jewish community around them.

Impoverished Lemberg makes more sense as an international vice entrepôt and a long series of legal cases testify to its prominence in this profitable business. By far the biggest, longest, and most publicised white-slavery trial of all took place there in 1892, when no less than twenty-seven traffickers were prosecuted for procuring girls for Constantinople, Egypt, and India. Following two weeks of sensational testimony in a courtroom so packed with spectators that the judge had to impose restrictions on attendance, twenty-two of the defendants were convicted. The charges involved the transport of twenty-nine females, though many more were known to have been involved over the years. This affair, referred to as 'the dreadful white-slavery trial' by a beleaguered German defence newspaper against anti-semitism, created so much attention that it became a turning point in the use of the issue by the anti-semites.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Blum and Langberg files 1912/2, VPA.

<sup>60</sup> The comment is in *Mitteilungen Aus dem Verein Zur Abwehr des Anti-Semitismus*, 13 November 1892. The case can be followed in *Gazeta Narodowa* (National Gazette), Lemberg, 8 July; 18-26 October 1892. Also, *Bulletin Continental*, November 1892. On Mrs Wachs and other Constantinople principals mentioned below, *Slowo* (Word) Warsaw, 31 July 1891.

The gang consisted entirely of Galician Jews, some of whom were returned by the Turkish government for the trial. They adhered to a rough division of labour into procurers, who combed Galicia and Bukovina for girls; transporters, who brought them to Turkey; and local agents who then distributed their live wares to the last operatives in the chain, the brothel-keepers in Constantinople's European quarters, Galata and Pera. The Ottoman authorities refused to extradite some of the major agents at their end, including the mysterious Michael Moses Salamovitz, whom we shall encounter nearly a quarter-century later still at the centre of the Turkish traffic.

Joseph Wandel, a forty-five-year-old dyer based at Lemberg, directed the flow of traffic from the hinterlands of Galicia and Bukovina towards the Sublime Porte. All kinds of poor girls and women made the journey. At least a half dozen were already prostitutes, many with sad tales to relate. Feige Aufscher had gone into a Stryj brothel after being orphaned; Chana Hermann did likewise after her mother died and Bettl Kiesler had taken up the life following a divorce. All were attracted to Constantinople by stories of great riches to be made. Common sense indicates that prostitutes would be as anxious to leave impoverished Galicia as was the population at large. There is an interesting exchange concerning Galicia's reputation in the trade in Elsa Jerusalem's popular novel about prostitution, *The Red House*, first published in Berlin in 1909. The unnamed setting is a city in Bohemia where the following conversation takes place between the procuress Nelly Spitzer and Milada, a prostitute from Goldschneider's brothel:

Milada: I make just one condition, cut out Galicia.

Spitzer: Say, think I'm a dumbhead? Send a Goldschneider girl to Galicia?<sup>61</sup>

Yet far from all the voyagers were already prostitutes. Some were maids, others fieldworkers, one a butcher's helper, all apparently promised honest jobs. Others were utterly helpless and wretched, easy bait for the Lemberg-based gang. Feige Kupferman's testimony was described by the local paper as

<sup>61</sup> Else Jerusalem, *The Red House* (New York, 1932), first published as *Der Heilige Skaräbaus* (Berlin, 1909).

drawing great gasps from the packed galleries. Feige was a fourteen-year-old starving orphan from near Zloczow who was befriended by a solicitous Mrs Katz and introduced to Mendel Goldenberg; he took her away with a promise of work and marriage.

It seems almost irrelevant to ask whether Feige Kupferman knew what was in store for her. She denied knowing, but what choice did she have? There were other equally pitiful cases. Adele Rechtsschaffen from Stryj described her life in Constantinople as a 'martyrology'. Before finally escaping to the Austrian Consul, she was hidden in a cave in order to elude the brothel searches of that official. Undoubtedly conditions in Turkish fleshpots were less than idyllic, as we shall observe later, even for the old hands. All were charged for the journey and even the experienced Chana Herman complained of the hard regime at Mrs Wachs' brothel at Constantinople.

Following some short jail sentences the condemned were quickly back at work. Wandel was convicted again in 1895 and was still under police surveillance eleven years after that. Other members of the gang shifted their operations to Czernowitz.<sup>62</sup> The convictions of 1892 did nothing to stem the traffic from this miserable corner of Europe and the facts were distorted by anti-semites to make it seem as if only gentiles like Adele Rechtsschaffen had been victimized. Even respectable accounts concentrated on her testimony, since it was her escape that led to the breakup of the gang. In fact twenty of the twenty-nine girls and women were Jewish.

### *Vienna*

Vienna is important to our story, not because Jewish white slavery reached the proportions here that it did in Galicia and Bukovina, but because Viennese anti-semites gave such full coverage to the issue. As the Jewish population at the imperial capital mounted to nearly 150,000 by the close of the century, the same kinds of social problems emerged here as in Warsaw, Lemberg, Minsk, Odessa, and other urban centres. Poor Jews from Galicia, Bohemia, and Moravia crowded into the Leopold-

<sup>62</sup> For Wandel, 'Ueberwachung Mädchenhandler', 6 Mai 1896 in 1904/2. List of Czernowitz Suspects, 31 December 1906, 1907/1, VPA.



stadt and other immigrant quarters. That the overwhelming majority were law-abiding is borne out by statistics that show Jewish crime in Vienna to be low, and diminishing after 1902.<sup>63</sup> Yet some Jews were involved in commercial vice and that was particularly unfortunate in Vienna, one of the breeding grounds for racial anti-semitism.

No confessional statistics for prostitutes in Vienna were ever compiled. But judging from the proportion of Galician girls so occupied in Vienna's licensed houses and from lists of names for the occupants of those establishments, there were not many Jewish women plying the oldest profession in Vienna, though one Jewish writer on the subject disagreed.<sup>64</sup> By the 1870s, however, figures like the very successful Rosa Hannover kept brothels there, and domestic as well as international traffickers were on the scene. As early as 1865 the Viennese authorities took steps to counter the traffic along the Danube to Hungary, south-eastern Europe, and Egypt. They tracked Galician traffickers moving through Vienna and in 1876 the concerted efforts of the Viennese police and the Mayor of Pest led to the breakup of the Emmanuel Scherz gang, mentioned above.<sup>65</sup>

The Scherz case was succeeded by a long series of incidents all demonstrating that Jewish traffickers used Vienna to tranship women to every point of the Empire and out of it. Some were prostitutes, others not; some were Jewish, others gentile. Procurers also combed Vienna's boulevards, amusement parks, and working-class districts for females. In 1896 for example the Viennese pair Mashoulim and Rosa Langer, father and daughter, were arrested along with two agents for running a clearing house for recruits to the tolerated houses of Serbia, Turkey, and Romania. Their agents searched Galicia and Russian Poland for women and brought them to the Langers, who dispatched the girls as the demand arose. When arrested

<sup>63</sup> Dr Leo Goldhammer, *Die Juden Wiens* (Wien, 1927), pp. 44-9. See also William Jenks, *Vienna and the Young Hitler* (New York, 1960), p. 121. On the influx, M. Henisch, 'Galician Jews in Vienna' in Josef Frankel (ed.), *The Jews of Austria* (London, 1967).

<sup>64</sup> For example, list of inmates for the houses of Regina Riehl 1906/2; Antonie Brady and Crecentia Wolkenstein, 1906/3. Schrank, *Prostitution*, vol. 2, pp. 198-9, records that in 1880, of 410 registered prostitutes only 4 were from Galicia. Hoffman, *Froyenhandel* believed Jewish prostitution in Vienna was substantial.

<sup>65</sup> For this aspect of the Scherz case, *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 28 March 1876. Schrank, *Prostitution*, vol. 1, pp. 31-2, and *Mädchenhandel*, pp. 95-6.



Rosa had just received a message from a well-known Polish procurer, 'Merchandize to Warsaw seized. Attention. Help. Baumwoll.'<sup>66</sup> This little incident is worth recording because it demonstrates the complex network of links connecting the fraternity. When Israel Meyrowitz, the two-time loser in Germany, visited Vienna, he always stayed with the Langers.

That there was Jewish involvement can be gauged from the fact that in 1906 alone the white-slavery police were investigating four relevant cases, relating to procuring for South Africa, the notorious nightclubs of Budapest, and for the brothel of Sophie Bergman in Graz. In another case the victims deposed,

A Mr. Solomon Berger of 3 Blutgasse, Vienna, enlisted us as hair-dressers for his brother's business in Beilitz [Silesia] as cashiers. When we arrived at Beilitz, Berger's brother told us the positions were already filled and told us of a small village near Biala where Berger's father had some jobs. We then learned that these jobs were at Berger's father's place, which is nothing other than a brothel, where Berger sends girls from Vienna. So we didn't go there.<sup>67</sup>

While the authorities did verify that such a brothel existed, run in fact by Berger's father and sister, the letter was signed 'a grieving family', and we do not know the identity of these girls. But we know all too well that procurers like Berger were active in the crowded Leopoldstadt ghetto.

Jacob Schild was one such figure, and his overseas connections virtually spanned the world.<sup>68</sup> Schild is a testimonial to the enterprise of the international traffickers. From Vienna he dispatched girls to South America directly; and he also had links in New York, Pittsburgh, Constantinople Marseilles, Genoa, and finally with the five Druckers, the clan whose empire of brothelkeeping and procuring ranged through

<sup>66</sup> *Bulletin Continental*, April 1896.

<sup>67</sup> Unidentified letter to Vienna Police Directorate in Adolf Lantos file, 1906/2. Also cases of Abraham Konstadt, Chaje Ewselman, and Marie Opelt, 1906/1. VPA.

<sup>68</sup> The Jacob Schild file 1910/1, VPA, contains over 100 documents written by the police, Austrian Consuls overseas, foreign ministries of other nations, and the suspects and witnesses themselves. The following has been reconstructed from this material. On Schild's Marseilles friends there is also material in M6/4817. MA. On his American friends, file 52943/26, at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington.

Vienna, Bukovina, Galicia, Romania, East Africa, and Asia. Let us try to follow Schild himself in Vienna.

He was born in Lemberg in 1867 and had a long criminal record there involving theft and receiving stolen goods. When he first came to the notice of the police in 1910 Schild was living with a convicted trafficker, Nathan Messinger of Brody, in Vienna's Blumauergasse. And from there he methodically searched the neighbourhood for recruits to send to his wife, Bertha Schild, who ran a brothel in Rio de Janeiro. Schild had a knack for finding vulnerable people. In April 1910 Abe Salzman, a furrier's helper who also lived in the Blumauergasse, came to the police and denounced Schild for sending his wife to Rio on false pretences. Salzman insisted that Guste Ornstein, with whom he lived after a Jewish ritual marriage, had been promised a position as a cook in Brazil but had recently written to him that she had wound up in a brothel. Salzman did admit that Schild had Guste buy some fancy underclothing before her departure. Why she would need them in a kitchen is not clear and Salzman was unable to explain why his suspicion had not been aroused earlier. The police assumed that Salzman was involved and had come forward out of a guilty conscience.

Schild was arrested but word reached Guste that it was her husband who had been jailed. She wrote in the most broken German,

My high imperial royal commissioner in Vienna ... I have learnt that my husband has been arrested. He is entirely innocent. Someone wrote me that he was arrested for me that is for selling me. That isn't true. I came myself. He pleaded with me not to come ... My husband is much too fine a boy to do such a thing.<sup>69</sup>

In the end Guste's deposition that she had been duped by the Schilds led to Jacob's conviction. But before the sentence was carried out he managed to escape to South America on a false passport supplied by a Constantinople brothelkeeper, Meier Gitter.

<sup>69</sup> Guste Ornstein letter of 25 May 1910 in Schild file.

Guste returned to Salzman and their three children only to go off again, this time to Moravia. She certainly had no love for their life in the Leopoldstadt and was willing to take her chances elsewhere. Procurers were good at locating such women and police enquiries turned up others with whom Schild had been involved. Rose Amster, another Galician immigrant who lived in the same house as Salzman, was struggling along as a dress-maker. Schild approached her and asked whether she would like to go to Rio to earn money. 'To her question, what kind of work would she have to do, he said, you must be a whore.'

Schild proposed that Rose marry Samuel Turim, who lived at Messinger's den of criminals, and that they should travel out together to South America. Rosa did not say no. She met Turim before refusing. And then there was Charlotte Reisenfeld, a governess who moved from hospital to Schild's lodgings because she was penniless, and then allegedly refused his advances as well as the offer of a trip to a Constantinople brothel.

Ornstein, Amster, Reisenfeld were all miserable, desperate, and vulnerable. They may have been practising occasional prostitution but they surely were not professionals when Schild made them his offers. And Schild was hardly doing them a favour. At Nathan Messinger's lodgings there were other people, including several prostitutes who were back from abroad. Tema Bereloff was there from Meier Gitter's place in Constantinople and was under treatment for syphilis. Another was pregnant. Messinger was running a rest and recuperation home for damaged prostitutes. And Schild? He took a chance and returned to Vienna in 1912, but was caught and served his four-month sentence. It was a small price to pay in order to get back to work in his old haunts.

The hardships of life in the Leopoldstadt were of no interest to Vienna's anti-semites. What did they make of Jewish white slavery? Organised racial anti-semitism developed in the Hapsburg capital in the 1870s and soon became endemic to all classes, from university students to artisans. Jewish finance was held responsible for the financial crash of 1873, Jewish traders and artisans were resented for their competition, and the immigrants in the Leopoldstadt were feared for their different culture. By the following decade there was an anti-semitic political party in parliament under the pioneering Georg

Ritter von Schönerer and a popular anti-semitic Karl Lueger took control of the Vienna city government.<sup>70</sup>

There was a surge of anti-semitic propaganda in 1882, involving everything from insulting posters to cheap metal charms portraying crude racial stereotypes.<sup>71</sup> Already Jews were being associated with prostitution which was represented as just one aspect of their inherent criminality and degeneracy. It was the Lemberg trial of 1892, however, that promoted white slavery to the status of more than occasional weapon for Austrian anti-semites. As one of that group put it, 'For a long time already many girls mysteriously disappeared. Finally in the year 1892 the great trial in Lemberg clarified the issue.'<sup>72</sup> Under the caption 'Jewish white slave traffic' the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, whose coverage of this topic was always thorough, used the trial testimony as the basis for a survey of the alleged traffic to Asia.<sup>73</sup> In this wild mixture of fantasy and fact obviously there was no mention of the truth that a majority of those trafficked by the Lemberg gang were Jewish.

With the end of the trial began the affair. On November 11 an anti-semitic deputy in the Parliament, Schlesinger, introduced the following question signed by fourteen of his colleagues including Karl Lueger and Franz Schneider, about whom more in a moment: 'What precautions does his Excellency the Minister President think of taking in order to build an effective claim against the shameful outrages of the Jewish people in Austria?' Schlesinger's purpose was to make as much political capital as possible from the Lemberg case and he caused a great storm in the house by prefacing the parliamentary question with the statement 'that he wondered what some minister would feel if his daughter fell into the hands of the mentioned trafficker, and that even liberal deputies would not want their daughters exposed to the filth of such people'.<sup>74</sup> These obnoxious remarks created a tremendous commotion and

<sup>70</sup> Dirk van Arkel, *Anti-Semitism in Austria* (London, 1966). Andrew Whiteside, *The Socialism of Fools* (Berkeley, 1975). F. L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism* (London, 1967), pp. 32-40. On Lueger, John W. Boyer, 'Karl Lueger and the Viennese Jews', *Leo Baeck Year Book XXVI* (1981), 124-41.

<sup>71</sup> Whiteside, *Fools*, p. 88.

<sup>72</sup> J. Seidl, *Der Jude des Neunzehnten Jahr-hunderts* (Graz, 1899), p. 56.

<sup>73</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt*, 22-3, 25-6, 28-9 October, 1 November 1892.

<sup>74</sup> *Stenographisches Protokoll über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Österreichischen Reichsrats in den Jahren 1892 und 1893*, IX Session, VII. Band (Wien, 1893), 11 November 1892, pp. 7638-9 and ff.



Schlesinger was disciplined by the President of the House. As the liberal *Neue Freie Presse* pointed out, however, Schlesinger's punishment was for violating public decency and insulting the ministers, not for the offensive parliamentary question about the Jews.<sup>75</sup>

A few weeks later Schlesinger and Franz Schneider returned to the theme and it was left to the courageous Rabbi Joseph Bloch to defend his coreligionists in the House. Through his newspaper and in every available forum, Bloch was the most vigorous opponent of anti-semitism in Austria. After a long legal struggle he had won a famous victory in 1885 against Professor August Rohling, a Czech who had produced an edited version of the Talmud in order to prove that its teachings required ritual murder.<sup>76</sup> On this occasion in 1892 Bloch clinched his argument that Jews had no monopoly on vice with the following point,

I once asked a German-national student, a worshipper of Herr von Schönerer, how is it that Schönerer changed his house in the Krugerstrasse into a brothel? He answered me: 'That's an old German institution!' Now some of the Jews have been germanized. I ask, I wish, that people do not offend the Jews; but if they attack the Jews they must allow some response.<sup>77</sup>

Apparently Schönerer had gone to just these lengths to force his mother to move out! But Bloch's debating victory was Pyrrhic. The connection between the Jews and prostitution remained notorious in Vienna, out of all proportion to their real involvement. This was true at every level of society. Following his organizing tour, William Coote, the British leader of the movement against white slavery, reported to his Jewish friends that nowhere was anti-semitic feeling occasioned by white slavery 'nearly so marked or prevalent as it is in Austria, where he heard it expressed more bitterly than anywhere else'.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Neue Freie Presse*, 15 November 1892. See also the reaction in the *Freies Blatt*, 20 November 1892, an anti-anti-semitic newspaper.

<sup>76</sup> Among other places, Van Arkel, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 9-14, 26. And Joseph S. Bloch, *Erinnerungen aus Meinem Leben* (Vienna, 1922).

<sup>77</sup> Bloch, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 327-9. *Stenographisches Protokoll*, 25 November 1892, 8012. Also, *Neue Freie Presse*, 26 November 1892.

<sup>78</sup> Moro citing Coote, 12 May 1901, ICA, vol. 1.



At the lower levels of society this was probably related to the great popularity of the blood libel in the Empire. The two charges were similar and they reinforced each other. This is clear in the agitation of Franz Schneider, a coarse and very effective rabble-rouser of the lowest type. Schneider's claim to fame is that he became a travelling salesman for ritual-murder stories, creating 'an atmosphere of panic equalling the fear once spread by the belief in witches and the witchhunters'.<sup>79</sup> He was largely responsible for provoking the Hilsner case in Bohemia in 1899, when a Jewish vagabond was tried for the ritual murder of a girl and was defended by Thomas Masaryk.

Schneider also made much of white slavery, as did other specialists in the blood libel. In 1899 Schneider pronounced in Parliament, about the

countless cases in which Christian servants employed by Jews disappear without trace, carried off to a dreadful fate in the brothels of Hungary, the Orient and South America, despite the vigilance of the legal authorities. These cases are connected with the incredible crimes committed by Jews because of their superstitions for the purpose of getting hold of Christian blood and calling to heaven for revenge.<sup>80</sup>

While ritual murder remained primary and white slavery secondary, it is easy to see how the two were reciprocal. Cases of real Jewish traffickers validated the blood-libel accusation and showed that 'Jews injure our *Volk* bodily', even though individuals accused of ritual murder were sometimes acquitted in court.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, the tenacious and revived medieval superstition about ritual murder gave credence to the charge that Jews had organized a mass traffic in Christian girls.

The connection between Jews and sexual vice was also commonly drawn by the general public and the official classes. In 1904 a lady successfully prosecuted the agent of a brothel, who had made the remark to her 'At Sachs you would be worth

<sup>79</sup> Van Arkel, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 28.

<sup>80</sup> Cited in *Anti-Semitisches Jahrbuch*, ed. W. Giese (1903), p. 64.

<sup>81</sup> *Anti-Semitisches Jahrbuch* (1903), p. 233. Also, unidentified cutting where the conviction of Moris and Lena Cohen in Brooklyn is used to validate the charges against Mendel Beilis in the famous Kiev blood libel case of 1913, folio 101. SP.

200 Guilders'.<sup>82</sup> Madam Sachs was a byword for Viennese prostitution. The Austrian League for the Suppression of White Slavery was bedevilled by tension between its Jewish and gentile members. When the international movement held a conference in Vienna in 1909, it was greeted by Major Karl Lueger and by Dr Robert Pattai, president of the Chamber of Deputies and another signatory of Schlesinger's celebrated parliamentary question. Only Pattai was more respectable, having dissociated himself from his colleagues in 1892 with the interesting comment, 'Even an anti-semite must disapprove of such crudity.'<sup>83</sup>

When a local moral crusade began in 1906, promoted by the press and the anti-white-slavery league, it was turned into another vehicle for racism. The occasion for the short burst of moral outrage on the Danube was the sensational Riehl affair. Regina Riehl ran a tolerated house where police turned a blind eye to her strict regime. Prostitutes were locked in and their debts seemed to mount the harder they worked. Riehl's servant and procuress happened to be Jewish, the sixty-eight-year-old Antonie Pollack, well known for years in Vienna's VD hospitals and slums.<sup>84</sup>

There was a great public outcry over police corruption, especially of one Inspector Piss, and over the cruelty of prostitution. A few of Riehl's inmates, almost all of whom were gentile, had actually been purchased from their parents. Naturally Pollack's role was prominently broadcast. In the aftermath the police decided to make a few symbolic gestures. In 1908 they successfully prosecuted on procuring charges the well-known Frau Lowy and her husband, Rudolf Schick, proprietors of the luxurious 'Maison Schick', recreation spot for Vienna's aristocrats. One of the denunciations read in court by the judge was blatantly anti-semitic. In the aftermath of the trial, the famous Frau Sachs, who had been mentioned prominently, fled Vienna.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Karl Kraus, *Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität* (Wien, d.d.), p. 135 (die Fackel, December 1904).

<sup>83</sup> Cited in *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 13 November 1892.

<sup>84</sup> The entire trial transcript is in *Archiv für Kriminalanthropologie*, Band 27 (1908), 1-11. On the aftermath, Kraus, *Sittlichkeit*, pp. 261-9.

<sup>85</sup> The material on the Lowy case is in both Ilka Lowy file, 1907/2 and Anna Sachs file, 1910/1. VPA.

The eighteen-year-old Hitler came to Vienna in September 1907, left at the end of the year because of his mother's death and returned in February 1908. Predisposed to the most aggressive forms of prejudice, Hitler absorbed the Viennese image of the Jewish trafficker. He wrote ominously in *Mein Kampf* of the streets and alleys of the Leopoldstadt,

In no other city of Western Europe could the relationship between Jewry and prostitution and even now the white slave traffic, be studied better than in Vienna ... An icy shudder ran down my spine when seeing for the first time the Jew as an evil, shameless and calculating manager of this shocking vice, the outcome of the scum of the big city.<sup>86</sup>

The terrible irony is that in fuelling this monstrously violent prejudice, the Jews in question preyed mostly on each other and were themselves partly shaped by the contours of life in an anti-semitic society. It is to the forces that formed the unclean ones that we now turn.

<sup>86</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York, 1939 ed.), p. 78.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Causes of White Slavery

#### *Anti-Semitism*

Speaking of Jewish involvement in commercial vice, Chief Rabbi Adler of Britain told the Jewish international conference on the traffic in 1910, 'we can trace this deplorable change directly to the recrudescence of active Russian persecutions in 1881.'<sup>1</sup> Following the assassination of the relatively reformist Czar Alexander II in May of that year, the Russian government unleashed murderous pogroms, forced half a million Jews living in rural parts of the Pale to abandon their homes for its already overcrowded towns and cities, and introduced other policies calculated to make their lives miserable.

Obviously the Chief Rabbi's observation is too simple to serve as a global explanation as to why Jews became involved in commercial vice. For one thing, the problem pre-dated 1881. For another, it extended beyond the jurisdiction of the czars. There were no pogroms of any sort in Galicia until 1898. Yet in a general sense anti-semitism is the place to begin. To the extent that it distorted the Jewish economy and impoverished the people, to the extent that it occasioned young women to take risks with suitors from abroad who turned out to be procurers, and to the extent that it encouraged the police to use Jews, as pariahs, to help run urban vice, anti-semitism is a prime cause.

There was some justice in Rabbi Bloch's comment made in 1899 on the occasion of the conviction of a gang of traffickers and brothelkeepers who worked along the western Polish border at Bedzin and Soznowitz: 'Russia has no right to sit in judgement over immorality, but should itself be charged as the author of all infamy, it ought to be charged as the accessory before the entire civilized world.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Österreichische Wochenschrift*, 28 Juli 1899.

The encouragement that Jews received from the police was particularly noticeable in Budapest, Congress Poland, and Russia. The forces of order utilised Jewish lumpen elements to help maintain social control. Under the thumb of the police, the uses of the eternal pariah in commercial vice were many and included keeping orderly brothels and thereby minimizing street disorder, keeping the peoples' minds off politics, and later infiltrating the revolutionary movement, provoking left-wingers and breaking strikes. In the Middle Ages Jewish ghettos sometimes had brothels placed at their walls, one outcast group next to another. Why not link them up?

There are some remarkably specific examples of commercial vice emerging not merely as a police convenience but as a direct consequence of discrimination. When Samuel Cohen enquired in 1932 about the situation at Salonika, which at the time was alleged to be bad, he learned from the correspondent of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* the interesting fact that,

The Jewish boarders at the tolerated houses were numerous around 1892, following the arrival at Salonika of a great number of fugitives from Kichinev and furthermore fleeing from the pogroms. The Jewish madams who still direct some of these brothels are precisely of that origin.<sup>3</sup>

Or take Russia, where the government's anti-Jewish conscription policy ultimately led to the formation of a colony of Jewish brothelkeepers in Moscow. In 1893 the Crown Rabbi there, Jacob Mazeh, enquired about the origins of some especially rough congregants at his Mizubi synagogue.<sup>4</sup> With the banishing of 20,000 Jews from the city in 1891, those remaining had come together in this central place of worship, including the rough strangers whose own congregation had been closed. Mazeh learned that these men were all that were left of a group of cantonists, soldiers who according to czarist Jewish policy, would have been seized from their parents as young boys and forced to serve for up to twenty-five years in the army. The

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Nehama to Secretary, AIU, 24 November 1932. File, Grèce III C55, 'La Prostitution juives des Salonique' (1932), AIU.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Mazeh, *Zikhronot* (Yiddish: Memoirs), vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1936), pp. 46-56.



worst of that nightmarish policy had been discontinued in 1856 but these men apparently pre-dated the reform.

The cantonists had sometime earlier received special permission to live in Moscow and some had opened licensed brothels there. They were part of the former Shipuvi congregation. Shortly before Mazeh's arrival their brothels had been closed, but the rabbi was unable to find out exactly why. One story had it that the rich members of the Moscow community had intervened with the previous Governor, the liberal Dolgoruki, in order to rid themselves of the stain. In any case, before the brutal expulsions of 1891 it was ruled that Jews could not own brothels in Moscow. Most of the keepers moved away and those who remained, Mazeh's congregants, were said to be supporting themselves by procuring.

Finally, there is an equally compelling case involving the force of circumstances and the origins of Jewish involvement at Constantinople. Once again it is a local correspondent of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, which was like a Jewish foreign ministry, who provides the explanation. Aron Halévy, head of Constantinople's small German-Jewish community explained,

The first establishment of a certain importance of Polish Jews at Constantinople seems to date from the year 1854. It is to the epoch of the Crimean War that some Russian-Jewish soldiers taken prisoner in the course of battle by the allied armies were transported to Constantinople where they received the order to live in the quarter that they still inhabit ... [they] had been given the sad mission of opening public houses of prostitution in the locale of Yukseh Caldirim and the adjacent streets ... To these unhappy people there came several Jewish families from Rumania, Hungary and Russia who fled from persecutions of which they had been victims or who wanted to rescue their children from the vigors of military service.<sup>5</sup>

In the period during and just after the Crimean War, Turkish ports were filled with human flotsam and some of these foreigners received economic concessions.<sup>6</sup> Aron Halévy, the correspondent, suggests that these prisoners of war were forced to

<sup>5</sup> Aron Halévy, 'Les Israélites polonais de Constantinople (Suite) Leur établissement à Constantinople—leurs mœurs', 16 March 1890, Turquie 1C17, AIU.

<sup>6</sup> Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-76* (Princeton, 1963), p. 73.

accept part of the prostitution concession and that they were then joined by refugees from anti-semitism. His is the only account extant of the origins of an unbroken sixty-year involvement with white slavery on the part of a section of Constantinople's Ashkenazi population. It would be useful to remember this was a calling that their founders did not ask for, though they were soon to become involved with criminal elements from all over south-eastern Europe.

Yet it would be wrong to place the entire initiative on one side. From economic necessity, demoralization, and opportunism small numbers of Jews found their way into commercial vice. For one thing, licensed brothels were not illegal. Furthermore while this form of livelihood was traditionally frowned upon by Jewish authorities, it was not so unlike some other widespread forms of individual small-scale Jewish commerce. Speaking of the situation in Constantinople, Aron Halévy described the attitude of some of the Ashkenazi community there to the brothelkeepers.

The serious Poles judge with irony this arrogance which pushes some of their compatriots to take a boutique in Yukseh Caldirim. According to them, nothing is as wise as living off the product of a very practical trade that permits one to amass without risk healthy savings ... one deplors this deeprooted reason ... that motivates them to say that one must only do commerce that is capitalist or proprietary.<sup>7</sup>

There are striking parallels between commercial vice and the much greater participation in tavern-owning and the liquor traffic throughout Russia and Poland. Both engendered ambivalence and guilt on the part of some of the individuals involved; and the omnipresent Jewish tavernkeepers of Poland and Russia, like their coreligionists in commercial vice, fuelled anti-semitic prejudice.

<sup>7</sup> Halévy to Secretary AIU, 7 January 1890, Turquie 1C17, AIU.

The feelings of the taverner trapped by fate in a situation he despised is captured by the poet Bialik,

meeting between the gates of purity and defilement ...  
 There, in a human swine cave, in the sacrilege of a tavern,  
 in streams of impious libation, ...  
 over a yellow leaved volume,  
 my father's head appeared, the skull of a tortured martyr<sup>8</sup>

The tavernkeeper here was a traditional Jew and studied Talmud, not likely among brothelkeepers, although there is evidence that a few did just that even in provincial Argentina.<sup>9</sup> On the whole, however, brothelkeepers abandoned Jewish values or never subscribed to them. This is not to say that some did not feel the same moral repugnance as the tavernkeeper. The most famous Yiddish literary work on the subject of prostitution, Sholem Asch's drama, *God of Vengeance*, explores the moral ambivalence of such a character, Yekel Tchaftchovitch, who runs a brothel downstairs while denying this has anything to do with the purity of his household upstairs, especially that of his cherished daughter Rifkele. The play ends in tragedy with Rifkele procured for a brothel in Lodz, finally returned but rejected by her father as unchaste and driven into his brothel downstairs.<sup>10</sup>

We should not be surprised that Asch's story was mirrored in real life. In 1900 one woman involved in prostitution in London's East End complained to Rabbi Friedlander of the Jewish Association that her second daughter had been taken to Montevideo.<sup>11</sup> The lesson is that by 1900 Jewish commercial vice was largely incorporated by underworld elements and many of its participants were predators of the poor. Most who started out upstairs were ultimately driven downstairs.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Salo Baron, Arcadius Kahan etc., *Economic History of the Jews* (Jerusalem, 1975), p. 138. Also on tavernkeeping, S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1916, 1918, 1920).

<sup>9</sup> Dr Haim Shoskes, *Mit Yidn—Zwischen Indianer, Neger un Araber* (Yiddish: with Jews among Indians, Negroes and Arabs) (Tel Aviv, 1960), pp. 50ff. In his interesting coverage of the subject, the author mentions this.

<sup>10</sup> Sholem Asch, *God of Vengeance* (Boston, 1918 ed.).

<sup>11</sup> JAGM, 17 December 1900.

*Social and Economic Factors*

In addition to anti-semitism and the tradition of beginning small-scale enterprise, any discussion of the origins of the problem must acknowledge the powerful factors at work transforming Jewish life in the nineteenth century, factors which of course were themselves sometimes related to anti-semitism: urbanisation; mass migrations; secularisation; and severe Jewish pauperisation in village and city. These are the kinds of factors that we have observed causing prostitution all over the western world at the time, and the Jews were not immune. As Ben Zion Hoffman, a Polish-American Bundist, concluded in an observation that is worth repeating again, 'The laws of nature are stronger than Jewish modesty. The laws of nature do not differentiate between Jews and Christians.'<sup>12</sup>

In other words, Jewish commercial vice was a natural and inevitable response to a cluster of formidable social and economic causes. Jewish urbanisation increased dramatically in the period. Apart from the steep increases in population that we have recorded for Warsaw, Odessa, Budapest, Vienna, Minsk, and Lemberg, consider the fact that while in 1847 only the first two, among all Russian cities, had more than 10,000 Jews, by 1926 the number of Russian cities so qualifying was thirty-eight. By the same token Galician Jewry 'had become by the turn of the century, predominantly city dwellers in an overwhelmingly agricultural province'.<sup>13</sup> This accelerated urbanisation was due to a number of factors, including the voluntary migration of people out of impoverished villages in search of work. There were also the forced population removals from the rural Pale into its towns, and from outside back into this restricted zone. Finally, despite all travails, there was a substantial natural increase in population. For all of these reasons the influx into cities more than outweighed the massive outflux of Jews overseas. While economic opportunity was greater in the cities of eastern Europe than in its villages, it was less than in the West where economic development was earlier and faster. Some Jews managed to adjust to the times and enter the

<sup>12</sup> Hoffman, *Die Froyenhandel*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Bernard Weinryb, *Jewish Vocational Education* (New York, 1948), pp. 31-2. Salo Baron, *The Russian Jews Under Tsars and Soviets* (New York, 1964), Ch. 5. On Galicia, Wistrich, 'Austrian Social Democracy', p. 90.

new industrial proletariat or the professional and entrepreneurial classes. But underemployment, low wages, pauperism, and economic marginality plagued Jewish life both in village and city.<sup>14</sup>

Nowhere in the Pale in 1900 was the rate of Jews on poor relief less than fourteen per cent and in most places even in normal times it was above twenty per cent.<sup>15</sup> Their central position in the rural economy had been shattered when Jewish middlemen and traders lost their functions, a result partially of government policy, especially the state's assumption of the sale and distribution of liquor in 1861 which displaced thousands of people; and it resulted too from the erosion of the Jewish service sector that sold to the peasantry and traded their agricultural produce.

Urban economic growth did not take up the whole slack and where Jews could find factory employment, like everyone else they were notoriously overworked and underpaid. The author of one thorough turn-of-the-century survey of the cigarette factories of Bialystok and Grodno in Russia, the waxworks at Boryslaw, and the match factories at Kolomea, Bolechow, and Skole wondered how the women employed in these miserable places could possibly make ends meet.<sup>16</sup>

These last four cities bring us to Galicia, one of the most backward regions in all Europe. The Jewish social workers and philanthropists who trooped there before 1914 typically described the standard of living as 'lower than that of Chinese coolies'. Rabbi Rosenak described an instance of fourteen people of all ages sleeping in a damp Cracow cellar room.<sup>17</sup> 'Luftmensch' is the term used to describe the poverty here, denoting people who apparently lived from air alone. Discounting some of this as understandable hyperbole, it remains

<sup>14</sup> Baron, *Russian Jews*, Ch. 6, especially pp. 113-18. Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia*, vol. 1 (New Haven, 1944), Ch. 12. Baron etc., *Economic History*, pp. 89-94, 97-9. Dubnow, *History*, vol. 3, 22-6.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Jewish History Atlas* (London, 1969), p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> *Vierteljahresbericht für die Mitgleider der Osterreichischen Israelitische Humanitätsverein, B'nai B'rith* (February 1901), p. 7. Also, Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle*, pp. 23-6.

<sup>17</sup> *Vierteljahresbericht* (October, 1898), pp. 156-7. U.O.B.B. Zweigkomitee des Deutschen Nationalkomitee Zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels. *Protokoll der am 19 und 20 November 1902 stattgehabten Zusammenkünfte*, (Hamburg, 1902), 20. Hereafter cited as U.O.B.B. Zweigkomitee, *Protokoll*. Rosenak, 'Bericht', 8.



that the Galician Jewish economy was in a state of collapse. Between 1880 and 1914 at least 5,000 Jews starved to death annually in Galicia and Bukovina.<sup>18</sup> As in Russia the Jewish position in rural trading and services was undermined, in the Galician case following the abolition of serfdom in 1848. Later in the century nationalistic and ultimately anti-semitic Polish peasant co-operatives further displaced Jewish merchants and traders from the countryside. At the same time traditional occupations in the handicrafts, retailing, and transport were wiped out by changes in government policy, by modern capitalistic development of the railways and the Vienna garment industry. When ICA surveyed the situation in 1910, after a decade of philanthropic efforts in the province, it was reported that half of the population of 800,000 Jews were without livelihood. This included 39,000 unmarried females.<sup>19</sup>

And Romania? Jews there were denied citizenship in contravention of the 1878 Congress of Berlin. Following decades of economic discrimination that removed them to the margins of the economy, a substantial minority of Romania's quarter-million Jews had to rely on the charity of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* for their food. Romanian Jewry has been called 'the most wretched minority in all of Europe'. By the turn of the century it was voting with its feet in a remarkable mass flight out of the country.<sup>20</sup>

This is the kind of desperation and misery that explains reports from Minsk and elsewhere of parents selling their daughters into prostitution.<sup>21</sup> Destitution could climb to terrifying proportions. In the slump year 1897 about half of the Jewish populations of Minsk and many other major cities applied for charitable relief before Passover.<sup>22</sup> We saw that some of the victims of the major Lemberg gang brought to trial in 1892 were virtually starving. Galician prostitution in particular seems to have had as much in common with the Chinese as the western variety. As noted by the *General Anzeiger* of

<sup>18</sup> Gilbert, *Atlas*, 68.

<sup>19</sup> 17 January 1910 response of the Galician Hilfsverein in ICA. *Betreffend Galizien*, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Howard Morley Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1963 ed.), p. 259. J. Berkowitz, *La Question des Israélites en Roumanie* (Paris, 1923).

<sup>21</sup> *Der Freund*, 16 April 1910. See below, note 55 for these reports.

<sup>22</sup> Dubnow, *History*, vol. 3, p. 24.

Berlin, a Jewish newspaper which followed this subject very thoroughly,

Famished, ragged, without shelter and protection—under such conditions it is a wonder that they all don't become prostitutes ... White slavery is the saddest facet of Jewish social life in these countries—who would want to gloss it over? And yet, if we hear so frequently of Jewish prostitution in Cracow or Berdichev, so must we reply: this is a loud condemnation of the governments which permit the best people to decay morally.<sup>23</sup>

Yet only a tiny minority of poor women became prostitutes. Furthermore, it appears that abject poverty was the crucial factor in only a minority of the cases that we know about. In this sense the problem reverts to a European rather than an Asian perspective. Jewish poverty was relative and not every place was as thoroughly miserable as Galicia, at least before 1914. A League of Nations survey shows that of twenty-five Jewish prostitutes questioned in Buenos Aires, only four described their original economic situation as very poor.<sup>24</sup>

We are not yet through with poverty, however; if not directly through sheer hunger, then by undermining family solidarity, poverty helped cause prostitution. Before seeing how this was so, let us examine what experts were saying about the Jewish family of the period. In his classic *Sociology of the Jews*, written between the wars, Arthur Ruppin characterised the traditional Jewish family as a mighty 'fortress in whose tranquility the Jew built his own world of love and peace'.<sup>25</sup> By the time Ruppin wrote, however, it was to lament the partial demise of that fortress. The Jewish family had come to resemble the family at large, open to generational conflict and social pathology.

The opening of generational conflict was apparent to everyone who studied white slavery. In 1909 Bertha Pappenheim wrote to ICA about Galicia, 'The generations do not understand each other any more; parental authority and power have almost disappeared; religious, cultural and political contrasts

<sup>23</sup> *General Anzeiger*, 15 October 1902.

<sup>24</sup> L of N, *Rehabilitation of Prostitutes*, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur Ruppin, *Sociologie der Juden*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1931), pp. 108-9.

heap themselves up between them.' Like other Victorian observers there, Rabbi Rosenak pinpointed materialism as one symptom. He was completely unprepared for

the extraordinary love of finery of Galician girls. One can see this on the Sabbath, when girls walk down the street beside young men—these girls, in modern dresses and great feather hats, have certainly worked very hard all week long and hardly have enough bread to eat.<sup>26</sup>

Making allowances again for exaggeration and common sense—most families got along—and recognising that the weakening of parental authority may have come earlier in Galicia than parts of Congress Poland, there is still value in these observations. How could it not be so in the crowded towns of the Pale and of the new world, where the old traditional values did not seem to work in the new and different realities, and where the impact of secularism on the younger generation was reinforced by the impact of poverty and migrations?

Poverty hurt family solidarity in a number of ways. By failing to provide an adequate standard of living, fathers might become 'deauthorized' in their childrens' eyes.<sup>27</sup> This was especially the case where children were unsupervised because parents were away all day searching for work or scrounging a living. In a paper presented to the 1910 Jewish International Conference on white slavery, Heinrich Sprecher said about Galica,

In very many poor Jewish families children are physically, spiritually and morally neglected and prepared for no calling. This is easily understood if one thinks that parents leave the house early in the morning in order to search for earnings and without supervision the children are exposed to the dangers of the street and bad company. What happens to these children one can imagine. In the most favourable cases they become beggars and vagrants. But still worse, the neglected youth furnish the largest contingent for the criminal underworld.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Rosenak, 'Bericht', p. 10. Also, Heinrich Sprecher, 'Die Ursachen Und Die Mittel Zur Bekämpfung des Weissen Sklaven-Oder Mädchenhandels in Galizien', in *Jewish International Conference* (1910), p. 258. Pappenheim in *Betreffend Galizien*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> Celia Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction* (New York, 1977), pp. 238-44, on this development between the wars in Poland.

<sup>28</sup> Sprecher, 'Ursachen', 260.

Once again, Galicia is the most dramatic and extreme case. Yet everywhere during this age of the great migrations it was common for families to split up physically, with the father going on ahead to the new world in order to save enough money to bring over his loved ones, or with children leaving home to find work. This created an artificially high number of at least temporary one-parent families; and we have noted the universally accepted correlation between prostitution and a home life that is disturbed in some way, or lived without both parents.

Jewish girls were not an exception to this rule. Of the twenty-five Buenos Aires' prostitutes mentioned above, nine claimed that their family lives had been immoral or abnormal in some way.<sup>29</sup> We also saw that several orphans were among the girls sent to Constantinople by the Lemberg gang. In America, when deportation hearings were held in cases of foreign-born women caught practising prostitution within three years of landing, stories like that of Feige Pers from near Minsk commonly emerged. Pers explained to immigration officials in 1915 that she had been raised by her father but 'he neglected me since I was three years old'. She was said to have worked in several of those Minsk brothels before emigrating to New York in 1913.<sup>30</sup>

Among the similar stories of lost parents or lost love, two cases stand out for their clarity above all the others. Mamie Pinzer was born in Philadelphia in 1885 to modestly comfortable parents from Poland. As described in her own remarkable collection of letters, Pinzer's slide to prostitution began after the murder of her beloved father in 1898 left her with an insensitive and uncaring mother. Another prostitute with unresolved family problems was Polly Adler, who became one of America's most famous madams in the 1930s. Born in 1900 in Yanow, White Russia, she was particularly close to her father, until at the age of thirteen she was sent by him to America. Adler took this as a personal rejection and never forgave her father. Within a few years she had drifted into prostitution in

<sup>29</sup> L of N, *Rehabilitation of Prostitutes*, 124.

<sup>30</sup> Feige Pers, 54012/3; also Sarah Adler, 53835/192, where the abandoned daughter is Molly Yosabowitz; Sarah Minchen, 55387/230. These files are kept at the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Washington. Unfortunately, many of the files involving deportation hearings have been destroyed.

New York.<sup>31</sup> Revenge against a rejecting father played a role here, as it surely did in other cases. And revenge could be thorough because Jewish prostitutes knew that traditional fathers, like Schmuhl in Lincoln Steffens' story of the lost Schloma, would tear the hem of their shirt as a sign of grievous loss and mourn their daughters as dead.

Here again some reflections on poverty and prostitution are in order. Whatever unresolved conflicts a woman might have, be it the wish to punish a parent or engage in exhibitionist or voyeurist behaviour, those of the middle class can discharge such impulses in acceptable ways. They can marry beneath themselves or become compulsive clothes-horses. Poor women with the same drives are limited more or less to the streets. This was pointed out by Erich Fromm in 1929 in the course of a literary debate occasioned by a famous League of Nations report tying the Jews to the international traffic in women.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, we know relatively little about the psyches and family lives of the women in question. But the general way in which diminished family solidarity and prostitution were interrelated is well illustrated by the victims of Herman Brusky, Wolf Goldenberg and Israel Londoner, three well-known practitioners of white slavery who appear over and over again in police files.<sup>33</sup>

An investigation of their activities in 1907 turned up four Warsaw prostitutes whom Goldenberg or Brusky had procured for South America. When interviewed by the police at Rio de Janeiro the women gave the following information. Norma Rosenberg was then thirty years old. She had been seduced at the age of sixteen in Warsaw by a man she could not even remember. Then Norma had become promiscuous, run away from home, and drifted into prostitution. Augusta Nudelmann, age thirty-four, had become a prostitute after being widowed in Poland. Regina Mellman, age twenty-four, had been abandoned by her fiancé six years earlier in Warsaw after they had

<sup>31</sup> Rosen, *Mamie Papers*, *passim*. Polly Adler, *A House is Not a Home* (New York, 1953). There is a helpful unpublished essay on the subject of the Jewish family and prostitution: William Shelley Pollack, 'Jewish Prostitution. Its Causes and Social Significance' (1976), Yivo Institute.

<sup>32</sup> Fromm, 'Zur Psychologie des Mädchenhandels'.

<sup>33</sup> Goldenberg and Brusky, 1907/2. VPA.



lived together. Regina had then gone to London, where she was procured by Wolf Goldenberg. Dora Greenhalgh, also twenty-four, had been seduced in Warsaw by Goldenberg when she was only fifteen. They had lived together and at first she worked as a prostitute only when they needed the money. Later Goldenberg took Dora to Buenos Aires and introduced her to full-time prostitution.

These life stories suggest a pattern of promiscuity, weakened family and community controls, but still-strong sanctions against 'fallen' daughters. They also suggest a helping hand from predatory procurers. Let us shift the focus from the contribution that these girls' emotional lives might have made to their condition to the aspect of the story that we know much more about, the traps that were set for potential recruits by young men in old world and new. For wherever there were struggling Jewish poor, a handful preyed on the masses. This, we may note, marked a departure from the behaviour of the German *Gauner* bands whose deprivations were limited to the outside world. Even later in the smaller *shtetl* communities of Poland the Jewish underworld generally stole from peasants rather than other Jews. But this Robin-Hood stage in Jewish crime could not be continued in the much larger and less tightly knit urban concentrations of Europe and America. Just as infamous gangsters like Lepke Buchalter found it most convenient to shake down and extort Jewish businesses in the garment and food industries in inter-war New York, Jewish procurers naturally turned inward to the community for their recruits.<sup>34</sup>

Women away from home were particularly at risk, a point illustrated by the Brusky-Goldenberg-Londoner case. Those three traffickers first became known to the police in Vienna when the Austrian League for the Suppression of White Slavery took up the case of Tauba Schiwek, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a driver from Bedzin in western Poland. Early in 1907 Tauba went to work as a kitchen maid at Jacob Korngold's inn at Jaworzna in Galicia. After a few months Israel Londoner arrived. She remembered him from Bedzin, where

<sup>34</sup> On the *shtetl* vs. Warsaw underworld, Shulman interview, p. 63. On the Jewish underworld in New York, Albert Fried, *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster* (New York, 1980).

he had appeared before her departure and had been a figure of great interest because of his experiences in America. At the inn Londoner easily convinced Tauba to accept a trip to Paris, where she wanted to visit her sister. Their journey took them first by wagon to Vienna, where they stopped at the Hotel Romania. As the girl described the scene:

As I was falling asleep Londoner knocked on the door and wanted to come in. I was only in a slip, unlocked the door and he came in. I asked him where he expected to sleep since there was no second bed, sofa or anything similar. 'What,' he said, 'No, with you. What's the matter?' He was very loving to me, said he would be as good to me as a father or brother. He lay with me in bed and I was so frightened and so stupid, that I cannot say what he did with me. I don't know what to say.<sup>35</sup>

The next morning Wolf Goldenberg appeared and broke the news that Londoner had been forced to depart early but that he, Goldenberg, would take care of her. In the meantime, the chambermaid had spotted blood on the sheets and called the police. Goldenberg was convicted and sentenced to two months at hard labour for attempting to take Tauba to Buenos Aires, while Londoner escaped.

This was a problem rooted in the social patterns of the time, because daughters like Tauba Schiwiek were commonly expected to earn money and many left home to do so. Servants like Tauba were particularly vulnerable and here the Jewish and the general experience were similar. A large proportion of prostitutes spent at least some time in service. At Lemberg in 1909 for example the police reported that two-thirds of the registered prostitutes had been in service beforehand.<sup>36</sup> The correlation was so widespread that Richard von Kraft Ebbing, the Newton of sexual deviance, concluded that the sexual pursuit of maids was related to apron fetishism.<sup>37</sup> A curious

<sup>35</sup> Protokoll mit Tauba Schiwiek ... in der Kanzlei der Österreichischen Liga Zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels ... 31 Juli 1907, Goldenberg and Brusky, 1907/2. VPA.

<sup>36</sup> *Conférence Internationale* ... (October 1909, Vienna), p. 124.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Raymond de Rykere, 'La Criminalité des Servantes', *Bericht über den VII Internationalen Kongres für Kriminalanthropologie*, 9-13 October 1911 (Heidelberg, 1912), p. 114.

idea, but the more likely explanation is their social isolation and powerlessness. In addition to those who drifted into prostitution, and reports from Minsk and Proskurov emphasize the prostitution of Jewish servants, we know that they were a target for procurers everywhere.<sup>38</sup>

Take the case of Feige Goldschmidt, age twenty-two, a domestic servant in Kovno, northern Russia. When the owner of a local employment agency for domestics, Sarah Maechterche, learned that Feige wanted to visit her two sisters in London, there was little difficulty in persuading her to make the journey with one Mrs Zipper. Unfortunately, Sarah was an agent for her husband in Buenos Aires and Mrs Zipper was a notorious trafficker. Feige vanished. Her family in London appealed to a well-known trafficker there, Sam Bloom, for his help. But Bloom claimed to know nothing. When the Jewish Association endeavoured to assist they ran into a wall of fear. Local people in Kovno were afraid to help, presumably because of the threat of revenge by the underworld there.<sup>39</sup>

While we can only surmise what happened to Feige Goldschmidt, the fate of a young Odessa girl named Kravetz is certain. After losing her position as a maid she was befriended by Chaim Rosenblitt and Chaya Jacob, who offered to take her to a new job in the country. The journey required a sea voyage and Kravetz ended up in a Constantinople brothel. After a few miserable months she managed to reach the Russian Consul there and in 1885 Rosenblitt and Jacob were convicted and sentenced to long terms at hard labour.<sup>40</sup>

Gangs of young thugs also plagued Jewish servants. Rabbi Rosenak reported on this problem in Galicia and the story was similar at Zhitomir. The situation in this Russian city is particularly interesting because of its demographic implications. Young alphonses were said to employ all kinds of tricks here to entrap the Jewish servants who came to Zhitomir from the poor countryside of the Avritch district. They even went so far as to invade kitchens, cause girls to lose their jobs, and then have them seduced. Before the massive outflux of young men

<sup>38</sup> *Der Freund*, 16 April, 5 May 1910.

<sup>39</sup> 17 December 1901, ICA.

<sup>40</sup> *Bulletin Continental*, June 1885. For another case involving an unemployed servant, Blumenzweig file, 1906/2, VPA.

from impoverished Avritch, Jewish servants would return home with their savings and marry locally. By 1910 there was a severe shortage of husbands, rendering the girls even more vulnerable. Alphonse married them and used their wives' savings to purchase tickets for overseas.<sup>41</sup>

Of course it was not just domestic servants away from home. As we shall continue to observe, all kinds of young women drifted into prostitution or were procured purposefully. For example, alphonse knew that where there were factories and workshops, from Bialystock, to London, to New York, there were happy hunting grounds for sweated women looking for a change or inexperienced girls prone to deceit. Later we shall discuss how girls in New York and London commonly drifted from sweatshop to brothel. Some procurers specialised in these places. Yechiel Goldstein, well-known in Buenos Aires, London, Paris, and Warsaw, would 'go to work for a time in factories, where girls were employed' in order to recruit them.<sup>42</sup> In 1898 he arrived in London from Buenos Aires, took a job at a sewing machine in an East-End sweatshop and began to take out a co-worker, Milly Rosen. Promising marriage, he convinced her to go to Cardiff with him, where he reduced her to prostitution by beatings and threats of murder. When Rosen was rescued by the Jewish Association, shortly before her scheduled departure for Buenos Aires, she was badly bruised and badly shaken.

At the risk of reducing the women to mere passive victims—which our evidence later from the New York garment industry will show they usually were not—we must emphasise how widespread are the reports of organised gangs of young thugs who met the girls more than halfway, converting a sexual liaison into an exploitative relationship before passing their partners along to others in the traffic. Sometimes gangs of young procurers combined that talent with other fringe criminal activities. Rabbi Rosenak reported on electoral fraud as their sidelight in Galicia, a combination to be found also among the youth of New York and other North American cities. From New York to Warsaw strikebreaking was another speciality.

<sup>41</sup> *Der Freund*, 16 April 1910.

<sup>42</sup> 17 December 1899, ICA.

There were a variety of names for the young men: cadets in the United States; counts and princes in Vilna; pezewenks in Constantinople; alphonsees in Warsaw and elsewhere. As one of the Polish prostitutes' folk rhymes had it,

Today's youth don't fear even the Kaiser  
They have a new profession  
To deal with live merchandize  
It rains outside  
The pavement wet  
Wake up good sister  
You're already captured for Buenos Aires<sup>43</sup>

In Poland there was another term for male delinquents, '*Wurljungen*'. Like many of the prostitutes, the '*Wurljungen*' were sometimes only transitionally delinquent, pulling back from a life of professional crime, not becoming confirmed alphonsees or traffickers. The Yiddish writer Schnitzer tells us that in the smaller cities of Poland the '*Wurljungen*' usually settled down to respectability by the age of thirty. In a curious reversal, they were clean-shaven while in rebellion and bearded after adjusting later to the traditional world of their fathers.<sup>44</sup>

Other delinquents drifted deeper into the criminal underworld and became professionals like Londoner, Brusky, and Goldenberg. Still others began there, since there was a family and generational dimension to Jewish white slavery, just as there was to the earlier *Gauner* in Germany and more recently to Mafia crime. The family element was very prevalent, and we shall see how this was not limited to pimping husbands and prostituted wives. Speaking of the Warsaw underworld, it has been observed, 'whoever was born into that went into it'. And in Calcutta the British police commissioner claimed in 1888 that the European pimps there were 'mostly of the lowest class of continental Jews: many of them having been reared in brothels'.<sup>45</sup> This meant intergenerational families and siblings

<sup>43</sup> Wanwild, *Bayne Yidn*.

<sup>44</sup> Schnitzer, *Pogrom*, pp. 1-7.

<sup>45</sup> Abe Shulman interview, 63, AJC. Henry Harrison, Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 6 February 1888. Government of India, Home Department Proceedings, Judicial, July 1888, 3200, IOL. Zaleski, *Prostitution in Warsaw*, pp. 94-5.



who worked together. In our survey of the roots of the problem, especially in Europe, one such cause is the existence of this intergenerational underworld, able to attract and recruit fresh members of both sexes.

### *Feminist Concerns*

At the 1910 Jewish international conference on white slavery Bertha Pappenheim offered a comprehensive explanation for the problem at hand:

Undoubtedly economic need is a great factor in the question. It appears to me that spiritual poverty and the decay of the family is yet greater and infinitely more momentous. But I have observed still other grounds, educational grounds, queer views of honour and shame, the concept of the inferiority of the female sex ...<sup>46</sup>

This catalogue of causes both reviews what has already been said and carried us forward. It is the 'other grounds' that we want to explore here, especially those that spring from the feminist perspective of Bertha Pappenheim and her allies in Jewish-feminist circles through Europe and America.

As feminists, Pappenheim and her friends deplored the prevailing double standard of sexual behaviour at large and the alleged low status of women in the Jewish religion.<sup>47</sup> As orthodox Jews however, feminists like Pappenheim did nothing to challenge the religious division of functions in which the synagogue was male-centred and the woman's place was in the home. They focused their attention on other issues, like the relative neglect of young women's education, especially vocational training. By 'queer views of honour and shame' Pappenheim meant the propensity of orthodox parents to confirm wayward daughters in prostitution by rejecting them after one lapse. She also had in mind the traditional horror that attached to spinsterhood, and that such attitudes might lead to the making of incautious matches. As one eastern European immigrant to the United States wrote, spinsterhood was considered to be 'the greatest misfortune that could threaten a

<sup>46</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), 150.

<sup>47</sup> On Pappenheim, the excellent study by Marion Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany* (Westport, Connecticut, 1979).

girl, and to ward off that calamity the girl and her family ... would strain every nerve.<sup>48</sup>

Most of all the feminists concentrated on the Jewish law of marriage and divorce. This had a symbolic content for them, since in Judaism one 'takes' a wife. Furthermore, certain practices arising from traditional marriage and divorce were known to lead to white slavery, which itself was increasingly of central importance to this generation of Jewish as well as other feminists.

The chief problem was '*stillah chuppah*' or clandestine betrothals, ritual unions sometimes entered into by the traditional Jews of eastern Europe. The Warsaw Jewish Association for the Protection of Young Girls explained the dilemma that resulted;

... according to Jewish religious considerations ... there is no limitation with respect of the persons who can celebrate a religious marriage. Thus one meets frequently amongst Jews with the ceremony of ritual marriage (*stillah chuppah*), which depends on a gift by the man to the woman of some symbol (a ring, even a piece of money); in fact, by the repetition of a sacramental formula. The presence of a Rabbi or of any other ecclesiastic is not necessary during the ceremony: the presence of any adult Jew as a witness is absolutely sufficient ... In consequence one meets with a number of women who have an irregular civil status. According to religion they are legitimately married; according to the law they are only concubines. This kind of religious marriage celebrated in the presence of an ordinary Jew is very frequent, above all in the country districts ...<sup>49</sup>

In other words, the *stillah chuppah* enabled procurers to manoeuvre unsuspecting girls into compromising situations. Ruthless men would court them, marry them, and then coerce them to practise prostitution at home or abroad. Such wives had no legal protection because their marriages were not

<sup>48</sup> Cited *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>49</sup> 'Jewish Ritual Marriages', *Vigilance Record*, 1930. Also 'Report on Activities of the Polish Delegation to the League of Nations April Session 1930', in Ministry of Social Welfare file 1927, AAN. Also on this subject, the debates at international conferences: *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 90-110; *Jewish International Conference* (1927), pp. 36ff. *World Conference of Jewish Women* (Vienna, May 6-11, 1923), pp. 37-40. *Protokoll der ... Weltbundes Jüdischer Frauen* (1929), pp. 16-24. Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, pp. 115-17.

registered in civil law. Yet they thought themselves married and were recognised as such by traditional Jews. Only in Czarist Russia was religious marriage tantamount to civil marriage. Even there according to a decision of the Administrative Council in 1830 a legal marriage had to be presided over by a rabbi. But this decision was frequently ignored.

Furthermore, while in the vast majority of cases the clandestine groom had no criminal intent, should he abandon his wife she was totally helpless. This is because traditional Jews require that a certificate of divorce, a *get*, be forthcoming from the husband. Rabbis might be able to command a *get* in the small hermetic communities of medieval Europe, but they obviously could do no such thing in the changed circumstances before the First World War. And husbands could not be presumed dead unless the fact of death was attested to by a Jewish witness. Reformers worried that abandoned women were particularly vulnerable to white-slave traffickers because no observant man would marry an *agunah*, as an abandoned wife was called.

In 1929 Dr Ada Reichenstein, a Lemberg delegate to the World Congress of Jewish Women, declared that 'the question of marriage and divorce was an *ostjüdische catastrophe*'.<sup>50</sup> There were some 25,000 women in Congress Poland alone whose husbands had disappeared in the war, and who could not remarry because the deaths had not been properly confirmed. Even before the war the problem of the *agunah* and desertion in general was considered serious enough to warrant the formation of a National Desertion Bureau in New York. We know that one of the victims of Israel Meyrowitz, a girl by the name of Gitel Turteltaub, was a desperate abandoned wife, and others who had turned to prostitution were said to congregate in New York at Sharkey's Cafe on Fourteenth Street.<sup>51</sup> Traffickers utilized the vagaries of the marriage and divorce laws to disarm their victims and expedite their plans. The record seems to go to Mordka Cichtiger of Petrikau, who in the 1920s was said to

<sup>50</sup> *Weltbundes Jüdischer Frauen* (1929), p. 22.

<sup>51</sup> Jeanne Levine, 'Jewish Family Desertion in Cases Carried Cooperatively by the National Desertion Bureau and other Social Agencies in New York City 1934' (1939), Graduate School for Jewish Social Work Studies, typescript in New York Public Library, 49-50. 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

have seduced twelve wives and delivered them all to foreign brothels.<sup>52</sup>

There was no shortage of these cases before 1914 either. Herr von Treschow of the Berlin anti-white-slavery police had some compelling evidence from Galicia on the subject. He learned that procurers from Buenos Aires sometimes brought along the Jewish marriage contract, the *ketubah*, which traditionally was part of the religious betrothal. On these contracts the procurer's name was already filled in, along with those of two witnesses. The schemer would then arrange to meet the daughter of a poor family and explain that there was no time to lose before getting back to his thriving business across the ocean. Or, he would claim to be acting on behalf of the eligible groom who was too busy to leave America. The *ketubah* was usually enough to convince any traditional family that the match was proper. Treschow knew of one girl from Lodz who had been lured to Buenos Aires in just this fashion. Her uncle, a Berlin resident, brought her pathetic letters to his police office.<sup>53</sup>

Police officials at Czernowitz had similar evidence. One expert wrote in 1907,

In the poorer and uncultured districts of the Jews here one finds very rash and pretty girls, who are corrupted by the pretended wealth of foreign suitors, enter in ritual marriage with full agreement of their families, and at their destinations are given over to a brothel.

The casebooks of the anti-white-slavery societies contain many examples of this abuse of the ritual marriage, perpetrated in Poland, Odessa, the colony of Russian immigrants in Lemberg, the East End of London, Paris, and elsewhere.<sup>54</sup>

Could parents have known of the real objects of these marriages? It is difficult to say. In China and Japan it was

<sup>52</sup> 'Memorandum and Subjects of the Polish National Committee for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children' (Warsaw, 1927) in file S74, Box 106. NVA.

<sup>53</sup> Treschow, 'Report'.

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum 24 December 1906, Czernowitz in 1907/1, VPA. For some of the pre-1914 cases of white-slavery through *stillah chuppah*: JAGM, 2 July 1899. *Hamburger Echo*, 7 March 1914 on Fiedler, cutting in folio 76, SH. *Troisième Congrès Internationale Pour la Repression de la traite des Blanches. Rapport de Major Wagener sur la Traite des Blanches au Brésil et Argentine* (1906), p. 9. *Vigilance*, November 1913, on Odessa.

commonplace for parents to sell daughters, and there were many charges that such sales took place in Jewish families, especially in Galicia, where the form of the transaction would be the *stillah chuppah*. The Paris-based Jewish Section of the Association for the Protection of Young Girls knew of such a sale. Charney, the Yiddish writer who had experience working against white slavery, wrote between the wars that miserably poor families in Poland knew what was afoot when they gave their daughters to overseas grooms who took them to brothels.<sup>55</sup> Charney believed that the willingness to go along was due to the understanding that daughters sometimes sent money back to support the parents.

We are on safer ground in asserting that some of the women who went through *stillah chuppah* knew they would be taken to brothels because they were already prostitutes for whom a ritual marriage marked the formalising of a professional and emotional relationship with their pimp. In Alexandria the Austrian Consul made a study of white slavery in 1903 and interviewed twenty prostitutes from the Hapsburg empire. He wrote, 'Many of these unfortunates believe themselves to be legally married to these men. Sometimes the "ketubah" in Hebrew language, signed by the Rabbi who performed the marriage, is produced.'<sup>56</sup> Most of these women were known to be practising prostitution before they left the old country. Still, they believed that they had entered into real marriages, even if based on a business partnership. Some would be cruelly deceived, since the *stillah chuppah* was sometimes little more than a marriage of convenience for their grooms, who were free to discard their wives when the occasion arose.

<sup>55</sup> *Association Pour la Protection de la Jeune Fille* (Section Israélite), *Assemblée Generale de 28 January 1912*, p. 30. Charney, in *Yiddische Emigraizia* (August-October 1929), pp. 323-5, where he reviews the Yiddish translation of the famous book by Albert Londres, *Road to Buenos Ayres*. There are many assertions that Jewish parents sold their daughters: 'Memorandum, 24 December 1906, Czernowitz'; B. Schidlof, *Der Mädchenhandel* (Berlin, 1904), p. 178, whose author was a Jewish member of anti-white slavery movement; Ernst Tuch, *Der Mädchenhandel* (1902), p. 8, in the Tuch Collection, LBI; *Vierteljahresbericht ... Humanitätsverein*, 4; Deutsch Nationalkomitee, *Bericht über die 6 Deutsche National Konferenz zu internationaler Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels* (1909), p. 154.

<sup>56</sup> Szarvasy, Austrian Consul General Alexandria to Junius von Puscariu, 24 March 1904, 1905/1, VPA. A copy of this also found its way into 2/3 July 1904, ICA, vol. 2. Hereafter cited as 'Szarvasy Memorandum', 1905/1, VPA.



Charney adds that old women on yearly pensions assisted the procurers by informing them of the right families to approach. Whether parents were careless, complicit, or just overjoyed to marry off a poor daughter, we do know that some matchmakers were in league with the traffickers, in places like London, New York, Czernowitz, and Odessa.<sup>57</sup> The case involving one such matchmaker Guinda Wainrouse of Odessa is quite remarkable and worth recounting.<sup>58</sup> Malka Altman and Rivka Rubin were both daughters of breadsellers and they helped out by delivering to customers in the city. Wainrouse, who lived nearby, offered on several occasions to introduce Rivka to a young fiancé, and finally on a holiday prevailed upon both girls to go along to the Hotel Tsarskoe Selo to meet two young men, Guelman and Olonesky. From there the party moved to a ship on which the young men said they were booked to sail to Constantinople in a few days time. Strange to say, when the whistle sounded for embarkation the girls were convinced to stay on board, on the understanding that they would be returned to Odessa on the first boat back.

This kind of trickery was not unknown elsewhere in the world. Occasionally Chinese procurers would invite their victims for a tour of a big American steamer docked at Shanghai and while the visit was under way the ship would depart for San Francisco. On one occasion a Jewish couple embarked at Liverpool, the woman believing they would be left off at their home in London. Needless to say the destination was Buenos Aires. The woman was put in a brothel but managed to escape to Rabbi Henry Joseph.<sup>59</sup>

Malka and Rivka wound up in a brothel run by one Tenenbaum and it was only after five months that Malka Rubin, pregnant and in hospital, managed to get word to her mother. The woman sailed to Constantinople and went directly to Tenenbaum's brothel, where the proprietor told her that Malka had long since departed with a Turk. Asked to swear to this in a synagogue, Tenenbaum relented and led the mother to her daughter. When both girls gave their trial testimony back in

<sup>57</sup> Pincus Tratner in Czernowitz list, 1907/1, VPA. For London, *JA Report* (1911), p. 52. For New York, the Mollie Yosabowitz case, Ch. Five.

<sup>58</sup> *Bulletin Continental*, March 1885.

<sup>59</sup> 18 September 1911, ICA vol. 1.

Odessa the case became a *cause célèbre*. The leader of the gang, Chaim Pick, was condemned to ten years' hard labour while the others, including the matchmaker, were deported to Siberia.

Who can say why Malka and Rivka did not rush off the ship? How could a more experienced woman believe the SS *Aragon*, which went directly from Liverpool to Buenos Aires, would call at London? People make mistakes, and it was the profession of pimps, kaften, macks, cadets, alphonses, pezewenks, or whatever else they were called, to foster these mistakes and find willing recruits. Thus from Vienna where she had eloped with one Leon Nuremberg, the eighteen-year-old Fanka Friedel contacts her friend Mania back in Warsaw:

I am writing to you about my journey, that it was very good ... What did they say in the workshop and what did the old man say. Write me exactly what they said. Tell them, my dear, that I have come to Vienna and I was very tired ... Do you know that when I arrived I was taken to a salon and he bought me a beautiful coat and hat, and also gold and diamonds and I was like a queen. And he bought me anything I liked. The wedding will be very soon. I will let you know when and on what day and I will send you money ...<sup>60</sup>

Nuremberg was a trafficker from Buenos Aires. Fanka's letter bespeaks such vulnerability that no wonder Jewish social workers threw up their hands and despaired that such 'grooms' were being received like the Messiah.

<sup>60</sup> Letter of Fanka Friedel, 7 December 1931, in Ministry of the Interior, file 244. Also, 'Report of the Polish National Committee 1931', file 192. AAN; Aanson G. Rabinbach, 'The Migration of Galician Jews to Vienna 1857-1880', *Austrian History Yearbook*, XI (1975), pp. 44-54.

**Part Two**

**The Geography  
of  
White Slavery  
to 1914**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Road to Buenos Aires

#### *Origins*

While the United States was the '*goldene medine*', the golden country, for millions of poor European Jews, Argentina and Brazil were Eldorado for the pimps and prostitutes of the old country. Everything was arranged for high profits: the imbalance of numbers between males and females, the Latin cultural toleration of prostitutes, thorough police and political corruption, weak laws and new shipping routes. Prostitutes sang in Yiddish,

In Buenos Aires, in Buenos Aires  
in an open world  
Every girl who goes to Buenos Aires  
brings a few thousand rubles.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years many hundreds of men and women took the road to Buenos Aires in search of their fortunes, some leaving behind intolerable poverty. As Rabbi Bloch put it, 'One must have seen the misery of the Polish Jewish cities for oneself, in order to understand that a trip to Buenos Aires is not frightening.'<sup>2</sup>

By 1914 the 'unclean ones', as Argentine Jews always called these outcasts, were both numerous and isolated enough to form a 'second Jewish world', complete with its own synagogue and cemetery.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, in Brazil, the unclean also formed their own *ersatz* community, a nuisance to the Jews there who also cast them out. When did commercial vice first migrate to South America and how extensive did this industry become? These are the questions to be explored at the outset. Then we

<sup>1</sup> Wanwild, *Bayne Yidn*.

<sup>2</sup> *Österreichische Wochenschrift*, 28 July 1899.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'ein zweites Judentum' is used in the interesting article by S. Adler-Rudel, 'Die Juden Argentiniens im Kampfe gegen Prostitution und 'Zuhaltertum'', *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege und Socialpolitik* (1930), p. 300.



shall ask about the actual road to Buenos Aires, the journey from old world to new. Finally, what did the new recruits find when, as one novelist put it, they reached the 'golden brothels' of Argentina?<sup>4</sup>

There is an interesting story that circulated in Budapest and purports to be the true account of the pioneers of the white-slave traffic to Argentina.<sup>5</sup> David Auerbach, known locally as 'Bohemian Dovidl' had grown up in his older brother's licensed brothel. In 1867 David chanced to read the first press reports at Budapest describing how boundless opportunity awaited those Hungarians able and willing to settle on the La Plata coast of South America. The newspaper added that the only problem was a scarcity of women. Auerbach's youth had not been entirely wasted. He decided to venture out to Buenos Aires to assess the situation for himself.

Arriving at the raw but thriving city Auerbach proceeded to have himself baptised by the Jesuits, who, we are told, thought so highly of his plans to bring women into the country that they advanced him money for his project. David wrote to his older brother asking that a dozen girls or so be lined up, but he drowned in a shipwreck off the coast of Portugal on the way home to collect them.

At this point Leib Hirshkovitz, a local procurer who had been given the job of arranging for this first transport of migratory prostitutes, enters the story. David's bad fortune enabled Leib himself to accompany the girls to Buenos Aires. When he arrived he discovered they were so valuable that he could sell them at windfall prices as his 'daughters' and 'nieces' to respectable men desperate for wives. Hirshkovitz carried on this marriage traffic for some time until other professional procurers muscled in and obtained the first licences for official brothels in Buenos Aires.

It matters little how much, if any, of the above is literally true. The story is emblematic of the truth because it contains several points that we know to be important. By the 1870s procurers and adventurers on the make had opened up the route to South America. At first Hungarians were heavily

<sup>4</sup> Izhak Reizman, *Lebens in Shturem* (Yiddish: Lives in Chaos) (Tel Aviv, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 60-7.

represented. And the traffickers established a settled presence in South America before the major influx of European Jews into Argentina and Brazil that began around 1890.

The dimensions of early Hungarian involvement were revealed in 1876 when police there unravelled the complex gang whose traces led back to Emmanuel Scherz in Stuhlweissenberg. They arrested one Adolf Weissmann near Arad in Hungary and he admitted to having accompanied in 1875 alone a half-dozen transports of girls bound for South America. Weissmann and Honig, an accomplice, would collect the women from Scherz and other suppliers, take them across the Empire and hand them over to Jacob Eisner and others for the voyage from Marseille. No less than twenty-three gang members were involved in the transport of females to Buenos Aires and Montevideo.<sup>6</sup> The problem was serious enough for the authorities in both Austria and Hungary to establish travel restrictions for young girls going abroad.

The Hungarians did not have much of a lead over the Poles. Dr Joseph Macko, who between the wars was the leading official Polish expert on white slavery, pinpointed the years between 1875 and 1880 as the time when the international traffic began there. The Prussian railways were in place and the shipping routes to South America were open. Macko confirmed what we described earlier, that agents from America combed through small towns and also had close links with brothelkeepers in Warsaw and other big cities.<sup>7</sup>

At the South-American end the importers established their small permanent colonies very early. The police of Rio de Janeiro uncovered what they called a 'Kaften's Association' in 1879, when the Jewish population of Rio was only about 1000.<sup>8</sup> Significantly in this part of the world the kaftan, or Jew's traditional long gown, became synonymous with pimp.

<sup>6</sup> Ch. Two, note 43 above.

<sup>7</sup> Dr Joseph Macko, *Prostytucja, Nierząd-handel Żywym Towarem Pornographia ze Stanowiska Historii, Etyki, Higieny, Prawa* (Prostitution, Fornication, White-Slave Traffic, Pornography from the Point of View of History, Ethics, Hygiene and Law) (Warsaw, 1938, 2nd edition). Ch. 5. There is also material in W. Zaleski, *Prostitution in Warsaw*, Ch. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Uebersetzung aus dem Buche 'Lupanar', published as an appendix in *U.O.B.B., Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*. The Hamburg-based B'nai B'rith Committee Against White Slavery obtained from Brazil the book by Ferreiro de Rosa, *O Lupanar* (The Bordello: A Study of Procuring and Prostitution in Rio de Janeiro). Gustav

According to authorities at Rio it was this group which opened up the traffic to Brazil. Some of the members, like the Hungarian Adolph Weissmann, were already well-known to police on the continent. One of the principal figures of the group, Sigmund Reicher, had been expelled from Alexandria with his woman, Vera Zalikoff, had swapped her for another in Buenos Aires, and moved on to Rio, where he took out citizenship, fronted as a trader in jewelry, and lived off a troop of prostitutes.

No less than thirty-nine of these kaften were expelled from Brazil in 1879 for procuring and running illegal brothels. The power and position that some of them had already achieved is demonstrated by the fact that Reicher himself, whose citizenship saved him from being deported, was able to obtain a document from the police chief attesting to his good character. Within a year the brutal Reicher was denounced, again with no result, by Clara Adam; she insisted she had been lured from Germany by his offer of employment as a seamstress, raped during the journey by one of his accomplices, and virtually locked in a brothel, from which she finally escaped in her slip at four o'clock one morning.<sup>9</sup> The thirty-nine deportees, many of them expelled from the Freemasons before sailing, were a typical cross-section of the first generation of Jewish traffickers. In the main they were from Galicia, Romania, Poland, Hungary, England, and Rumelia or Constantinople in Turkey. They were mostly men in their mid-thirties, in their chosen professions perhaps for a decade or so. They were herded on board ships and delivered back to Europe, a development that was duly discussed in the anti-semitic press, which now began its sixty years of coverage on the subject.<sup>10</sup>

Their careers were just beginning and we can trace some of these resourceful characters for another quarter century. Hersch

Tuch, the Committee chairman, translated and abridged the book and saw to its publication in German. That Gilberto Freyre used the same source in his *Order and Progress* (New York, 1970), adds even more to the credibility of the source, hereafter cited as 'Lupantar'.

<sup>9</sup> 'Lupantar', pp. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> 'Lupantar', p. 5. Undated document about the deportation of Brazilian procurers, Adolph Bernstein and Hermann Gottlieb files, 1873-80, VPA. Shrank, *Mädchenhandel*, pp. 133-4. The Anti-semitic report is in Otto Glagau's *Kulturkämpfer* 3 (1880), often cited by later anti-semites. For example, Alexander Berg, *Juden-Bordelle* (Berlin, 1892), pp. 13-16; T. Fritsch, *Das Rätsel des Jüdischen Erfolges* (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 239-40.

Gottlieb was back at work soon after arriving at his native Tarnopol. Gottlieb was well-known as a trafficker in this important Galician centre of Jewish culture, where for years he had been in the habit of returning every six months or so to enjoy his newfound wealth and to find fresh recruits. In 1880 a Jewish police agent noticed an unusually beautiful and elegantly dressed young Jewess alone in a popular guesthouse restaurant and discovered that she was due to leave for Buenos Aires the following day with Gottlieb. The departure took place as planned.<sup>11</sup>

Many of Gottlieb's friends filtered back to Brazil. Israel Klopfer, from Czernowitz, returned to Rio de Janeiro after a spell in Buenos Aires and was nearly named flagbearer to the national guard. Having the beautiful Anita Rubinstein in his employ was a great aid to his social climbing. At her brothel 'there were frequent and continuous meetings of federal deputies, wealthy businessmen, and top-flight lawyers, journalists, and military men.'<sup>12</sup> Klopfer's undoing was to fall foul of another pimp and a jealous prostitute who denounced him in 1895. Following a prison sentence in Brazil we last hear of him in 1904 one step ahead of the Alexandria police, fleeing to Marseilles. Other deportees like Marcus Weinblatt, another Romanian, settled in Buenos Aires. The British police caught up with Weinblatt in 1896 and he was convicted in Liverpool for procuring two Galician peasants for Argentina with promises of employment there in domestic service.<sup>13</sup>

Complaints about the traffickers' colony in Buenos Aires began reaching Europe in the 1880s. In 1888 an alarmed correspondent in Buenos Aires wrote to London's Anglo-Jewish Association about the 'immoral practices committed in this city by Jewish immigrants from Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Rumania'. In the following year there were reports of some 200, mostly Polish, pimps at work there; and even if there were only half that number they must surely have been conspicuous,

<sup>11</sup> 16 December 1880, report of Bernhard Reinfeld, agent from Przmysl, in Herman Gottlieb file, 1873-80, VPA.

<sup>12</sup> Freyre, *Order and Progress*, p. 61. Also on Klopfer, 'Lupanar', pp. 19-22; Szarvasy, Austrian Consul General, Alexandria to Junius von Puscariu, 24 March 1904, 1905/1 VPA.

<sup>13</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 27, 31 March 1896; JAGM, 31 May 1896.



since the entire Jewish population at the time was very modest, perhaps 1000.<sup>14</sup>

These unclean ones were in place when the rapid immigration into Argentina began in about 1890 and they were even present to greet the first agricultural pioneers who arrived under the sponsorship of the Baron de Hirsch Fund. Baron Maurice de Hirsch, son and grandson of Bavarian court bankers and great railway entrepreneur in his own right, decided that the way to resolve the Jews' economic dilemma and to bring order to their chaotic flight from Russian persecution was to settle them on the land. In 1891 he established the Jewish Colonization Association, ICA, to organise this massive resettlement and he ultimately endowed it with the princely sum of \$50 million. ICA agents bought up hundreds of thousands of acres in Argentina and planned on settling millions of Jews there.<sup>15</sup>

While in the long run the ICA colonies managed to settle some 40,000 pioneers in Argentina and elsewhere, the early ventures on the pampas went very badly wrong. When the first settlers arrived in 1891 their colonies were not even completed and many had trouble adjusting to the rigours of the climate and to the hardship of agricultural toil on virgin land.

Mordchai Alpersohn, one of those pioneers, described his arrival at Buenos Aires in 1891 and very early introduction to the unclean ones: 'Near the gates of the immigration house we met a few dozen elegantly dressed women and fat men in top hats. Through the gates they were talking with our wives and gave children chocolates and candy.'<sup>16</sup> The Baron de Hirsch representative arrived and told the new arrivals not to fear the impure ones outside the gate, but warned them not to let their families into that street. Unfortunately, the settlements were not quite ready and at hearing this the characters outside the gates took out their silk handkerchiefs and started crying for the sorry plight of the immigrants. They even convinced a few families to go with them. On the following day ICA decided

<sup>14</sup> Letter from David Hassan cited in Anglo-Jewish Association. Council Minute Book, vol. 2, 4 November 1888. See also 20, 27 November 1888 and 26 February, 26 March 1889. Mocatta Library, University College London. *Bulletin Continental*, October 1889. *Vigilance Record*, May 1890.

<sup>15</sup> Sachar, *Jewish History*, pp. 510-11; Dubnow, *History*, vol. 2, pp. 414-22.

<sup>16</sup> Mordchai Alpersohn, *Dreissig Jahren in Argentina* (Yiddish: Thirty Years in Argentina), vol. 1 (Berlin, 1923), Ch. 2.



to move the new arrivals from the capital to makeshift huts at their colonies in order to get them away from the vicious influences of Buenos Aires.

In these difficult early years, as many colonists drifted off the land into the capital, some inevitably got caught up in the economy of commercial vice. Alpersohn suggests in a thinly veiled novel that some of the pioneers wound up earning their livelihoods by selling wares of one kind or another to the city's brothels, while remaining outside the criminal subculture and continuing to be good Jews. The same thing apparently happened to groups of unlucky settlers who arrived unofficially shortly before the Baron de Hirsch people, only to discover that they had been swindled and had no colonies at all. As Alpersohn was told, 'If they themselves are not brothelkeepers now they are the functionaries ... and their women are the cooks and the maids of the brothels.'<sup>17</sup>

The particularly tragic case of Anna Trachman shows how ill fortune could force people with nowhere else to turn into one of the few developed sectors of the economy. Henry Joseph, acting rabbi at Buenos Aires, wrote to the AIU in 1892,

In the Province of Santa Fe in this Republic resided a Jewish family by name of Trachman engaged in agricultural pursuits, happy and prosperous, but in one night, all was misery, for two villains forcibly entered this home, murdered the husband, and robbed the family of all they possessed, the wife and mother was relieved and for a time all was well, but I regret to say the woman has taken the most disgraceful means to obtain a livelihood and keeps a house of ill fame in this city. She has a little girl at school in Paris, and forwarded by some man money to defray the child's expenses, but again was robbed ...<sup>18</sup>

Most of the participants in commercial vice arrived in the much larger private flow of migrants and had nothing to do with the ICA pioneers. Is there any way to measure how many individuals were involved in commercial vice? For the numbers of prostitutes at Buenos Aires we can extrapolate some meaningful figures. For 1911 the Buenos Aires Jewish Association

<sup>17</sup> Alpersohn, *Oif Argentinier Erd* (Yiddish: On Argentine Ground) (Buenos Aires, 1931), p. 100; *Dreissig Jahren*, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Henry Joseph to Jacques Bigart, Secretary, 21 August 1892, Argentina B.AI.U.

reported that 258 Jewesses had been registered for the city's brothels. We can be confident that is accurate because none other than the trusted Mr Alfred Gelfy, one of the workers for this defence league, was employed by the municipality at the dispensary to do the actual inscriptions. He had some luck keeping girls under age from going into licensed houses, but only at the risk of fights with their pimps.<sup>19</sup>

Those 258 women represented about 80 per cent of the total number of prostitutes for 1911 inscribed from Russia, Romania, and Austria-Hungary. Applying that 80 per cent factor to the national totals that we know about for 1889-1901, it turns out that 1964 out of the 6414 total registrations for those years would be Jewish, that is, about 155 per year or 30 per cent of the total. At the same time the French total was only 9 per cent. Applying the same 80 per cent figure for 1910 to 1913, where we also have national data, it turns out that an average of 261 Jews registered annually. By that time, however, the French had assumed the leadership, by 21 per cent to 20 per cent of the total registered. Estimating for 1902-9 is more uncertain. But assuming the same average of 155 registrations for these years when in fact immigration was increasing heavily, we reach a total of 4248 Jewesses registered for licensed brothels at Buenos Aires in the quarter-century 1889-1913.<sup>20</sup>

Several points should be made. First of all, prostitution in Buenos Aires was never a purely Jewish nor even a mostly Jewish business. The well-organised French, who catered for the most part to a better-off clientele, took over first place before the war and the Italians came quickly into third place.<sup>21</sup> Still, the figure 4248 reflects only the licensed sector. What of the provinces and nearby Montevideo, and what of Brazil, where the government was so lax in supervising prostitutes that it kept no statistics before the war?

<sup>19</sup> The data in 6 July 1912, ICA vol. 1. On the registrations at the dispensary, Cohen, *Visit to South America* (1913), p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> The national figures for registrations between 1889 and 1901 are in Hoffman, *Froyenhandel*, p. 17. The national figures for 1910-23 are in League of Nations, *Report of the Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Woman and Children*, Part 2 (1927), 19 Table B. Romania is not included separately in the first series, but rather is subsumed under 'other countries'. Based on the very modest number of Romanians in the second series, the annual figure for this country, 1889-1901, is assumed to be six.

<sup>21</sup> On the different clienteles, Albert Londres, *Road to Buenos Ayres* (New York, 1928).

For the whole region in this quarter-century it seems likely that something like 9000 Jewish women came to practise prostitution. When measuring this total against the Jewish population of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, which was less than 60,000 in 1910, one should keep in mind that many of these women had already died, acquired enough capital to give up the life, or departed for other stations along the international vice circuit. At the height of this movement before the First World War how many Jewish women practised prostitution in Buenos Aires, the mecca of their world? In 1909 some 265 of them were registered in the city's brothels. But a little later the Jewish Association reported,

There is obviously no way of ascertaining the numbers of Jewish girls who went willingly or who were inveigled into the numerous secret houses of prostitution ... Judging from our experience we fear that the numbers of such girls must largely exceed those of the inscribed girls.<sup>22</sup>

As for the commercial end of the industry, the Jews were at least the equals of the French. Before the war they ran about half of the 200 or so licensed houses in Buenos Aires and their procurers numbered in the hundreds.<sup>23</sup> Consider the remarkable temporary exodus of 1913, occasioned by the first Argentine law that gave police real powers against the procurers. It was due to go into effect on 1 October 1913 after a delay of fifty days. The authorities made known to the traffickers that anyone arrested after the grace period would be subject to a three-year sentence.

The *Buenos Aires Herald* reported that '2,000 procurers, mostly Russian and Polish, left the capital as if fleeing from an earthquake.'<sup>24</sup> While we cannot take the number at face value, there are traces of hundreds of these characters abandoning Argentina like rats fleeing a sinking ship. Acting in co-operation with their neighbours, the maritime authorities at Rio were said to have prevented over 1,000 known traffickers from landing in

<sup>22</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), 33; 6 July 1912, ICA vol. I.

<sup>23</sup> 102 of 199 brothels in 1909 and 98 of 204 in 1911, according to the sources cited in the previous note.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in *Vigilance Record*, November 1913.

1913. The police at Marseilles, where a few score of suspects filtered through on their way to Odessa, Salonika, Constantinople, Smyrna, and Warsaw, wrote that 'These measures frightened the traffickers, who at that moment, left Buenos Aires in troops. German ships had carried up to 250 of them at a time.'<sup>25</sup>

At Warsaw the return of this horde of natives coincided with an infrequent attempt by the police medical committee to fight prostitution and VD. In October 1913 the authorities besieged Lea Grunstein's cafe on Krolewska Street in the city centre and it took the police vans most of the night to haul off the 90 suspects to jail.

Caught in the haul was the local anchor of the overseas traffic, none other than Shilem Letzki, as well as many of the principal operators from Buenos Aires like Zacharias Zytynski, later president of the Zwi Migdal Society, the celebrated pimps' fraternity. One account of the roundup insists that the new arrivals had so dislocated the market with their limitless funds for buying up all merchandise that local pimps had tipped off the police. Later a Polish writer recalled seeing the unusual mob in jail and thinking at first that they must be Bundists.<sup>26</sup>

Neither the Russian nor Argentine authorities could be counted on to do their duty in a sustained way, however, and the 1913 law which had sent ripples around the world was found to have gaps. The pimps returned and rebuilt their numbers. When the authorities in 1930 finally routed the Zwi Migdal Society they knew of over 400 members. At the same time the Polish authorities had a little black book that listed

<sup>25</sup> W. R. O'Sullivan-Beaure, Consul General, Rio, to Sir Edward Grey, 17 July 1914, FO 369/677, PRO. Reports of Special Commissioner Marseilles, 3 November 1913, 17 March 1914, MA. Also reports from Marseilles on some earlier expulsions and the 1913 movements, 30 October, 2, 13 November, F7 14853, AN.

<sup>26</sup> On the arrests, *Kurier Poranny* (Morning Courier), 25, 29 October, 9 November 1913; *Neues Wiener Journal*, 10 November 1913; 'Angehaltene Mädchenhandler in Warschau', 21 May 1914, Czernowitz, 1914/5, VPA; 13 January 1915 meeting of German National Committee, SP. On the Warsaw cleanup generally, 'Prostitution', T. Heenan, Consul, to Secretary of State, 17 November 1913, 861. 1151 (M316-86), USDS. Finally, Adam Pragier, *Czas Przeszły Dokonany* (Memoirs) (London, 1966), pp. 99-100.

some 590 suspects involved in the Argentina traffic.<sup>27</sup> Judging from the numbers mentioned in this array of evidence, the term 'second Jewish world' is well chosen. Who were these people and where did they come from?

Young people of all kinds were attracted to the easy money available in South America. There are occasional instances of well-off youths turning to the traffic, for example the rich son of an industrialist from Thorn in western Poland. There was even a story in Buenos Aires that the two wayward sons of a rabbi had become well-established pimps there. Their elderly father joined them in the 1920s and died shortly after discovering what they had been doing. The son's request that he be buried in the normal community cemetery was turned down when the boys insisted on attending the funeral. The ban against the second Jewish world was ironclad and the poor rabbi was interred with the unclean ones.<sup>28</sup>

We have also seen that sheer bad luck sometimes pushed people into commercial vice. Early settlers unable to endure the hardships of breaking ground in an undeveloped land drifted to the capital and got caught in the thriving brothel economy. Or, as we shall continue to emphasise, innocents in the old country might be lured to South America by offers of employment or marriage. By and large, however, the biggest portion of the second world consisted of lumpen elements from the ghettos of Europe either with previous criminal records or some experience in prostitution. Some of these people drifted in and out of Argentina as chance and opportunity dictated. After all, it was the most popular stop on the worldwide vice circuit.

There was a particularly active two-way link with Constantinople. For example, in 1911 Bercia Bleiberg and his wife Gusta moved from Czernowitz to the Turkish capital, where Gusta went into a Galata brothel while he worked as a part-time

<sup>27</sup> Julio Alsogaray, *Trilogía de la Trata de Blancas. Rufianes-Policia-Municipalidad*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Ayres, n.d.), p. 176. The author was a courageous police participant in the 1930 investigation. The little black book is titled 'Skorowidz osob Podojrzaných Referat Policji Kobiecej' (List of Suspects) 1931. There are about 1380 names in all relating to every kind of morals offense. Some 590 are associated with Zwi Migdal. National Police file 156, AAN.

<sup>28</sup> 'Report of Polish National Committee, 1 January 1932-31 December 1933', 24, case of Israel Greenberg, Ministry of Social Welfare file 188, AAN. Shoskes, *Mit Yidn*, story told to him by Mr Galiczki.



housepainter and part-time pimp. By 1911 the couple decided to try Buenos Aires, but they returned after two months, Bercia apparently not liking the climate. Among their friends at Czernowitz was another couple, Kune Gross and his Romanian wife, Nessie Wechsler. In 1907 they went directly to Buenos Aires, where Nessie joined the brothel of another Czernowitz native, Baruch Blum, and Kune opened a delicatessen. She became ill and he disliked South America; but by 1910 they had acquired enough capital to move to Constantinople and pay 36,000 Kronen for Gusta Farer's brothel at 47 Synagogue Street, Galata.<sup>29</sup>

Some came from even farther afield. Mottl Kerner met Friede Willinsberg in Harbin, Manchuria, where they were both profiting from the opportunities created by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. After a stay in Shanghai they journeyed to Buenos Aires in 1908, where Friede stayed in a brothel for five years before they returned to Europe.<sup>30</sup> In addition to these more or less stable if peripatetic couples, all of whom had gone through the '*stillah chuppah*', some very dangerous criminals were attracted to Buenos Aires and many settled there. Some came from South Africa after the terrible Joe Silver gang was finally broken up. Many came directly from Poland and maintained links with the underworld there.

The family element was very prevalent. Consider for example two extended families based in Argentina and alleged to have business links with none other than Shilem Letzki, King Shilem I of Warsaw. First the Cohens: the mother, a trafficker who frequented the spas of Europe; two sons, Herman and Itzi Meyer, both traffickers and brothelkeepers; two daughters, both thieves, one a trafficker and the other, later known as 'Ema the Millionaire', a remarkably successful brothel-keeper who parlayed her savings into a money-lending business for the Buenos Aires underworld. And Emma herself, with her husband, headed a related family of criminals. Then the Rosenbergs: matriarch Lime, still in Warsaw, along with her daughter and son-in-law sending girls to Argentina; at the receiving end the sons Solomon and Schmiel Rosenberg,

<sup>29</sup> Gross, Wechsler, 1907/2; Blum, Wechsler, Neger, Langberg, 1912/2, VPA.

<sup>30</sup> Mottl Russ, 1914/5, VPA.

brothelkeepers, traffickers, and thieves well-known in the old country.<sup>31</sup>

And these two connections just scrape the surface of the family-centred vice industry that migrated to the new world. Mention could be made of the Goldenbergs, mother and three sons; the three Springfeder brothers of Warsaw; the three Goldstein brothers; Jacob Zabladovitch and his three sons.<sup>32</sup> All were notorious traffickers or brothelkeepers with a stake at Buenos Aires, and the list could be extended to the point of tedium.

By the 1880s the unclean ones had buried their first dead and organised their own unofficial organisation.<sup>33</sup> When the local *Chebra Kaddisha*, or burial society, was established in 1894 to administer the Ashkenazi cemetery, the unclean were excluded from it. Thus began a heroic forty-year struggle by the honest Jews of the city to exclude the pimps. In the short run, however, this exclusion simply forced the ruffians to establish their own institutions. They acquired a cemetery in 1900 and six years later the Poles amongst them obtained a charter for their Warsaw Society, which on the surface sounded much like other immigrants' groups for mutual sickness and burial assistance. However, in 1927 the Polish Ambassador objected to the name of this notorious institution and Warsaw Society was altered to Zwi Migdal Society, apparently in commemoration of one of its early members.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Based on information received by Vienna police from Herlich Sterling, 25 June 1912 and n.d., and on police minutes attached, 1912/2, VPA. Most of these individuals were well-known in Buenos Aires and as we shall see, a number of them were arrested in 1930.

<sup>32</sup> On the Goldenbergs: 'Record of Work Done', Buenos Ayres Jewish Society for the Protection of Girls and Women, 4 March 1904, in 20 May 1905 ICA, vol. 1. On the Springfeder, below and Tony Kellen, *Weibliches Sklaventum in Neuerer Zeit* (Leipzig, 1894). On the Goldsteins, information from Professor Charles Van Onselen. On Zabladovitch, who married Ema the Millionaire, see note 30 above. It is unclear whether she was the mother of any of the sons.

<sup>33</sup> Shoskes, *Mit Yidn*, describes tombs dating from the 1880s. In 1927 the president of Zwi Migdal Society, Zacharias Zytynsky, claimed that the group went back forty years. See the valuable article by Geraldo Brá, 'La Mutual de los Rufianes', *Todo es Historia*, 121 (1977), 81-2.

<sup>34</sup> In addition to Brá's article just cited, a useful source for the history of Zwi Migdal is Alsogoray, *Trilogia, passim*. Of considerable value for piecing together some of the history of the group is the long legal document covering the investigation of 1930, complete with a full list of names and many depositions, in *Gaceta del Foro*, 1 November 1930, pp. 3-23 (4 closely typed columns per page). A copy is in the NVA Collection, and is hereafter cited as *Gaceta*. Also on Zwi Migdal, Victor Mirelmann, 'The Jews of Argentina 1890-1930', Columbia University Ph.D., 1973, pp. 351-7.

The Poles shared the cemetery with another benefit society, the Ashkenazim, who were none other than their less numerous counterparts from Russia and Romania. Therefore Buenos Aires had room for two Jewish societies involved with commercial vice. The Zwi Migdal, as we shall call the Poles from the beginning, and the Ashkenazim did more than bury their dead members; they provided them with important professional services while they were alive. Before describing the second Jewish world that they created, however, we shall go back to the beginning, to the return of the South American procurers to Europe, their quest for fresh females and their journey back to the new world.

### *Fresh Goods From Europe*

In 1903 the Hamburg-Jewish Committee Against White Slavery lamented that 'the white-slave traffickers are in close contact in all parts of the world, in great cities as in small villages ... in order to benefit fully from the techniques of the traffic and the advantages of combination.'<sup>35</sup> Especially before 1914 the advantages of the international traffickers were indeed substantial. They had the steamship and the railway to move women quickly and the telegraph to help dispatch them efficiently. With the exception of Britain and Germany, the police were corrupt or compliant to varying degrees everywhere.

Furthermore, before the international reform movement began making headway after 1900, only in a handful of nations was it illegal to procure a consenting adult for prostitution at home or abroad. And legal loopholes abounded, even in England. One morning in October 1901 Arthur Moro and Rabbi Friedlander of the Jewish Association called to see William Coote about Mordka and Rachel Sacharnyi, two traffickers from near Kiev who were known to be scheduled to leave Waterloo Station that evening with two innocent girls whom they were taking from Odessa to Buenos Aires. Everyone realised that no legal steps could be taken because British law required the sworn complaint of the victims. Moro was ready to give up, but Coote was more stubborn in these matters.

<sup>35</sup> *Die Ursachen des Galizischen Mädchenhandels und ihre Bekämpfung. Jüdischen (U.O.B.B.) Zweigkomitees des Deutschen Nationalkomitees zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels* (1903), p. 7. Hereafter cited as U.O.B.B., *Ursachen des Galizischen Mädchenhandels*.

He proceeded to the station and with the help of a translator supplied by the Jewish Association, stopped the party and took them all to Scotland Yard. All that Coote earned, however, was a reprimand from the magistrate next morning who freed the Sacharnyis.<sup>36</sup>

In the circumstances international procurers might be tracked but were infrequently arrested, and when convicted they were usually sentenced lightly. Some returned to Europe from South America three or four times a year, year after year, and while there were always new young men for the work of seduction, the active careers of some of the leading traffickers spanned decades.

Adolf Dickenfaden, another contestant for the title 'King of the White-Slave Traffickers', left Warsaw as a young man in 1885 and established himself in Buenos Aires where he settled down with Sara Dzigan, a brothelkeeper. He remained active until his death in 1927, supervising in the field the work of his many subordinates. With black hair and handlebar moustache, described as looking like a Persian Jew, Dickenfaden was the quintessential ponce. He was universally known as Napoleon. Sighted over and over again and expelled on at least one occasion from Austria, he seems always to have evaded conviction.<sup>37</sup> Dickenfaden's forty-two years may be unusually long, but those of some of his agents also spanned the years. Abraham Silberstein, at work in the 1900s, was still going strong in 1928 when he was convicted in Warsaw of procuring a girl for Brazil.<sup>38</sup>

How was the international movement of women organized? Sometimes overseas visitors procured women themselves, like Spiegelglas in provincial Galicia or Meyrowitz in Poland. Marcus Braun reported that overseas procurers used Warsaw

<sup>36</sup> NVA Executive Minutes, 28 October, 26 November 1901. JA, Minutes of the Council, 11 February 1902, JWB. Also Stanislaus Posner, *Nad Otchlania* (Over the Abyss) (Warsaw, 1903). In the following year the couple were arrested at Bremen. *Traite des Blanches*, April 1902.

<sup>37</sup> On Dickenfaden, his file in 1912/2, VPA; Halina Siemienska, *Stan Walki Z Nierzadem* (The Struggle Against Fornication) (Warsaw, 1933), pp. 15-16, in Ministry of the Interior file 241, AAN, where he is called king of the traffickers. Also, *Bulletin Continental*, June 1908. *Fifth International Congress for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic* (London, 1913), p. 282. On Sara Dzigan, *Gaceta*, p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> Abram Silberstein, 1908/1, VPA. Siemienska, *Stan Walki*, pp. 15-16, 10 May 1924, ICA, vol. 2.



as a base 'and from that city they make their excursion trips into smaller places of Russian Poland, Lithuania, and Russia proper to procure their wares.'<sup>39</sup> There was also a division of labour through which these wares were supplied for them by local agents.

In his *Mottke the Thief* Sholem Asch has a marvellously evocative scene located in the upstairs rooms of Yankele's barbershop in Warsaw's Old Town. There, guarded by the police to make sure their negotiations were not disturbed, the major local pimps like Mottke and their overseas guests, in this case a rich mother and son, did business. The visitors 'talked a sort of Spanish-Jewish dialect, mixed with Turkish phrases and expressions drawn from every conceivable European language.'

Was this really traffic in slaves? Asch continues,

the words 'Buenos Aires' and the 'Argentine' are for these girls surrounded with the gloriole of legend. There in Buenos Aires, girls were free, made lots of money from the 'blacks', and then acquired a husband and themselves became proprietresses of establishments ... when the dealers came from Buenos Aires to replenish their stock the Old Town held high holiday.

While this does less than justice to the minority of girls and women who were actually shanghaied, it was at gatherings like this that the fate of many of the participants was decided. As far as Poland is concerned, overseas wholesalers sometimes went right to Warsaw, and there before the war Shilem Letzki seems to have played a central role in the traffic. But it was also commonplace for these merchants to use the Polish towns near the western border for their transactions.

In 1899 the Russian, Austrian, and German police worked together to break up a series of gangs who used the Polish towns of Bedzin and Soznowitz as meeting points for local agents and wholesalers from South America. These places were just inside Russia at the corner of the three empires, a very popular staging area for white slavers about to set out for

<sup>39</sup> Braun, 'Report'.



Buenos Aires.<sup>40</sup> Some years later, in 1913, the Polish authorities claimed to have discovered that traffickers from America convened annually for a kind of major trade fair. That year the meeting was held away from police scrutiny at Rokiciny, on the railway to the west of Warsaw within easy reach of the German border. Before the police raided the scene, it was alleged that one procurer from Brazil had already embarked with twenty-six girls, all between the ages of fourteen and twenty, sold to him by local agents. He had paid a bribe of 100 Marks to get them over the border and had gone on to Hamburg where the party set sail for the new world.<sup>41</sup>

On the face of it the story is not improbable. Traffickers occasionally did move females around in batches. In November 1911 the Hamburg police reported that three traffickers had sailed on the SS *Cap Vilano* for Buenos Aires with some fifty women. It was impossible to stop them because they were all over twenty years old and aware of their fate.<sup>42</sup>

For those transports starting out from behind the Russian frontier, from places like Bedzin, Soznowitz, or Rokiciny, the obstacle of the border had to be negotiated. On occasion this was a real headache for the white slavers, perhaps their major obstacle, though they managed more easily than the Russian emigrants at large. It is a curious historical irony that even before the Russian Revolution Jews had trouble obtaining Russian passports. In principle the Czars no more than the commissars recognised the right of emigration. It was possible to coax passports from the corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, but only at high cost and after considerable delay. Most emigrants got around the problem by arranging to be smuggled over the border into Germany or Austria-Hungary. Ticket agents fixed this for a small sum, calling on the services of

<sup>40</sup> On the related cases, *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 20 July 1899. *Reichsbote*, 16 September 1899 in Appendix of newspaper articles, U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*. *Bulletin Continental*, December 1899, citing *Corriere della Sera*. *Hamburger Echo*, 20 July 1899. Shrank, *Mädchenhandel*, citing *Neues Wiener Journal*, 19 July 1902. Posner, *Nad Otchlania*.

<sup>41</sup> Folios 60-2, SH *Der Jüdische Frauenbund. Mitteilungen*, January 1914. *Traite des Blanchés*, December 1913.

<sup>42</sup> Politische Polizei, SA 1890, police report of 19 November 1912, with cutting on Ninth Conference of German National Committee, SH.

Jewish or peasant smugglers who lived in the border regions, or arranging for the Russian border guards to be bribed.

Migrants drawn into this illegal though officially sanctioned system of emigration were at some risk. Russian border guards responsible for not letting them pass without proper documents might for some perverse reason do their duty. In 1907 ICA reported that when Russian border guards intercepted a party of Jews trying to cross into Austria, two women were killed when they fell off a cliff while trying to escape. The more common risk was falling into the hands of some of the more unscrupulous unofficial shipping agents, smugglers, or border peasants. Then the dangers ranged from being defrauded of one's money by being overcharged for tickets, to having one's baggage stolen, to outright murder.<sup>43</sup>

Especially in the very busy corner of the three empires some of the border Jews were in league with the traffickers. Why not? It was both very profitable and a blessing to help get Jews out of Russia. The police chief at Kattowitz on the German side of the border stated in 1908, 'Only if we could succeed in winning over confidential agents among the Jewish border people, could the traffic be suppressed. But the white-slave traffickers pay very well and would therefore seem to be safe from denunciations by private persons'.<sup>44</sup> The Germans and occasionally the Austrians were more efficient and purposeful than the Russians at stopping the traffickers. They had no love for the *Ostjuden* who were crossing their territory on the way to the new world, or even filtering in to settle, and they were among the first nations to sign the pre-1914 international conventions against white slavery. From the police work of the Germans and Austrians comes some of our most interesting intelligence about the Jewish traffic, especially at the Russian borders.

In 1910 for example, the Austrians received a tip that Abraham Silverstein, the very busy Russian who later went to work for 'Napolean' Dickenfaden, was being brought across

<sup>43</sup> ICA Comité Central de St. Petersburg. *Rapport Annuel* (1902), vol. 2. Zosa Szajkowski, 'Sufferings of Jewish Emigrants to America in Transit Through Germany', *Jewish Social Studies* XXXIX (1977), 105-15.

<sup>44</sup> Cited by Treschow, 'Report'.

the border on foot along with two helpers and two prostitutes, on the way to Genoa to catch a ship for Buenos Aires. They were arrested at the frontier town of Szackowa, and the women, one from Warsaw and the other from Zelichow, had planned carefully for the long journey. With their laundry they were carrying bread, cheese, and four pounds of chicken fat. The Silberstein connection, based at Petrikau in western Poland, was broken up.<sup>45</sup>

It was the Austrians too whose enquiries, after stopping a transport crossing near Cormons in 1898, led to the unravelling of the major operation centred at Bedzin and Soznowitz, mentioned a moment ago. For years it had been the practice to take women across the frontier to the German city of Kattowitz, where the Café Komeran was known to be the procurers' headquarters. From there, rail connections were excellent to Genoa or Hamburg. The Russians arrested a dozen suspects and at least three were convicted. They were Moses Hendler and Isaac Benkowitz, brothelkeepers in Bedzin and Soznowitz, and also Chana Pickarczk, who was notorious in Warsaw for her newspaper advertisements that offered shop assistants and dressmakers attractive jobs overseas.<sup>46</sup>

With the police in all three nations on the alert, Israel Meyrowitz arrived on the scene in 1900 and again fell into a trap.<sup>47</sup> Meyrowitz had been keeping busy since being banished from Germany after finishing his three-year sentence for procuring in 1892. Back in Buenos Aires he had taken up with several women and made repeated trips back to Kattowitz, where he posed as a coffee planter. In fact he used the services of one expert smuggler, Shize Zauser of Soznowitz, to get him into and then out of Poland with his women. Zauser was notorious along the border because of his dealings with the traffickers.

In 1900 with his normal contacts like Moses Hendler in gaol or being investigated, Meyrowitz put into effect a particularly ruthless plan. In Skierniewice, Lodz province, there lived Yankl Berger, the brother of one of Meyrowitz's former

<sup>45</sup> Abram Silberstein file, 1908/1, VPA.

<sup>46</sup> See n. 40, above.

<sup>47</sup> Folios 6-32, SH.

women, and Yankl's niece, the seventeen-year-old Gitel Turteltaub. Berger had been in league with Meyrowitz for years and now they arranged that he would deliver up Gitel. For her part, the girl had been abandoned by her husband and she was hoping that Meyrowitz would be able to reunite them in Paris.

The rendezvous was arranged for the Hotel Silliger, in Oswiecim of all places, better known as Auschwitz and at the time inside Austrian Galicia. The hotel was a den of traffickers and was being watched by the police who arrested the infamous Meyrowitz the moment he arrived, even before Berger and Gitel entered the picture. Meyrowitz was extradited to Germany where he was convicted and sentenced to two and one-half years imprisonment for attempted procuring.

The lesson of all this is that police vigilance at the corner of the three empires could sometimes prove the traffickers' undoing. In the winter of 1903/4, Galician traffickers responded to stepped-up German police activity by temporarily abandoning the route through Silesia. But they were soon back and for every conviction scores of incidents took place. At the southern end of the border at Myslowitz the police investigated eighty suspected cases of white slavery between 1894 and 1914 but obtained only four convictions.<sup>48</sup>

One of those convicted was Samuel Lubelski, known locally as 'King of the border, king of the white slave traffickers, king of the agents'. Lubelski was one of those unsavoury unofficial travel agents of whom we spoke a moment ago and his trial in 1914 was the most sensational of its kind in Germany, rivalled in notoriety only by the Lemberg trial of 1892.

In 1906 the Germans opened at Myslowitz a major control station for transmigrants going onto the Baltic ports. Following the cholera epidemic at Hamburg in 1894 the authorities became much stricter in their handling of travellers. It was unlawful for any emigrant to enter Prussia without being inspected and disinfected at one of the dozen emigrant control stations. Myslowitz was one of the busiest, with a flow of migrants from nearby Austria as well as from Russia. The great Hamburg-

<sup>48</sup> Shidlof, *Mädchenhandel*, pp. 92-3. *Preussischen Haus der Abgeordneten*, 20 February 1914, vol. 2599, Herr Leinert.



America Steamship Company was the main beneficiary of this business and its local agent was Max Weichmann, whose travel agency sent on to the port thousands of voyagers each year. Weichmann had made a fortune and was a powerful figure in the city. Not only did he contribute widely to charity, he maintained an open charge account at the bar of the Hotel International for his police friends.<sup>49</sup>

One of Weichmann's employees was Samuel Lubelski, a notorious trafficker with an equally notorious brother, Moszek, who ran a brothel in Buenos Aires. Lubelski was an excellent subagent, directing a heavy flow of business through the Weichmann firm, including dozens of prostitutes. Weichmann must have known it and the police tolerated it, refusing Russian and Austrian requests to extradite Lubelski and even permitting his brother Moszek, who had been banished from Germany, to visit Myslowitz undisturbed.

Following repeated denunciations over a four-year period, including several by members of the local Jewish community, one stubborn borderguard, Halemba, created such a stir that finally in February 1914 Lubelski was put on trial at Beuthen. The proceedings were sensational. The chief witness, Goldberg, admitted to smuggling emigrants over the border to Lubelski, but he refused to name other traffickers for fear of death. Three other witnesses described how once or twice a week, usually late at night, pretty girls were separated from the rest of the tired travellers and, with the help of Lubelski's nephew, brought to Cohn's lodging house where Lubelski himself lived. They were locked in and only later taken to the Emigration Hall. Furthermore, there were accusations of massive police corruption and deep suspicions that Max Weichmann was behind the whole thing. The court convicted Lubelski of white slavery and violating the emigration laws and sentenced him to nine years' imprisonment. Weichmann, who had been detained and released during the trial, was now under intense investigation,

<sup>49</sup> On the Lubelski case, cuttings and documents in folios 63-75, SH. Centralpolizeistelle zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels, Berlin, an zu Zentralstelle Wien, 20 July, 20 November 1914, 1914/4 VPA. *Correspondenzblatt des Deutschen Nationalkomitees zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, August, November 1914, January 1915. SP. On Albert Ballin and the politics of shipping, Lamar Cecil, *Albert Ballin. Business and Politics in Imperial Germany 1888-1918* (Princeton, 1967).



as was Chief Inspector Madler, one of the powers in the border area.

The Social Democrats picked up this issue and used it in the Prussian Parliament to chastise the police for corruption, for promoting immorality, and for persecuting foreigners. Some of their charges were far from the mark, for example, that the powerful Albert Ballin, head of the Hamburg-America Line, had used his influence to stop the investigation because Weichmann's agency was so profitable. But strange things were going on. Poor borderguard Halemba had been sacked. There were charges that the police had deported one Polish Jew who complained about Lubelski, and innkeeper Cohn insisted that he had been put out of business by a boycott instituted by Weichmann. Furthermore, Cohn charged that Weichmann had tried to ruin his credibility by bringing over seven criminals from Warsaw who were put up to telling the police that Cohn was a trafficker. These allegations against Cohn were not true, for as soon as his suspicions were aroused about Lubelski, he had contacted Rabbi Winter, a leader of the Myslowitz chapter of the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* (Relief Organization of German Jews) and an active opponent of white slavery.

In the end there was only one additional prosecution. One of Lubelski's friends from Bedzin across the border was convicted in 1915 of having attempted to suborn witnesses. But Lubelski's own sentence was reduced to three and one-half years on the grounds that the women whom he was transporting had practised prostitution in Russia and Poland, and that they must have known where they were going. This made him guilty of procuring rather than of white slavery.

It seems transparently obvious that Chief Inspector Madler, who had been around for years in Silesia, had been protecting Lubelski; and Madler was declared to be 'without reproach'. What was afoot? Leinert, a Social Democratic deputy, declared that Lubelski was in the employ of the police as a political spy and this may well have been the case. The affair shows that not only in Russia did traffickers benefit from police protection. Before his arrest Lubelski had shipped some eighty prostitutes to Buenos Aires, not an inconsiderable portion of the total for those four years.

Once clear of the border area the traffickers generally had an easy time of it. They made for one of the major ports offering steamer service to South America. In fact there were characters based at these points of concentration and embarkation who assisted their friends coming through, or who themselves procured. The Hamburg-Jewish Committee Against White Slavery reported that criminals lurked at the Jewish lodges of Hamburg and at the kosher restaurants of Antwerp. The police at Marseilles broke up a gang of eight procurers in 1905, who came from all over eastern Europe and included a Jerusalem native. Jacob Schild had lived at Marseilles for a time and one of his friends there gained access to ships by posing as a vendor of telescopes.<sup>50</sup>

Still, these international travellers had to take care, especially as nations strengthened their laws and special police bureaus, voluntary committees, and travellers' aid outposts were organized. It took careful planning to keep one step ahead of the authorities, especially where women were not professional prostitutes or were under age. If caught in such circumstances there was a good chance of a criminal conviction. When the British authorities became vigilant the procurers transhipped cargo from Le Havre and Marseilles instead. They sent girls alone and had them say they were joining relations in the ICA colonies. They travelled first class to avoid suspicion and had girls travel as sisters on double passports. One procurer was arrested crossing Silesia in a monk's habit with six girls in tow. Two others took a girl from Odessa and dressed her as a boy before they were discovered by the ship's captain. Perhaps the prize for *chutzpah*, nerve, goes to Mrs Golda, who with her man left Odessa with two innocent girls in 1904 and managed to beg her way across to Buenos Aires, having the party pose as victims of the Kishinev massacre and touching Jewish benevolent societies for passage.<sup>51</sup>

When finally on board ship, everyone could relax and enjoy the sea cruise, unless of course this was to be the moment of

<sup>50</sup> U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, p. 53. Report from Paris, 19 May 1910, Jacob Schild file, 1910/1, VPA. Also M6/4817, MA.

<sup>51</sup> 30 June 1906, 24 September 1910, ICA. *JA Report* (1905), pp. 16-17. U.O.B.B. *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, Appendix citing *Berlin Abendpost*, 20 June 1899. *Traite des Blanchés*, January 1908.

truth for those women who had been duped. The Brazilian police reported that 'The Kaftan undertakes a system of planned demoralization on board ship, where he completely changes his language and manner.'<sup>52</sup> They knew of Clara Adam, one of Sigmund Reicher's victims, raped in such circumstances. Or there was Alice Silverman, a cigarette maker from Whitechapel, who was promised a job in New York but was put on a ship to Buenos Aires and assaulted during the voyage. Fortunately she was rescued by Sir Edward Stern, a prominent British Jew who happened to be on board. He saw to it that her assailant was prosecuted and convicted.<sup>53</sup>

In looking back over the road to Buenos Aires there were personal tragedies like those of Alice Silverman and others; and there was actual opportunity awaiting enterprising prostitutes. For the group, however, the use of Germany as the major region of transshipment reinforced the development of anti-semitic prejudice. Already current in Germany was the stereotype of the *Ostjuden* as pushy and infested *Schnorrers* (beggars), leeching off the Germans and spreading disease. Reports of Jewish traffickers from the east did not improve the stereotype and such cases as those of Meyrowitz and Lubelski added up. Between 1882 and 1916 the per capita rate of convictions for procuring in Germany was actually greater among Jews than Christians.<sup>54</sup> Needless to say, the anti-semitic press never missed an incident and the general press gave ample coverage to the subject as well. Meyrowitz and others took their places as bogeymen in the anti-semitic literature that proliferated in Germany.

When charges were made in the Prussian parliament about Jewish immorality following the Lubelski case in 1914, one of the major defence journals could only point out lamely that

<sup>52</sup> 'Lupantar', p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> E. D. Stern to Chief Rabbi Adler, 21 February 1906, in 30 June 1906, ICA vol. 1.

<sup>54</sup> On 1882-1901 and on interpreting the data, Marion Kaplan, 'German-Jewish Feminism: The Jüdischer Frauenbund, 1904-1938', Columbia University Ph.D., 1977, Chapter on white slavery. On 1899-1910, *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*, March-April 1924. Also, Bruno Blau, 'Die Juden als Sexualverbrecher', *Im Deutschen Reich* (February, 1911), pp. 77-81. On the issue of the *Ostjuden*, Jack Wertheimer, "'The Unwanted Element'"—East European Jews in Imperial Germany', *Leo Baeck Year Book XXVI* (1981), pp. 23-39.

there were no traffickers among the German Jews, but 'that this uncontrolled influx of such very shady characters from the ghettos of the East is a very great danger for German Jewry.'<sup>55</sup>

*The 'Second Jewish World'*

What happened to our voyagers from the old world to the new, seekers of fortune and victims of criminal greed? If there was a chance that the police or the occasionally troublesome travellers' aid busybodies would try to intercept them, the procurers and their charges disembarked at Montevideo and completed the short journey to the Argentine capital by small local launch up the River Plate. This last deception made them virtually unstoppable by travellers' aid workers.

Then it was into a brothel. There are persistent reports that the girls were placed in houses after having to endure the humiliation of being stripped and literally put on the auction block. In the 1920s these proceedings were alleged to have taken place at Zytnitsky's restaurant and Brutkevich's beauty parlour, legitimate fronts run by two principal members of Zwi Migdal.<sup>56</sup> Before the war Chil Steimann, who was still around when Zwi Migdal was raided in 1930, was said to be in charge of the auctions. Gabriel Raymann, editor of a local newspaper and the Comstock of Buenos Aires, described the females on auction, where buyers

came to see them, examine them, touch them minutely, because one decayed tooth or one feature deformed by an accident diminished more or less considerably the intrinsic value of the object. Then begins the sale; bids are made and met; Steimann enjoys the benefit of premiums paid in advance by agents particularly interested, and the unhappy girls, like Phrne, exposed nude before this areopagus of vile people who compute in advance the profits of their charms, offer sometimes sums of 300 or 400 pounds sterling.<sup>57</sup>

None of the women themselves ever mentioned this kind of slave auction and it is likely that most of them went directly to a brothel. Many agents recruited for specific houses and it seems

<sup>55</sup> *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Anti-Semitismus*, March 1914.

<sup>56</sup> Brá, 'La Mutual', pp. 82, 86.

<sup>57</sup> Gabriel Raymann, 8 November 1905, in 1907/1, VPA.

to have been the major freelances who sold their wares at Steinmann's, men like Noé Traumann and Marcus Poznansky whom we will hear about in a moment.

That not all the women were reconciled to their fate even after going behind closed doors was demonstrated over and over again by a series of remarkable rescues and escapes in Buenos Aires. One Russian immigrant in England was lured to the Argentine capital in 1911 by her fiancé and immediately locked in a brothel, but not before the poor girl had had taken from her the £7 her widowed mother had given her for a wedding dress. Although the landlady kept her under close watch, she managed after a few days to sneak down from her room, unbolt the front door, rush into the street and attract the attention of a respectable old Jewish man who took her to Rabbi Henry Joseph.<sup>58</sup>

Not all victims got away so quickly. In 1905 Eva Ullmann, a dressmaker working in the East End of London, was taken to Buenos Aires by a woman promising her a better job but actually working for the horrible Hener Kohn, better known as 'Grubby Enoch'. Kohn sold her to another brothelkeeper, Schaffman, and she was able to escape only when led to safety by a sympathetic client.<sup>59</sup>

These incidents were not unusual or infrequent. Shortly after marrying a local woman in Cardiff in 1910, Samuel Vizar, a Polish immigrant, took his new bride to Buenos Aires and sold her to a brothel. By this time Mrs Vizar had given birth to a daughter, and threats against the infant rendered the mother a virtual prisoner. An engineer from a British ship visited the brothel, learned of her situation and told the story to Canon Karney, chaplain to the British Mission of Seamen, who in turn informed the police. With the madam shouting in Yiddish for the English women to be hidden, the authorities raided the house and Mrs Vizar was taken away. As a result of this case the National Vigilance Association in London posted to Buenos Aires a woman travellers' aid worker, who remained at the port for twenty years.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> 18 September 1911, ICA vol. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Gabriel Raymann, 15 October 1905, in 1907/1, VPA.

<sup>60</sup> File 49, Box 116, NVA.



In the 1920s the incidence of such rescues becomes even more frequent, showing perhaps that as economic and social conditions deteriorated desperate girls and women were taking even greater risks to get out of Poland, and showing too that the profits of prostitution were so substantial that procurers were even more willing to recruit innocent victims. One of the key cases that led to the long investigation against Zwi Migdal involved a trapped woman reduced to tying a message to a stone and throwing it from a brothel window.

We know about such cases because they were exceptional and therefore made their way into the files of the police or the anti-white-slavery committees. Most new recruits quietly disappeared from view into the bordellos of South America. For some it was a family reunion, because sisters brought over sisters and mothers occasionally brought over daughters. Sometimes these incidents too were recorded. In 1903 because she was a minor the Buenos Aires Jewish Association was able to stop one Fanny Rosenbaum from joining her sister, Fitle Gordon, who was a brothelkeeper.<sup>61</sup> Between the wars the casebooks of the Jewish Committees in Buenos Aires and Warsaw contained numerous stories of this kind. With most legal avenues of emigration closed off to Jews from Poland, some were willing to join family in Brazil and Argentina despite the fact that these relatives made it clear that they expected the new arrivals to contribute to the family business.

Even where innocent girls found out the truth after landing in America, most probably made the best of it. One such person has left a memoir of her experiences that sheds light in several dark places, especially on the everyday regime of the brothels and on the chances for getting ahead.<sup>62</sup> Esther Jadzikoba lived in Odessa where she had an affair with a wealthy visitor from Argentina, Samuel Feder. He proposed marriage and the family readily accepted. Feder left behind a dowry and in 1906 the couple left for Montevideo, where he suddenly died. She had entered the orbit of Zwi Migdal, however, and was simply inherited by the Society.

<sup>61</sup> 'Record of Work' 9 March 1903, ICA, 20 May 1905 vol. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Francis Korn, *Buenos Aires: los Huéspedes del 20* (1974), pp. 84ff.

None other than Maria Fisher, the celebrated 'Ema the Millionaire' accompanied her to Buenos Aires and explained what was expected. Fisher gave her a new name, Cosia, and broke her in over a three-week period before turning her over to a brothel in the port area. Escape was impossible according to Jadzikoba. The detail she seemed to remember most vividly when she told the story in 1930 was the meagreness of the breakfast, which was served to the inmates at eleven o'clock after a long night's work.

Movement was the name of the game and Jadzikoba relocated many times, spending a particularly unpleasant year in one of the eighty public houses at the provincial city of Rosario, where she was physically abused by the brothelkeeper. Then it was back to a bar in Buenos Aires, where she met three madams and resolved that theirs was the only way out. It took another five years of hard work, during the course of which she had an infant girl whom she gave away, before the Zwi Migdal made her an auxiliary or madam in the city of Ensenada. By 1930 Jadzikoba was able to mark her success with the comment, 'I am in a position to show my lingerie without worry.'

Her story suggests the power and scope of Zwi Migdal. While most of the information that survives about this obscure organization relates to the inter-war period, some of its pre-war history can be retold. The original legal charter was signed on 7 May 1906, just about the time that Esther Jadzikoba was landing in South America. Among the signatories were some of the worst thugs and slavers imaginable, including a number whom we have already run across—Herman Brusky, Abe Springfeder, Noé Traumann, and Marcus Posnanski. Noé Traumann, whose comings and goings were frustratingly logged by the Buenos Aires Jewish Association, was the first president of Zwi Migdal and like many of the other founding members, he was still around at the time of the big roundup in 1930.<sup>63</sup>

As Jadzikoba suggests, the organization did indeed extend to the provinces. At Rosario there were only some 375 to 400 Jewish families at the time, but no shortage of Jewish prostitutes. The same thing could be said about Brazil's provincial cities,

<sup>63</sup> On 1906, Brá, 'La Mutual', p. 76. *Gaceta*, p. 6.

where of course the Zwi Migdal writ did not run. In 1913 Samuel Cohen made a tour of South America and reported the sorry if sketchy details about Sao Paulo, Santos, Bahia, and Pernambuco, all of which harboured shameful colonies similar to those of Rosario.<sup>64</sup>

Zwi Migdal was not quite as all encompassing as Jadzikoba's account suggests. That is to say, there were independent operators and there were also the Ashkenazim, to say nothing of the French, the Italians, and others. The Zwi Migdal octopus increased in strength after the First World War, incorporating many of the independents and achieving an almost unassailable position in which it was reputed by the police to control 1,000 brothels and 3,000 girls.<sup>65</sup> However even before the war it obviously had the police and a range of politicians in its pay. The 1904 regulation that limited brothels in central Buenos Aires to no more than three inmates was at least partly ignored and Zwi Migdal houses were said to contain up to eight girls.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore the Society never assumed the form of a trust, with central ownership and control. Like counterparts elsewhere, Shilem Letzki's gang in Warsaw, the New York Independent Benevolent Association, or the hundreds of individuals who co-operated in commercial vice in Constantinople, Rio, and Philadelphia, the Zwi Migdal was more like a trade association of independent businessmen. Undoubtedly from an early date it enforced discipline among women and settled conflicts between pimps, though details about this exist only for its later history.

What gave the Zwi Migdal the appearance of a monolith was the success of the Jewish community's boycott, a story to be explored more fully in our later treatment of how Jews responded to white slavery. That boycott was implacable and its first result, as we observed, was that curious cemetery shared by all the unclean ones, located at Avallaneda in the southern part of the city. Similar boycotts in Rio de Janeiro,

<sup>64</sup> On Rosario generally, Rabbi Halphon to ICA, 7 May 1908, in 27 June 1908, ICA vol. 1. Cohen, *Visit to South America* (1913).

<sup>65</sup> In the abridged and later French edition of Alsogoray's book, *La Prostitution en Argentine* (Paris, n.d., 1935), p. 95, Bra uses the figure 2,000 brothels.

<sup>66</sup> Gabriel Raymann, 8 November 1905 in 1907/1, VPA.

Sao Paulo, Johannesburg, and New York produced similar arrangements so long as Jewish prostitutes and pimps chose to be interred according to Jewish custom.

Visitors to the cemetery at Avallaneda were usually amazed by the curious combination of lavishness and piousness incorporated in the tombs. In keeping with the South American custom, each gravestone had an enamelled photograph attached. One could study the features of the deceased pimp—fat, homberg, handlebar moustache—and read the incongruous inscription, ‘Our president the important man Reb Alter R-N of Odessa. The grand master of our lodge. In the garden of Eden his soul rests.’ Or, ‘Leah G-N of Jassy, a virtuous woman of much character. I cry in my tragedy that she was taken away so early. Her husband Leopold.’ It was at Avallaneda that the famous author Stephan Zweig said, ‘so much dirt, how much Jewish dirt, where can I get the energy to describe this?’<sup>67</sup> Similar burial grounds in Brazil and elsewhere paled in comparison. They were either small sections of larger Jewish cemeteries, as in New York and Johannesburg, or small sections of Christian ones, as in Sao Paulo.<sup>68</sup>

The Zwi Migdal Society also built its own lavish clubhouse and synagogue. Some accounts attribute this departure to the legendary Luis Migdal, an elegant, bearded pioneer of the Society who judged that religion would keep the women happy.<sup>69</sup> I call Migdal legendary because the actual existence of this shadowy figure is open to doubt. It is true, however, that prostitutes traditionally have been religious. Until the twentieth century, Russian girls prayed to a saint in the hope that they would be protected from VD, pregnancy, and violence. When the client arrived the image or picture was then turned to the wall or covered up.<sup>70</sup>

Jewish women were no exception to the rule and the Buenos Aires synagogue was unique only for its wealth. At Rio in the 1890s Marcus Rosen, who was employed to safeguard prosti-

<sup>67</sup> Shoskes, *Mid Yidn*.

<sup>68</sup> On New York, below, Ch. Five. On Johannesburg, below, Ch. Six. On Sao Paulo, Able Shulman, ‘Unclean Burial Place in Brazil’ in *Jewish Week*, 8 June 1980.

<sup>69</sup> Korn, *Buenos Aires*, p. 85. Also on Migdal, *Yiddishe Tsaitung* (Buenos Aires), 4 March 1930, where he is said to have been from Novidvar, near Warsaw.

<sup>70</sup> Cleugh, *Love Locked Out*, pp. 132-3. Winick and Kinsie, *Lively Commerce*, pp. 39.

tutes, arranged for a temporary synagogue for the high holidays, and invited a local glazer to officiate. Unfortunately the glazer soon succumbed to yellow fever, but by the time Samuel Cohen visited Rio in 1913 there were more permanent arrangements. He discovered a synagogue for prostitutes and their male friends. To Cohen's horror the place had been publicised in the local papers as the 'womens' congregation' shortly before his arrival. The Brazilian Jews were as outraged by these developments as was Cohen. On one occasion in about 1910 when white slavers marched through the streets of Rio in a ceremony to dedicate a new torah scroll for their synagogue, they were attacked by a crowd of young men from the respectable community who took away the torah and put the unclean ones to flight.<sup>71</sup>

Given the hardships, loneliness, and contempt that the women endured, it is not surprising that some sought to maintain religious customs, especially in remote places. Up in Butte, Montana, Jewish prostitutes were said never to work on religious holidays and we shall have occasion later to observe others in fervent prayer at Manila. In London Jews were said to shy away from Christian rescue homes from fear of eating non-kosher food, or even from fear of conversion. And back to Rio de Janeiro, when one of the unclean ones died, the funerals were traditional and emotional: 'The cries of the women who approached in the funeral procession were stirring, asking forgiveness in their Russian *patois* for past wrongs done to the deceased ...'<sup>72</sup>

Nor had the men made a clean break with tradition, as their tombstones and torah processions illustrate. At Portsmouth in England Jewish pimps sought kosher meat.<sup>73</sup> Thus the Zwi Migdal synagogue in the centre of Buenos Aires was a natural part of an *ersatz* community, shaped by a pariah class who had not forgotten their roots and who were desperate for respectability.

How successful were the prostitutes and pimps in their *goldene medine*? There is no simple answer to this interesting question.

<sup>71</sup> 'Lupantar', p. 9. Cohen, *Visit to South America* (1913), p. 6. Shoskes, *Mit Yidn*.

<sup>72</sup> Julie Coleman, *History of the Jews of Montana*, p. 74, Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society, University of Denver. *Jewish Association ... Report* (1897/8), p. 38. 'Lupantar', p. 34.

<sup>73</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 141-2.



In both Argentina and Brazil, however, it was the French prostitutes who were reputed to serve the middle and upper classes. In Brazil their status was remarkably high and some became almost second wives to top bureaucrats and industrialists. Along with their other services these continental *cocottes* were expected to pass on to the self-conscious Brazilians old-world manners and ideas about fashion.<sup>74</sup> Not all of these 'French' prostitutes in Brazil were actually French and we have the example of Anita Rubinstein's highly placed clientele. But generally in both countries Jewish brothels seem mostly to have served the poorer classes.

For the inmates luck was required to avoid the ravages of disease and in Brazil yellow fever added to the heavy toll of syphilis. One visitor to the 'unclean ones' burial ground in Sao Paulo wrote, 'Most of the girls died at a very young age—19, 20, 25. Some reached 30 and 40. The exception to this rule were the "madams".'<sup>75</sup> Mere survival guaranteed neither becoming a madam nor accumulating capital. There was also the question of how much the brothelkeeper and pimp raked off. The control of prostitutes seems to have been less complete and exploitative in Brazil than in Argentina, where from an early date the Zwi Migdal incorporated much of the business. For several reasons, by the turn of the century at Rio at least some of the women had achieved a degree of independence. By law brothels there were very small, limited to two or three girls per house. As in Europe, where brothels themselves were becoming unpopular, this reduced economies of scale and made Rio less profitable for male entrepreneurs. This also created a curious situation in which the kaftan who installed a second girl sometimes made the first extremely jealous. That is what apparently happened to Israel Kloppe, whom we saw earlier was denounced for trafficking by a jealous prostitute.<sup>76</sup>

Commercial vice in Rio was much less male dominated and some women were their own mistresses, with no kaftan at all. Furthermore some who had a kaftan rarely saw him, since many were based in Argentina and only visited Rio occasionally,

<sup>74</sup> Freyre, *Order and Progress*, 57-62.

<sup>75</sup> Shulman, 'Unclean Burial Place'.

<sup>76</sup> Wagener, 'Rapport Sur la Traite des Blanches' (1906), pp. 4-5.

to collect their share of their womens' proceeds. This was the case with the four Warsaw women described above who were procured by Wolf Goldenberg. The author of a realistic novel about Jewish white slavery described the Rio cemetery as containing virtually only women, sadly most between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.<sup>77</sup> Thus in Brazil, if the women survived, they commonly managed to acquire small brothels or to accumulate savings and leave the country. In 1913 Samuel Cohen told of a woman who had returned to London after four years with £1,500 from Sao Paulo, said to be particularly hospitable. But travelling back with him was another prostitute who had gone to Rio voluntarily only to give up and run away from her brothel.<sup>78</sup>

Even in Argentina luck and determination could pay handsome dividends, as in the cases of Ema the Millionaire, Esther Jadzikoba, and many other prostitutes who moved up the ladder within Zwi Migdal and wound up buying brothels and living off the labour of others. There were others who made their money and left the country, such as Kune Gross and Nessie Wechsler, who used their savings to buy a brothel in Constantinople. In 1914 Amalie Ellenbogen complained to the police at Rosario that her husband Abe had absconded with all of the 53,000 pesos they had saved together, and had returned to Czernowitz where he had ritually married a distant relative of hers. This was one of the risks of the trade, as was a sudden change in police policy. In 1913 Esther Frucht, who had been involved in prostitution for eighteen years, was unable to afford passage to Europe because in the stampede out of Buenos Aires her brothel was unsaleable. These incidents illustrate of course that capital could be accumulated in the first place.<sup>79</sup>

What of the link between the brothel economy and the general economy? First of all prostitution created employment for hundreds of people who never participated in vice themselves. We have talked about the merchants, in some cases from ICA colonies. A circle closer were the auxiliaries, people with few prospects who were either on the scene already or

<sup>77</sup> Reizman, *Lebens in Shtetem*, p. 91.

<sup>78</sup> Cohen, *Visit to South America* (1913), p. 7. Also Wagener, 'Rapport', p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> Abraham Ellenbogen, 1914/4, VPA. Also the depositions of Sara Dessel, Tauba Pasternak, Sara Dzigal, Rose Cohen, *Gaceta*.

who travelled to South America to take advantage of the only opportunities that would ever come their way. They were individuals like Adolf Abramowitz, known as Adolf the Romanian, who was unofficial scribe to Rio's Jewish prostitutes. For a small fee he would write to their parents and describe how well they were doing as seamstresses or hotel staff. Another was Deborah Paukler, who travelled from Czernowitz to her sister Fanny's brothel in Buenos Aires, where she worked as a cook. Others ran restaurants and cafés where the unclean ones congregated. German Pitagorsky, who owned what must have been a lucrative business, the linen service for Zwi Migdal brothels, appears to have been a pimp at the same time.<sup>80</sup>

Another economic fact of significance is that many prostitutes regularly sent money back to their families in Europe. Adolf the Romanian was usually asked to enclose small sums in the eight or ten letters per week that he dispatched from Rio de Janeiro. This was a general phenomenon, as we shall see, and at the most remote corners of the earth Jewish prostitutes did not forget their struggling families in Europe.

Finally, what happened to the capital that was accumulated and remained in South America? Chinese and Japanese prostitutes in this era were the means for what can best be called the 'primitive accumulation' that enabled Chinese and Japanese entrepreneurs later to invest in other forms of commerce in America, Asia, and Australia. The contribution of Japanese prostitution in Malaya to the development of Japanese wealth there is particularly noteworthy.<sup>81</sup> Was it the same with the unclean ones in South America?

Given present-day political realities, this is a question of considerable delicacy, and one that will only be touched upon briefly here and in the later discussion of the inter-war period. Even before 1914 some participants in commercial vice took the first opportunity to make a clean break and go into something respectable. At Santos in Brazil for example, Samuel Cohen reported that a number of Jewish families had given up the white-slave traffic and bought shops. Others in the unclean

<sup>80</sup> 'Lupanar', p. 10. On Paukler, 21 July 1914, Buenos Aires, 'Gegenstand: Langberg, David', in 1912/2, VPA. On Pitagorsky, 26 October 1907, Buenos Aires, in Goldenberg and Bruskey, 1907/2, VPA.

<sup>81</sup> Sissons, 'Karayuki-san', pp. 327-30. Hirata, 'Chinese Prostitutes', p. 3.

sphere were diversifying into various areas, legal and illegal. Simon Rubinstein, the powerful head of the Ashkenazim who arrived in Buenos Aires from Odessa in about 1900, soon managed to take over, appropriately enough, a condom factory. Rubinstein was also a notorious silk smuggler and proprietor of silk shops in the capital. Furthermore, his friends were beginning to enter the economy at large, a development that went much farther after the war. By then the economic power of the unclean ones, amplified by marriage and investment, became a theme explored painfully in Yiddish literary works, such as Mordchai Alpersohn's novel *On Argentine Ground* and Berel Greenberg's short story, *Thirty Handkerchiefs*.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Cohen, *Visit to South America* (1913). On Rubinstein, Alsogoray, *Trilogia*, pp. 65-75. Mordchai Alpersohn, *Oif Argentinier Erd*. Berel Greenberg, '30 Noz-tikhlech' in *Blut und Vine* (1944). These works are discussed in the very valuable essay by Yehiel Scheintuch, 'Mivoyot ha-histaglut vha-histachdut shel ha-yehudim lo'r Hasifrus Yiddish b' Argentina' (Hebrew: Concerning Problems of Adoptability and Unity of the Jews in Light of the Yiddish Literature of Argentina) in *Sefer Dov Sadan* (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 313-25.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The United States

#### *Allen Street, New York*

Allen Street runs through the heart of the old Jewish Lower East Side in New York City. At the turn of the century the noisy Third Avenue El train, long since vanished, distinguished it from neighbouring streets, like Orchard and Eldridge, Broome and Rivington, all with similar rows of dark and mean tenements. On Allen Street, according to a contemporary, 'with its elevated structure whose trains avalanched between rows of houses and the sunlight never permeated. I see small shops, which somehow never achieved the dignity of selling anything new ... a street which dealt in cast-off merchandize.'<sup>1</sup>

That cast-off merchandise included girls and women. Allen Street was the centre of New York's red-light district, the place in fact where red lights displayed in the vestibules of bordellos first gave currency to the popular term. Most residents of the Lower East Side led their lives without paying much attention to the local prostitutes. By the turn of the century, however, the influential *Jewish Daily Forward* warned its readers, 'It is better to stay away from Allen, Chrystie, and Forsyth Streets, if you go walking with your wife, daughter, or fiancée. There is an official flesh trade in the Jewish quarter. In the windows you can see human flesh instead of shoes.'<sup>2</sup> The honest residents who lived in the immediate vicinity had no choice and were forced either to come to terms with the unclean ones or to expel them. What was it like to live in Allen Street?

The place to begin a survey is at 102 Allen Street, a small tenement like many others, with twenty rooms on five floors. Only in 1900 this building was controlled by some of the most powerful families in the vice world. 102 was owned by Max Engel, brother of Martin Engel, the omnipotent political boss of the local eighth ward in the Tammany Hall democratic

<sup>1</sup> Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976), p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



empire. Martin had even gotten Max a very nice 'no show' job in the city payroll department. Furthermore, the janitress and watcher at 102 was Hester Wolf, sister of none other than Jake Wolf. Jake ran an infamous saloon in Delancey Street, a hangout for thieves, pimps, and every species of criminal that flourished in the neighbourhood. There were prostitutes all through 102. Downstairs Hester Wolf's daughter entertained visitors. Fanny Benjamin and a woman named Katie occupied most of the stoop and second floors and paid the substantial sum of \$80 per month to use that part of the house as a brothel. Then there was Rose Freeman, who did business in a separate room, and finally upstairs Mrs Kominer, installed there by Max Engel after her return from the colony of prostitutes in South Africa.<sup>3</sup>

The neighbours had little peace. Michael and Becky Yarmin lived on the second floor of 102 with their children. The noise kept them up all night and Hester Wolf was constantly chasing their children off the front stoop, which was reserved for the prostitutes. From this 'brickle' the women would solicit with the cry 'only 50 cents'. On one occasion in 1901 Fanny Benjamin complained to Max's wife Mary Engel, who came down from her fancy home uptown once a week to collect the proceeds, that Hester Wolf was not vigilant enough in clearing off the children. It was the Yarmins' turn that day to clean the hall and stairway and tempers were high. Hester complained about the cleaning job and Becky Yarmin responded that it was good enough for her '*Nafkis*' (prostitutes). After this exchange Hester had the Yarmins dispossessed.

Local opinion of the prostitutes depended mostly upon whether one needed their business. Mrs Hoffman, who did their laundry in number 102, would say nothing to the snoopers of the crusading Committee of Fifteen. Across the street at the candy store in number 97, the proprietress responded to those same investigators, 'If I would not like them whores I would not live in this neighbourhood.'<sup>4</sup> But in the tenement next door

<sup>3</sup> On 102 Allen Street, reports in Boxes 1, 7, 10; Abstracts of Events of the Day, 8 November 1900-30 November 1901, Comm. of 15. On Wolf, Story 42, 7 September 1912, JMC. On Martin Engel, *New York Evening World*, 10 June 1901; *New York City Special Commission to Investigate the Police Department* (New York and Albany, 1899), vol. 5, p. 4896. *Report of the Special Committee of the Assembly Appointed to Investigate the Public Offices and Departments of the City of New York* (Albany, 1900), pp. 2262, 2035.

<sup>4</sup> Report of J. Kreisworth and H. S. Conklin, 23 May 1901, Box 7, Comm. of 15.

to the candy store the tenants complained bitterly about having to drag their children away from the unwholesome scenes across the street, and about Martin Engel, who was alleged to own properties up and down the street, 'The mention of the name Engel makes them shiver as they said he is the head of all the pimps there and they are under his protection.'<sup>5</sup> Local people feared death should they testify against any of the Engels and in the midst of the Committee of Fifteen's campaign two of the machine's wardmen visited 102 to shut the complainants up. Furthermore, on one occasion three of the Committee's investigators, disguised as peddlers, were cornered on First Street and just got away with their lives.<sup>6</sup>

Undoubtedly, some prostitutes lived in good neighbourliness with their fellow toilers. But in Allen Street the complaints were numerous. At 102 the whores taunted other women on Fridays, 'Get, get madam its before a sabbath.' According to the head of a congregation further up the street in his testimony before the New York State Mazow investigation of 1900, whores bothered members of his Allen Street synagogue. In general the most knowledgeable men in the district, Abe Cahan, editor of the *Forward*, and David Blaustein, the outstanding community worker, agreed that in the words of the latter, vice was forced on inoffensive Jews by divekeepers.<sup>7</sup>

To return to Allen Street, 102 was one in a long string of dives. Along six blocks of the street there were twenty-six saloons and at least that many disorderly tenement houses. The whole run from 98-104 consisted of brothels, with Hyman's saloon at 98 a popular hangout. Passers-by could see washlines crowded with rows of telltale little towels flapping like flags in the breeze.<sup>8</sup> Number 96 also harboured some particularly interesting characters. Sam Schimil Itscher, a famous old thief, ran a 50-cent stoop house on the ground floor here, and his prostitute was the equally well-known Sadie Chink, described later by Abe Shoenfeld, the Jewish private detective for the

<sup>5</sup> Report of Max Moscovitz, 16 March 1901, Box 7, Comm. of 15.

<sup>6</sup> '41 First St.', on Kreisworth, Conklin, and Moscovitz, Box 15, Comm. of 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Special Committee* (1900), vol. 1, pp. 1994-5, and also pp. 2029, 2033. Abraham Cahan, *Bleter fun Meyn Leben* (Pages From My Life), New York, 1928, vol. 3, pp. 363-4. For Blaustein's comments, *Chicago Tribune*, 3 October 1907.

<sup>8</sup> Map in Frank Moss, *The American Metropolis*, vol. 3 (New York, 1897), p. 165. Reports in Box 7, especially J. Kreisworth, 16 April and 16 May 1901, Comm. of 15.



1. The red-light district in Buenos Aires. Photograph taken by the dramatist Peretz Hirschbein in the 1920s.



2. 'The First Step in a Girl's Downfall'.  
Drawn by Sam Zagat for *Wartick*, c.1900.



3. 'Fourteen Lawyers are Indicted for Graft in Sin Cases',  
drawn by Sam Zagat for the *New York Forward*, c.1920.



Illustrierter

# Film-Kurier

# MÄDCHEN HANDL



4. The image of white slavery in Germany, from a 1926 film magazine.



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PAR DUBUT DE LAFOREST

5. The image of white slavery in France.  
Theophile Steinlen poster for popular serial of 1895.

New York Kehillah, as 'an awful looking creature, very ugly, 5 ft. 5 in., stout, big bust, dark hair, pale pimpled face, about 180 lbs., born in Austria and has a boy 14 years of age by Sam.'<sup>9</sup>

Chink and Itscher are a testimonial to how the relationship between pimp and prostitute could endure anything. The pair first took up together in the early 1890s. In about 1901 Itscher seduced Rosie, the daughter of the janitor at 96, left Sadie, and travelled around the country living off the young girl's earnings and squandering most of them by his compulsive gambling. Then suddenly in about 1911 he left Rosie in Chicago, returned to Sadie Chink, herself back from Philadelphia, and the pair took up again keeping brothels. Further up Allen Street there were other local characters of note. At number 205 Celia Minsky, later a successful madam on Percy Street in Philadelphia, was serving her apprenticeship in a house owned by Louis Soviner, with his brother Max soon to enter the very highest echelons of commercial vice in New York.<sup>10</sup>

Local parents had to worry about vulnerable teenage daughters as well as impressionable young children. Yetta Grossman, who lived on Allen Street between Houston and Stanton, drifted into prostitution after struggling for \$6 per week as a cloak operative in the sweatshops. Her parents discovered her change of occupation and turned her out.<sup>11</sup> At the same time the street had its quota of cadets and their victims. In June 1900 Frank Gross of 171, only eighteen, seduced the fifteen-year-old Sarah Zimmerman, who lived with her father at 122, and placed her in a brothel. About six months later, acting on information from the Committee of Fifteen, the girl's poor father found Sarah soliciting in the street and had her arrested. Gross's conviction for abduction followed and he was given a stiff sentence. And shortly before the Gross conviction, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children rescued from Lena Cohen's well-known brothel at 156 a fourteen-year-old girl who had been seduced and sold to the

<sup>9</sup> Story 12, August (1912), JMC, for the following paragraph also.

<sup>10</sup> Story 30, 3 September 1912, JMC.

<sup>11</sup> 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU. Also, Ida Silverberg of Allen Street.

house by another local cadet, Louis Sodofsky, who was also sent to prison for abduction.<sup>12</sup>

Allen Street was the worst of its kind, but at the turn of the century conditions were not so different in a dozen other densely populated streets in the red-light district. In 1901 a municipal cleanup sparked by the anti-Tammany Committee of Fifteen led to the victory of reform mayor Seth Low, to the closing of many brothels, and the flight out of town of a number of inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> Hester Wolf received a three-month sentence and, though the case against the Engels collapsed, Martin soon lost his leadership of the district. Within a few years many of the vicious returned, however, to other neighbourhoods like the West Side Tenderloin, and even back to Allen Street itself. And with them reappeared the same web of political corruption and brutality. When and why did this underside of Jewish life materialise in the city of promise?

#### *Origins and Causes in New York*

The origins can be traced back to the 1880s, to the beginnings of the great influx from eastern Europe. The first substantial business in Jewish commercial vice that we know about was run by the Hertz family from Hungary. Mother Rosie Hertz arrived from Hungary ahead of the tide in 1880 and began by working as a visiting prostitute. According to the knowledgeable vigilante, Abe Shoenfeld, 'she would go from one coal cellar to another—from one shoe making basement to another, and thus make money. She and her husband Jake lived frugally and with care and attention to their pennies and dollars...'<sup>14</sup> Soon they bought 7 East First Street which later was utilised by no less than forty women, and a string of other establishments,

<sup>12</sup> Abstract of Events of the Day, 11, 15 February, 17 May 1901, Comm. of 15. Also, Cases 3 and 5 in Women's Municipal League. *Facts for New York Parents. Conditions That are not to be Endured* (New York, City Club, 1901).

<sup>13</sup> On the Committee of Fifteen, Jeremy Felt, 'Vice Reform as a Political Technique: The Committee of Fifteen in New York, 1900-1', *New York History* LIV (1973), 24-51. *The Social Evil. The Committee of Fifteen* (New York, 1902).

<sup>14</sup> Shoenfeld's material on the Hertz clan in the Judah Magnes Archive has been published by Arthur Goren, in 'Mother Rosie Hertz. The Social Evil, and the New York Kehillah', *Michael* III (Tel Aviv, 1975), 188-210. There is some additional material in Boxes 13 and 14, Comm. of 14; 'Prostitution', Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

supplying employment to a whole gang of Hungarian relatives. Mother Rosie's own mother, Gittel, was said to have arrived in New York as early as 1865, making her the real pioneer, the first Jewish madam in the city and possibly in America.

Like other areas of settlement in the West, the United States attracted more male than female migrants. Some came to earn money and return to the old country. This was less true for the Jews, who normally came to settle and whose proportion of females amongst their migrant pool was higher than the equivalent figure for the whole stream of immigrants. But even among the 1.5 million Jews who entered the United States between 1889 and 1914, males outnumbered females by 56 per cent to 44 per cent. Furthermore, many of the men were separated from their wives for years while saving enough money to send for them. That the large pool of unmarried young men was a prime cause of prostitution was pointed out at the time by a leading Jewish statistician, Isaac Hourwich. It was especially notable because the traditional situation of early marriages to protect chastity had been stood on its head.<sup>15</sup>

This demographically derived condition of 'male sexual misery', as something similar in France was called, created lucrative opportunities that both the growing lumpen elements in the ghetto and the thoroughly corrupt police and politicians were quick to grasp. By the late 1880s Jews were gaining a few of the posts in the local Tammany democratic machine. There was Martin Engel, who rose from plucking chickens to driving around his Eighth Assembly District fiefdom bedecked in diamonds. There was the longer-lived Max Hochstim, a minor political hack based at the Essex Market Courthouse. These characters had a direct interest in their own properties, Engel's empire was said to be worth \$200,000 in 1894, and they also raked off tribute from gamblers, saloonkeepers, and brothel-keepers in the neighbourhood. Other proprietors like Rosie Hertz paid the police directly and still others sent their tribute through an important new layer of crooks, the collectors. When Jake Wolf was not arranging to stuff ballot boxes, in his capacity as a district captain under the famous Tammany boss, Big Tim

<sup>15</sup> Liebman Hersch, 'International Migrations of the Jews', in *International Migrations*, vol. 2, ed. Walter Willcox (New York, 1931), pp. 482-3. Hourwich in *Federation Review*, December 1909.

Sullivan, he was acting as 'the first Jewish collector for the police on the East Side'.<sup>16</sup>

The Jewish criminal underworld came to maturity in New York in the 1890s, part of it arriving from abroad like the Rosie Hertz clan, but more and more of it emerging locally in its adolescent years from the social conditions of the Lower East Side ghetto. As the statistician Isaac Hourwich pointed out about the underworld in 1908, 'among the Jews above the age of 21 the foreign born vastly predominate, whereas among the minors a large proportion are American born.'<sup>17</sup> In the former case Jake Wolf's saloon was the best known of a series of similar establishments which served as schools of acculturation for foreign toughs. Mordke Goldberg and the brothers Soviner graduated from Wolf's academy in the early 1890s and went on to become the most feared vice operatives in New York.<sup>18</sup>

Along with Samuel Lubelski of Myslowitz, Adolf Dickenfaden of Buenos Aires and several others, Mordke Goldberg was also known as 'the King'. The oral history of the Lower East Side recorded that he began life in Warsaw and that while in the Czar's army had seduced fifteen-year-old Rosie. They travelled to South Africa where she worked as a prostitute, and then around the United States, finally settling in New York where he became a fixture at Wolf's saloon.<sup>19</sup> At around the same time that Mordke and Rosie Goldberg reached New York, Max and Louis Soviner arrived from Russia. It was about 1892. Max and Louis first went to work peddling from pushcarts. This hardly suited their ambitions and Jake Wolf knew good prospects when he saw them. Soon Louis was put up to seducing a girl in Broome Street and then Max followed suit. They moved up the ladder from procuring, to working as watchboys around the brothels, and finally to running houses in Allen Street. With the dislocation of the old red-light district

<sup>16</sup> On Engel and Wolf, sources cited above, note 3. On Hochstim, *New York Evening World*, 10 June 1901; *Lexow Investigation*, vol. 3, pp. 2957, 2962-3, 3011, 3211; vol. 5, p. 5393. On Hochstim's later career there is a great deal of material in the Comm. of 14 Papers.

<sup>17</sup> *Federation Review*, June 1908.

<sup>18</sup> Story 42, JMC.

<sup>19</sup> On Goldberg's early career, Abe Shoenfeld interview, 6 January 1965, p. 50, AJC. George Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York, 1913), pp. 78, 80, 93, 286, 291, 328, (Goldberg is called X34, Rosie is X87). Story 42, JMC.



in 1901, however, they were forced out of town. Their exile was quite remarkable, taking them through the vice districts of Boston, Buffalo, and St. Louis, where we shall observe them later running prostitution in collaboration with the Democratic Party. Then it was on to Pittsburgh, Havana, and Johannesburg. Finally they arrived back in New York and in 1912 joined forces with Mordke Goldberg to form the largest vice trust in the city.<sup>20</sup>

More and more the participants in this subculture of criminal vice were homegrown. That was true of the men and the women. In order to see why we should remember what was said about how migration to a new environment, loss of traditional religious faith, and family poverty all helped open a generational gap between parents and children in the cities of Europe. In the new world that gap yawned even more widely. Lincoln Steffens recorded in his *Autobiography*,

The tales of the New York Ghetto were heart-breaking comedies of the tragic conflict between the old and the new, the very old and the very new; in many matters, all at once: religion, class, clothes, manners, customs, language, culture. We all know the difference between youth and age, but our experience is between two generations. Among the Russian and other eastern Jewish families in New York it was an abyss of many generations; it was between parents out of the Middle Ages, sometimes out of the Old Testament days hundreds of years B.C., and the children of the streets of New York today. We saw it everywhere all the time. Responding to a reported suicide, we would pass a synagogue where a score or more of boys were sitting hatless in their old clothes, smoking cigarettes on the steps outside, and their fathers all dressed in black, with their hats high, uncut beards, and temple curls, were going into the synagogues, tearing their hair and rending their garments... It was a revolution. Their sons were rebels against the law of Moses; they were lost souls, lost to God, the family, and to Israel of old.<sup>21</sup>

The lure of the local street gang was almost irresistible for boys in all the immigrant groups. Furthermore, given the economy of prostitution, with its constant requirement for

<sup>20</sup> On the Soviners' early days in New York, Stories 30 and 42, JMC; Kneeland, *Prostitution*, pp. 82-4 (where they are called X383, 384).

<sup>21</sup> *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York, 1931), pp. 244-5.

fresh recruits, and given too the status of sexual conquest among adolescent males, systematic seduction became part of the life of the street. After studying the data for Chicago in 1910-13, Walter Reckless, the most acute sociologist of his time on this subject, wrote that 'procuring-pimping-pandering was an accepted pattern of male activity' for poor urban youths generally. Gangs of street-wise youths adopted names and the 'noble knights', for example, were notorious in the Jewish ghetto for procuring.<sup>22</sup> That the place to begin a discussion of recruitment is with males is born out by Lillian Wald, the famous social worker, who observed in 1905 that 'Most of the women are found by men and not by women as was formerly the custom.'<sup>23</sup>

Michael Gold confirms the existence of this 'accepted pattern of male activity' in his wonderfully moving memoir of childhood on the Lower East Side. One of the most popular role models in the neighbourhood was Harry the Pimp, a wealthy man who managed to control twenty girls while keeping a respectable family on the side. 'Next to Jake Wolf, the saloon-keeper, he was our pattern of American success.' And Gold writes this not merely because Wolf had the kindness to pay the Gold family's rent for a few months when they were broke. The cadets were endemic, and according to Gold they 'were hunters. A pretty girl growing up on the East Side was marked by them ... They seduced the girls the way a child is helped to fall asleep with tales of magic happiness.'<sup>24</sup>

Cadets used all the familiar ruses we have already had occasion to note. They frequented employment agencies and took jobs in order to meet potential victims. They attended the popular dance halls, where the young hard-working immigrants went for a bit of relaxation. In the heart of the Lower East Side there were thirty-one of these places, most offering admission for five cents. According to the University Settlement Society the dance 'gatherings became mere training schools for cadets and bases of supply for houses of prosti-

<sup>22</sup> Walter Reckless, *Vice in Chicago* (Chicago, 1933), p. 42. On the noble knights, 'Parlour Houses, 108 W. 31st St., Mrs. Hymen', in Investigation. Field Reports on Prostitution, Comm. of 14; 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

<sup>23</sup> 'Investigation of Rames Law Hotels', p. 8, Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Gold, *Jews Without Money* (New York, 1945 ed.), p. 32 and *passim*.

tution'. One anti-vice agent reported that dance-hall cellars were used for sex. Pimps even watched the parks for possible indiscretions in order to blackmail young girls.<sup>25</sup>

Real traps were set in those days and one young woman had the incredible bad luck to fall into two of them. Eighteen-year-old Mollie Yosabowitz from Jassy in Romania was summoned by her mother in 1913 and the two were reunited in Newark. A local marriage broker put her in touch with Benny Winkler. One Saturday night he took her to New York, promised marriage, and after explaining that the relations with whom they were supposed to stay were not at home, he seduced her in a Fifth Street dive. Molly saw what Benny was up to and broke off with him, only to go to the 'Austrian-Hungarian Employment Agency' on Third Street. They sent her to Max and Sarah Adler of Delancey Street, who happened to run a brothel in their apartment. Finally Mollie gave in. She seemed such a victim of circumstance that the Immigration Inspector who recommended her for deportation as an alien prostitute a year later did so only with the greatest reluctance.<sup>26</sup>

While cadets like Benny Winkler as a rule were smooth, well-dressed and well-schooled in the art of seduction—as the alphonsees we have met elsewhere—they were not beyond the use of main force. Take Mendel Schneiderman and Louis Greenberg, both convicted of abduction and sentenced heavily in 1901. One evening Schneiderman, who kept a barbershop on Attorney Street, invited Dora Rubin, who lived upstairs with her parents, out to a show at the Thalia Theater. When they returned home the front door going up to the flats was locked and the barber had Dora wait in his shop while he got the key in the adjoining saloon. As Miss Rubin deposed, 'Schneiderman thereupon entered the barber shop, locked the door upon the inside, pulled down the windowshades and by force, and without deponent's consenting at any time, ruined her by having sexual intercourse with her.'<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> University Settlement Society of New York *Year Book* (1901), pp. 50-4. On some of these forms of entrapment, 'Investigation of Raines Law Hotels', p. 8, Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Adler, file 53835/192, kept at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington.

<sup>27</sup> Deposition of Dora Rubin Schneiderman, 23 January 1901, in Mendel Schneiderman case file, New York City Municipal Archives (kept in storage). The City archives

Dora's parents were practical and when the barber offered marriage, they accepted. Immediately after the ceremony at city hall, however, the bride was deposited in the brothel of one 'Kate Smith' on West Seventeenth Street, where she was beaten into submission before finally escaping weeks later. Schneiderman's twenty-one-year-old friend, Louis Greenberg, was a witness to that marriage. Greenberg's usual hangout was Bloom's Cigar Store on Grand Street, just around the corner from Allen Street. Henrietta Kantrowitz had the bad fortune to come to his attention and soon after their meeting, Greenberg took the sixteen-year-old girl to a furnished room on Second Avenue, reserved for the purpose, where he forced her to have sexual intercourse. A witness later testified that the act was violent and that there was fresh blood on Miss Kantrowitz's skirt. In her compromised state Greenberg convinced her to marry him and she too was delivered to Kate Smith and beaten into temporary submission.

One remarkable thing about these cases is that there was no pretence of marriage through the *stillah chuppah*. These were civil marriages and they illustrate once again the lengths to which the corps of cadets were willing to go, and the confused and ambivalent feelings of the young women who consented to marriage. In the end of course it takes two to establish a long-term relationship built around prostitution and we know of Rubin and Kantrowitz because, exceptionally, they attempted escape and succeeded in doing so within a few weeks.

In the main, who were the women who willingly entered the game and stayed in it? First of all, most were foreign born but locally recruited. When the white-slavery issue was raised in America, there was much publicity about the influx of foreign prostitutes. Indeed there were plenty of them across the country. After a tour of America in 1909 Marcus Braun estimated that there were 50,000 alien prostitutes, mostly French and Belgian or Polish and Russian Jewish women, along with 10,000 foreign pimps, from coast to coast. The estimate seems way too high though just to show that Braun was relatively

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also have a file on the Louis Greenberg case, and both convictions are discussed in Abstract of Events of the Day, 20, 26 March 1901, Comm. of 15. Also cases 7 and 8 in Women's Municipal League, *Facts for New York Parents*.

sober, one of his colleagues placed the figure for foreign prostitutes at 100,000.<sup>28</sup> What everyone agreed about, however, is that most of the foreign born women who practised prostitution in the US turned to it after their arrival, though a small minority of professionals were brought from abroad.

After reconnaissance by Marcus Braun and branches of his department across the country, Daniel Keefe, the Commissioner General of the Immigration Bureau, concluded in 1910 that 'women or girls are rarely imported into this country for purposes of prostitution ...'<sup>29</sup> From her vantage point as Special Inspectress at Ellis Island, Helen Bullis entirely agreed with respect to the infamous Jewish pimps' society, the New York Independent Benevolent Association: 'The Association did not do any importing at the time I knew it, and it is doubtful if individual members did very much. It was easier to get girls here, with practically no risk.' And from his perspective as President of the Philadelphia Association for the Protection of Jewish Immigrants, Mr Louis Levy concurred, blaming prostitution, rather narrowly, on the dance halls, dancing schools, cinemas, and rapacious cadets.<sup>30</sup>

Levy's old fashioned outlook, of course, was evidence of the very generational gap that sometimes made it difficult for girls to derive emotional understanding from their parents and that drove them to seek it where it seemed available, in the street culture of the neighbourhood. The files of the Kehillah investigators contain suggestions along these lines, although hard facts about family life are meagre. We know of Jenny of Fifth Street, a serious girl from a fine and upwardly mobile Orthodox family. One of her girlfriends wound up as a prostitute and then Jenny suddenly took up with 'Meyer the Special'. Why? Jenny told the investigator, an old friend, 'that she had taken a chance to jump out and to make a dollar'. But we would like to know more about cases like this.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> 52484/H, 'Braun Report. European Supplement', 6 October 1909.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Keefe to Secretary of Commerce and Labor, 12 January 1910, in 52483/1B, USIS.

<sup>30</sup> Helen Bullis to US Commissioner of Immigration, Ellis Island, 26 December 1912, in 52809/7E, USIS. Louis Levy in *Jewish International Conference* (1910), appendix 4.

<sup>31</sup> Story 17, 30 August 1912, and also Story 38, JMC.



In the aggregate, however, family strain exacerbated by the move to America is clearly one of the prime causes. When Alice Menken, the well-known Jewish social worker, surveyed the wreckage of 300 female delinquents who had been paroled to the Jewish Welfare Board before 1924, she listed squarely as the first cause, 'incompatibility of foreign born parents and American born children'. Then followed lack of religious training, poor housing, and tedious jobs.<sup>32</sup> A generation earlier the same gap existed between parents and children, though the latter most likely would have gone to America as youngsters rather than been born there. Thus in San Francisco between 1909 and 1910 some forty-five foreign born Jewish prostitutes came to the knowledge of the meticulous immigration inspector there. Typical was Lillian Levy who was born in Germany and entered New York at the age of eighteen. She insisted she had 'never sported in the old country'. The average age at arrival for the whole group of forty-five was fourteen-plus.<sup>33</sup>

The only quarrel we have with Alice Menken's ranking of causes is that 'tedious jobs' should be near the top of the list. Working in the garment industry was more than tedious, it was sweated and badly paid. Many of the Jewish women who turned to prostitution in New York simply opted out of the sweatshop. In a sample of thirty-four Jewish prostitutes who had violated probation in 1905, the preponderance had started their working lives in the garment industry, making shirts, coats, cloaks, shirtwaists, gloves, and curling feathers. Some mentioned seduction by cadets but even these girls refused to return to an 'honest' life. As Mollie Kessler, a former cloak operative, insisted, 'I cannot exist on \$4 or \$5 per week'. Others simply admitted to the wish for easy money and more money. Thus it was explained that one woman 'who worked at Siegel and Cooper's for \$6 per week and who went astray while there, says she would lead an honest life only for \$15 per week'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Alice D. Menken, *Tales of One City. A Few Selected Stories to Illustrate the Rehabilitation of the Morally Handicapped* (New York, 1924), conclusions.

<sup>33</sup> Data gathered from diaries and from a census of brothels compiled by US Immigration Inspector John Robinson, California Historical Society, San Francisco.

<sup>34</sup> The thirty-four are part of a total of 104 prostitutes described in 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

Consider the observations of Meyer Shoenfeld, Abe's socialist father and a reformer in his own right who defeated a notorious brothelkeeper in an aldermanic race during the Reform victory of 1901. Meyer Shoenfeld wrote in 1910 that 'white slavery is the result of industrial slavery'. In manufacturing centres this was substantially correct. At the time, Shoenfeld mused whether the famous strike of the shirtwaist girls, which dragged on from November 1909 to February 1910, might have driven some of the brave protesters into prostitution. Sure enough, one of the strikers turned up in a Cleveland brothel at about the time that Shoenfeld wrote.<sup>35</sup> But even in times of normal trade some women simply would not put up with conditions in the sweatshop.

Prostitutes might even provide a positive role model for younger girls in the ghetto, just as Jake Wolf did for the boys. Lincoln Steffens described how when he was a reporter, a distraught mother pulled him off the street and took him upstairs to the back window of the apartment where her three daughters were peering out. 'Da, se'en Sie', she cried. Across the alley and clearly visible in her room was a prostitute serving a customer. 'My oldest girl says she will go into that business when she grows up; she says its a good business, easy, and you can dress and eat and live.'<sup>36</sup> Perhaps this incident gave Steffens the idea for his character 'Schloma' and the invitation, 'es ist besser wie packen pants'. One of the prostitutes who frequented Sharkey's Cafe on Fourteenth Street explained her own entry into the game in almost the exact same terms, namely the good life of a neighbouring whore. And when cadets had recruits ready to make the leap, they sometimes took them along to Steckles' Restaurant on Third Avenue where particularly well-dressed prostitutes congregated. This was considered an 'easy way to induce working girls of immoral tendencies to take the final step ...'.<sup>37</sup>

### Organisation

Taking the broader perspective, how did Jewish prostitution in New York compare to that of other groups? How was commercial

<sup>35</sup> *Federation Review*, March 1910. Report of Andrew Tedesco, 18 March 1910 in 52484/15B, USIS.

<sup>36</sup> Steffens, *Autobiography*, p. 245.

<sup>37</sup> 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

vice organised in this giant metropolis? As with every other great city in the world, statistical guesses about prostitution in New York varied widely. Marcus Braun thought there were some 10,000 alien prostitutes there in 1908. The very knowledgeable James Bronson Reynolds, formerly head of the University Settlement Society and active in the anti-prostitution movement, put the total figure at 30,000. But the specially empanelled Rockefeller Grand Jury for whom Reynolds worked as a counsel was able to collect only 6,000 names in 1910.<sup>38</sup> The most systematic attempt to gather intelligence and statistics for New York and the nation yielded the claim that the city harboured 26,000 prostitutes who were controlled by 6,100 pimps, while an unknown number of other women were said to work independently. It is impossible to say whether these numbers have real validity; and how do we classify the badly paid shopgirls and sweatshop workers known to supplement their wages on weekends as call girls or by 'sitting in company' as it was called, in a parlour house?<sup>39</sup>

The last survey mentioned, conducted between 1911 and 1912 is of such importance that we must explain its origins. In the spring of 1910 James Bronson Reynolds, then working with the Rockefeller Grand Jury, received a visit from Samuel London, a lawyer based in El Paso, Texas. London had been nothing less than the chief legal counsel for many of the procurers in the southwest and after representing them for years he had been overcome by a guilty conscience. London claimed to know more than any man in the country about white slavery and he offered to make his expertise available to the authorities. Bronson Reynolds was impressed, especially since London's character was attested to by letters from his local rabbi, Rabbi Stephen Wise and Adolf Kraus, President of the International B'nai B'rith, an organisation leading the struggle against white slavery.

Reynolds recommended London to the Justice Department and the lawyer himself began negotiations with the President of

<sup>38</sup> 'Braun's U.S. Detail, White-Slave Traffic', September 29, 1908, 52484/1, USIS. Frederick Whitin to James Bronson Reynolds, 10 October 1912, in Correspondence, Comm. of 14. Shoenfeld Interview, 22. *New York Times*, 30, 31 January 1913.

<sup>39</sup> 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU. Story 1020, 11 March 1914, JMC.

the southern district of the B'nai B'rith, the Texan Henry Dannenbaum. After a series of meetings with federal officials, London and Dannenbaum worked out the following plan. Dannenbaum, who later became a Texas State Judge and one of Houston's leading civic figures, would be appointed 'Special Assistant to the Attorney General to assist in the prosecution of violations of the White-Slave Traffic Act and the immigration laws'. The legislation in question is the famous Mann Act, passed by Congress in 1910 during the national uprising against white slavery. The Mann Act made it a serious felony to procure for prostitution across state lines, and Dannenbaum would be based in New York to help enforce it. As for Samuel London, he would collect general intelligence for future prosecutions while being on the payroll of the B'nai B'rith southern district. This London did over the twenty-one months from April 1911 to December 1912, with the help of fourteen assistants paid by the federal government. London kept a meticulous card index with his thousands of names; unfortunately, all that survives is his testimony to a New York City Aldermanic Committee in 1913 with the aggregate data and some interesting observations.<sup>40</sup>

What was the Jewish proportion of the total? Two important nativist attacks on Jewish criminality made Jews very conscious of the available statistics. In 1908 Theodor Bingham, the Police Commissioner of New York City, published an article on 'Foreign Criminals in New York' which claimed fallaciously that half of the criminals in the city were Jewish. This was followed a year later by G. K. Turner's famous 'Daughters of the Poor' in the muckraking *McClure's Magazine*.<sup>41</sup> Turner's highly coloured piece, full of anti-semitic stereotypes, was politically inspired and laid the problem of commercial vice squarely at the door of the ghetto politicians and their hangers-

<sup>40</sup> The story of the investigation is reconstructed from correspondence involving Dannenbaum, London, Reynolds, Wickersham and others in files 148825 and 145825. 239, Box 7724, Record Group 60, Class 30, USJD. Also, Dr Mendel Silber, *B'nai B'rith in the South Land* (New Orleans, 1943), 49-55. Henry Dannenbaum to Frederick Whitin, 19 June 1911. Correspondence, Gomm. of 14. *B'nai B'rith News*, December 1912.

<sup>41</sup> Theodore A. Bingham, 'Foreign Criminals in New York', *North American Review* (September 1908), 383-94. G. K. Turner, 'The Daughters of the Poor', *McClure's Magazine* 34 (1909), 45-61.

on. In fact many of Turner's charges about Jewish participation in remote places like Manchuria, the Rand, and India, as well as provincial America, have been or will be confirmed here. But Turner was utterly wrong to assert that prostitution in New York was primarily a Jewish problem, and that New York was the world centre of white slavery.

The New York Jewish community defended itself aggressively and a statistical battle formed part of the struggle. Following Turner's article, the Yiddish paper *Warheit* went so far as to publish daily lists of prostitutes convicted in night court, proclaiming that only 27 per cent or so were Jewish, which meant that according to the Jewish proportion of Manhattan's population, they were underrepresented.<sup>42</sup> It is very difficult to judge what the real proportion was and different surveys yielded varying results. One of the most dependable studies, based on a sample of 647 prostitutes released from the Bedford Hills Reformatory up to 1910, showed the Jewish proportion of prisoners to be about the same as the Jewish proportion of the city's population at that time, 19 per cent.<sup>43</sup>

A few points are clear. The Jewish share began decreasing by the second decade of the century, as we shall see later. Furthermore, Jewish women were concentrated in Jewish-run brothels or with Jewish pimps. The great majority of the 6,000 names collected by the Rockefeller Grand Jury and turned over to Abe Shoenfeld's vigilantes were not Jewish. But, percentages were higher in the 'dollar houses' in the West Side Tenderloin and in the notorious Raines Law Hotels, both under heavy Jewish proprietorship. The Committee of Fourteen was another anti-prostitution group, this one founded in 1905 to close these dives, hotels with bars on the premises established under the so-called Raines Law. They were heavily patronised by prostitutes who solicited off the premises in streets, music halls, and cafés. In a random group of 104 prostitutes who used some of

<sup>42</sup> Arthur Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community* (New York, 1970), p. 147. Goren's valuable study of the New York Kehillah deals thoroughly with its response to allegations and its struggle against crime.

<sup>43</sup> Kneeland, *Prostitution*, Ch. 8 and appendices. Goren discusses the pitfalls in interpreting data like this, pp. 147-8.



the hotels, 34, or nearly 30 per cent, were Jewish, a higher percentage than that for Jewish prostitution in the city at large.<sup>44</sup>

As for the commercial end of affairs, the few extant pointers suggest that Jewish brothel ownership was substantial and heavily concentrated but not in a majority for the whole great city. When in 1911 Rabbi H. Pereira Mendes asked the Committee of Fourteen, to which he belonged, about the extent of Jewish participation, the secretary replied that of sixty-six notorious Raines Law Hotels obliged to put up a cash bond in order to obtain their licenses, thirty were Jewish owned. Furthermore, of the 181 Raines Law Hotels closed or fought by the Committee between 1907 and 1911 as particularly notorious, eighty were Jewish or German owned. Before the Kehillah's ultimately successful assaults of 1913, Abe Shoenfeld placed Jewish ownership in the 'dollar houses' in the Tenderloin at between 40 and 60 per cent and confirmed that participation was high once again downtown.<sup>45</sup>

The French and the Italians also had a major presence in the commercial vice of New York and other large cities. When Samuel London began his enquiries he called for informants 'one of each *Hebrew, French and Italian* nationalities'.<sup>46</sup> Like the Jews, the Italians settled in large numbers. With their own ghetto in downtown Manhattan sitting beside that of the Jews, there was real conflict over which corps of cadets had rights to whose girls. There is a remarkable story that belongs to the folklore of the Lower East Side about how Jack Zelig—gunman, thief, and Robin-Hood figure—pushed the Italians out of Jewish-ghetto crime. Italian cadets were resented for recruiting Jewish girls in the dance halls above Houston Street and Zelig himself had a score to settle after being beaten by some of their toughs. He decided to get even and put together a gang that included two fearsome hoods, Whitey Lewis and Lefty Louie.

<sup>44</sup> Shoenfeld Interview, p. 207. 'Summary of investigation into cases of disorderly women placed on probation. June-December 1905', in 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU. There are descriptions of 92 of the 104.

<sup>45</sup> Rabbi Dr H. Pereira Mendes to Frederick Whitin, 3 January 1911, and reply of 7 January, Correspondence, Comm. of 14. *Committee of 14, Bulletin 51*, May 1911, in Minutebook, Comm. of 14. Shoenfeld Interview, pp. 24, 207.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel London to Henry Dannenbaum, 20 June 1911, in File 145825, Box 7724, Record Group 60, Class 30, USJD.

The occasion for the first round was the 'Avenue Boys' Ball at the Stuyvesant Casino on Second Avenue. The Avenue Boys were a bunch of Jewish pimps and gangsters, and Jules Morello, who had been recruiting Jewish girls and collecting protection money from some of the Avenue brothelkeepers like Big Aleck Harlig—about whom more in a moment—promised to shoot the place up. Zelig sent word that he would be waiting to kill Morello if the latter came armed. A classic encounter was in the making.

Morello and his henchmen arrived and Benny Weiss, top pickpocket, had the task of frisking him to see if he was packing a gun. He was. Morello's henchmen sensed a trap and quickly ran off but as Abe Shoenfeld described the scene, within seconds

Jack Zelig the Eastside Emancipator from the outrages of the invading Italians (Pimps and thieves) stood blazing away—bang! bang! firing two shots into Jules Morello, Jules dropped, arose and falteringly ran down the stairs. Jack stood at the head of the stairs and let him have two more slugs—hitting him twice again.<sup>47</sup>

Before he was finished Zelig murdered a second Italian gangster and cut a third to ribbons. 'This was sufficient to keep the Italians ever walking through the Eastside to walk the chalk line, behave themselves and mind their business.' And Zelig? After Red Phillips shot him in the back of the head in 1912 he was given an Eastside sendoff that in grandeur was second only to the celebrated funeral of Rabbi Joseph.

According to the federal Dillingham investigation of white slavery in 1910, Italian pimps were most feared by their women.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps this street knowledge added to the above vendetta. On the other hand, in some circles Jewish pimps and procurers were considered to be more ruthless than their French counterparts. Here is a report of 1907 which was written by Frances Kellor, the highly respected social worker, after much field work,

There are two nationalities who may be said to control the disorderly house business in New York, namely the French and Jewish ... while

<sup>47</sup> Story 14, JMC.

<sup>48</sup> *Report of the Immigration Commission. Importation and Harboring of Women for Immoral Purposes. Presented by Mr. Dillingham, 5 December 1910, p. 77.*

French houses are said to be worse in their practices they are not, from the civic side at least, to be so much feared as the Jewish. The French people engaged in this business prefer to run their business as nearly compatible with the rules laid down by the police department as possible... The Jew on the other hand, has been taught early in life the value of morality and decency, and does not take up this business unless he is thoroughly vicious and bad.<sup>49</sup>

A subjective point of view perhaps, but based on the common sense that for a Frenchman to run a brothel was no big and bad thing. It also seems to be the case that relations between the French and Jews were fairly cordial. Jews owned many of the so-called French houses in the Tenderloin and sought to fill them with French prostitutes from abroad.<sup>50</sup> Apparently they were more easily controlled than the native born and more willing to engage in oral sex, always a money-maker because it allowed for a high intensity of work. Such a place at 398 Sixth Avenue with a half-dozen of the fifteen to twenty inmates practicing 'sodomy', was run by Dolly Harlig, wife of Big Aleck Harlig and a former prostitute for Mother Rosie Hertz. The place was owned by Big Aleck and Mortke Goldberg and was a veritable goldmine.<sup>51</sup>

The Dillingham report concluded that Jewish pimps and procurers were better organised than those of other nationalities. As in Buenos Aires and Constantinople, there was a central organisation, though it was less powerful and coherent than the Jewish vice organisations in those other cities, and it was popularly overestimated during the white-slavery panics of the time. In 1896 some of the leading figures in commercial vice obtained incorporation for their New York Independent Benevolent Association. Martin Engel was one of the founders and it appears that Max Hochstim was also. Like the Zwi Migdal the manifest purpose was to enable the unclean ones of the New York area to obtain death benefits and Jewish burial, from which they were being excluded by respectable immigrants'

<sup>49</sup> Report, 17 October 1907, 'Frances Kellor', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU. There is a great deal of sensational material in the report but only some of it can be corroborated.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Story 6, 9 December 1912, JMC.

benefit societies. The IBA charter reads innocuously, 'To Promote Sentiment of Regard and Friendship Among the Members and to render Assistance in Case of Necessity'.<sup>52</sup>

Like Zwi Migdal, Shilem Letzki's organisation in Warsaw and the Constantinople circle, the IBA was a trade association of independent entrepreneurs. Estimates of its membership range from 135 to 600. It was investigated many times and Helen Bullis' description offers an apt summary. In 1912 she called it

a Jewish mutual benefit society, including among its members practically all the Jewish disorderly house keepers of prominence in New York. To say that it is composed wholly of such persons or of 'white slavers' is an exaggeration, but it is strictly within the truth to say that most if not all its members are engaged in occupations which in some way touch or depend upon prostitution for their support. This would include keepers of cafés patronized by pimps and madams, clothing dealers selling to disorderly houses; doctors who attend inmates of such houses; saloon-keepers in certain districts; professional bondsmen and many others.<sup>53</sup>

It functioned as a private economy, such as existed in the other centres of Jewish vice, and because there was no state regulation, the doctors played a big role in the organisation. Dr Solomon Neumann, a highly respected Lower East Side physician, asserted in 1909 that 80 per cent of the prostitutes in New York suffered from venereal disease.<sup>54</sup> Madams and pimps wanted to protect their investmants and clients grew accustomed to seeing medical certificates, several of which survive, testifying to the good health of their partners. A

<sup>52</sup> Report, 17 October 1907, p. 3, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

<sup>53</sup> Helen Bullis to US Commissioner of Immigration, Ellis Island, 26 December 1912 in 52809/7E, USIS. Also on the IBA, *New York World*, 22 December 1912. Story 231, 20 December 1912, JMC. *White Slave Traffic. Presentment of the Additional Grand Jury for the January Term of the Court of General Sessions in the County of New York, in the Matter of the Investigation as to the Alleged Existence in the County of New York of an Organized Traffic in Women for Immoral Purposes*. Filed 29 June 1910. Foreman, John D. Rockefeller Jr.; a copy is in Box 91, Lillian Wald Papers, CU. *Dillingham Report*, p. 77, where the incorporation date is 1904. The murder of prostitute Katie Polta for disobeying her pimp is mentioned here and is alleged to have taken place on 15 April 1908. At the IBA cemetery there is interred a Kate Pelter, d. 15 April 1907.

<sup>54</sup> Solomon Neumann cited 52484/H, 'Braun Report, European Supplement', 6 October 1909, USIS.

number of local physicians were notorious for specialising in this lucrative practice. After Dora Rubin had escaped from Mendel Schneiderman's clutches, she deposed that she had been examined by several doctors, including Joseph Adler. Based in Columbia Street, Dr Adler was reputed at one time to be president of the IBA. He fell in love with a local whore and with his practice ruined by the 1901 cleanup, allegedly assaulted his wife in an attempt to get her money.<sup>55</sup>

This shows of course that the fortunes of commercial vice could suddenly plummet. The pimps suffered major dislocations, twice when reform candidates overcame the Tammany-Hall machine and were swept into office on waves of moral and political outrage. Following the Lexow investigation William Strong was incumbent from 1894 to 1897; and following the exertions of the Committee of Fifteen, Seth Low moved from Columbia University to City Hall from 1901 to 1905.

On each of these occasions the unclean ones were dislocated. As we shall see, many fled to other American cities, to the Rand, to Panama, and elsewhere. But after the old regulars recaptured City Hall the unclean ones returned and regrouped. They were more numerous than ever prior to the final attack that we have alluded to, that of the vigorous Kehillah official, Abe Shoenfeld, who had time on his side. That is to say, following his campaign of 1912-15 and the changing conditions of life, Jewish prostitution ebbed away.

Those last golden years beginning in 1905 were very profitable. Characters like the Soviner brothers and many others returned and developed the West Side Tenderloin, redeveloped downtown and moved into fresh territory in Harlem. Some idea of the extent of the entire vice scene in 1913 is provided by Samuel London, responding to a question about vice headquarters in the city.

Some of them were on Rivington and Grand Streets, and on Second Avenue and other streets on the lower east side, and some were as far

<sup>55</sup> Deposition of Dora Rubin Schneiderman in Schneiderman case file; Also on Adler, Report, 17 October 1907, Lillian Wald Papers; 'Testimony of Witnesses for the Defence of Joseph D. Herlihy', vol. 2, pp. 1474-93, 28 January 1901, in Box 1, Comm. of 15; also unidentified cutting, 29 May 1901, Box 40, Comm. of 15.



north as 116th Street and Lexington Avenue. I took a census of these places and got the addresses of fifty. The traffickers received their mail in them and met in them by appointment and talked over the business, such as the transfer of a woman from one house to another, and from one state to another. The business of the men here is scattered over the country. Occasionally the women meet the men to settle any differences that may have arisen or to make application for a change from one house to another. Then some of the women meet the men whom they are supporting in these places between 12 and 2 o'clock in the morning and turn over their earnings to them. These cafés are general places of rendez-vous.<sup>56</sup>

The IBA accounted for only part of this scene, said to be controlled from fifty cafés and saloons. For years the IBA had its unofficial headquarters at various dives around the East Side. Finally in 1907 it settled into 76 Second Avenue, a café bought by Little Louis Segal and Abe Rabelle.<sup>57</sup> The place was fitted out with fifteen tables and a back room for gambling. Upstairs was the Manhattan Preparatory School, teaching aspiring immigrants another kind of Americanism. Rabelle, known as 'the Rabbi', was one of the heavyweights, a Russian-born pioneer cadet of the 1890s and a former president of the IBA. He had run a bogus employment agency on the Lower East Side before fleeing the city during the cleanup of 1901. Rabelle then spent six lean years in Pittsburgh before returning and going back into business. In 1912 Rabelle sold out to Big Aleck Harlig who had stuck it out in New York but sent his wife Dolly west to work for him. Rabelle then bought out a kosher restaurant at 92 Second Avenue, Kastners, and converted it into another low café and major control post for Jewish pimps and procurers.<sup>58</sup>

The IBA was no more than the scaffolding for Jewish commercial vice. Beneath it there was an edifice of private empires, partnerships, and struggling small fry, a structure to be described in a moment. But commercial vice was not entirely insulated from the rest of the underworld. A fine recent study

<sup>56</sup> *New York Times*, 30 January 1913.

<sup>57</sup> Story 6, JMC.

<sup>58</sup> Story 197, *ibid.*

has chronicled the rise and fall of the 'enormously complex, richly endowed culture of vice and criminality' that developed in the Jewish East Side.<sup>59</sup> Here we seek to isolate the vice component from the rest, from the array of criminal activity that ranged from theft, picking pockets, drug dealing, gambling, strike-breaking, and even horse poisoning.

As in Warsaw the spheres of commercial vice and general criminality overlapped. Before he met his violent end in 1912, Jack Zelig's all-purpose gang of enforcers were based at none other than 76 Second Avenue. We can illustrate the overlapping spheres by listing some of the regular *habitués* up the street at Rabbelle's café, 92 Second Avenue.<sup>60</sup>

Abe Rabbelle, alias the Rabbi, President Pimp Association  
William Laskey, gun  
Bennie Laskey, gun  
Harry the Mock, gun and mack (pimp)  
Sam Fox, mack and brothel owner  
Joe Fox, mack and brothel owner  
Chaim Fox, mack and brothel owner  
Kid Rags, mack, gambler, stuss house owner  
Nigger Rue, stuss house owner  
Sam Boston, gambler, brothel owner, former fagin for little boys, fence. His wife is a pickpocket.  
Benno Myers, gun  
Hymie Saks, runner for a lawyer  
Crazy Itch, gambler  
Dave Reiner, burglar  
Charles Pearlstein, mack, strikebreaker  
Charlie Argument, mack, strikebreaker  
Wolfie Katz, mack  
Sender, disorderly house owner  
Sadie Solomon, Madam  
Louis Werner, disorderly house owner, ex-president IBA  
Messner, white-slave trafficker

There are three groups, those who had nothing to do with prostitution; others who combined pimping with other usually

<sup>59</sup> Albert Fried, *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster in New York* (New York, 1980), xiv.

<sup>60</sup> This is a partial list of those observed in Story 197, JMC.

violent crimes and who sometimes collected protection money from brothels; and finally some of the leading figures in the prostitution racket—Rabbelle, Messner, Sender, Sadie Solomon, Louis Werner, who specialised and had no other criminal interests.

Those leading specialists formed a complex web of business relationships. For example Sadie Chink ran one of four houses owned on Third Avenue by the horrible Messner, one of the few direct importers from Europe. Messner was described

as a heartless pimp; one look at the man is sufficient to convict him: he is short, stocky, walks all spread out: big stomach, clean shaven... this man adorns for hours and hours every day the front of 92 Second Avenue and travels from the door to the curb and back continually.<sup>61</sup>

At the same time Sadie Chink had a partnership in a brothel on Twelfth Street run by Sam Shulem, an old thief, and his wife Sadie Solomon. This last woman was one of the best travelled figures in the New York underworld, having run disorderly houses in Johannesburg, Brazil, Buenos Aires, Panama, Texas, and Vancouver.<sup>62</sup>

Still, these were small fry, and so was the old Rosie Hertz clan. By 1912 there were a handful of empires that generated the really big money. Max Hochstim was no longer in politics, but he was involved in a syndicate said to own twenty-one disorderly hotels in the Tenderloin. The Committee of Fourteen had been pursuing the Hochstim group for years and in 1912 Frederick Whitin, Secretary of the Committee, wrote,

there is no more defiant or dangerous crowd operating today in this city ... all their places give rebates to the girls, their resorts are the rendez-vous of pimps and in spite of our activities, no particular headway has been made against them. They have been driven first from the lower-east-side, 29th Street, and when they were driven out of 29th Street they have reached out further uptown.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Story 197, entry for 18, 19 May 1914; Story 175, JMC. Also on Messner, 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

<sup>62</sup> Story 197, entry for 24 October 1914; Story 871, 6 November 1914, JMC.

<sup>63</sup> *New York World*, 5 March 1913. Frederick Whitin to Reverend Peters, 3 May 1914, Comm. of 14, Box 13. There is extensive documentation here about Hochstim's disorderly-hotel empire.

At last word they were heading for the Bronx. At the same time the old graduates of Jake Wolf's saloon, Mortke Goldberg and the Soviner Brothers along with a few other hoodlums built a 'Vice Trust'. Estimates of its size ranged up to direct or indirect control of some forty-three houses with many hundreds of inmates between West Sixteenth and Fortieth Streets. According to District Attorney Charles Whitman, the trust had its headquarters in a delicatessen on Seventh Avenue. There disputes were settled and profits divided. Early each morning, after paying the madams their \$5 per day and the girls their 50 per cent share of the takings, four collectors would go to the delicatessen and empty out on a table black bags containing the wages of sin. At its height the trust apparently cleared well over a million dollars a year.<sup>64</sup>

While the girls did not live in, they were charged \$3 a day for board and all they got was a midnight snack half way through their eight-hour shift. Judging from the many who came forward to give information once the District Attorney's raids began, it was no fun working for the Vice Trust in the Tenderloin. Here is a letter sent by one Fannie Cohen to a magistrate a year before the District Attorney launched his attacks:

Your honour will no doubt remember a case being brought before you today where the defendant (L Savina) was charged with sitting in front of a drug store was ordered to move on by the officer... Instead of fining said defendant you should have sent him to the island for 6 months for said defendant was sitting watching his disorderly house where we are his slaves and any night your Honour will pass by 439 6th Avenue you will find this same defendant with his watchboys soliciting men to go said House ... as well as across the street 440. Let me inform your Honor that this defendant is an international king of white slavery. I can mention to your Honor a dozen or more houses that he runs and what he learns us inmates of said Houses to do, is a shame to write. We are subjected to asodomy (sic) and also crimes

<sup>64</sup> On the 'Trust', *New York World*, 16 August 1912; *Vigilance*, September 1912; *Warheit*, 16, 17, 25 August, 2, 3 September 1912; *New York Times*, 13 June 1913, 25 March, 29 August, 1 September 1915; Story 105, 8 October 1912 and Story 880, 13 August 1914, JMC; Shoenberg Interview, 50, 207; Winick and Kinsie, *Lively Commerce*, p. 232.

against nature ... on June 21 one of our number while going to Atlantic City jumped overboard and was drowned ...<sup>65</sup>

The Vice Trust was protected by the police and Mortke Goldberg, the most powerful trustee, was the collector, delivering, it was said, \$400,000 a year in protection money. This was the function his mentor Jake Wolf had filled a generation earlier. Then in July 1912 there occurred a sensational murder which, though nobody knew it at the time, spelled the beginning of the end for Jewish commercial vice in New York. Herman Rosenthal, a gambler and former pimp was shot down in broad daylight in Times Square and Lieutenant Charles Becker, head of the Vice Squad, was convicted and executed for the crime, on the probably erroneous theory that Rosenthal was about to tell all about Becker's grafting.<sup>66</sup>

With the police on the defensive, this was the opportunity for District Attorney Whitman and the New York Kehillah's vigilantes under Shoenfeld to launch their attacks on commercial vice. The Soviners fled first, disappearing in 1912 to their hideout in Hoboken. In the following year a second set of raids dislocated the whole trust and Mortke Goldberg ran off to Buenos Aires. His underworld friends wanted him out of the way in the unlikely event that even he might be willing to testify about the graft system. And so he started a new career in brothelkeeping in the healthier Argentine climate.

These bigtime players made the big money. The Soviners owned extensive property. One principal dealer in disorderly houses, the grandfather of a well-known politician, did equally well. Some of the women also prospered. Sadie Solomon, that well-travelled madam, was said to be worth \$50,000 in 1913 and Dora Gold, from Kovno, saved about half as much at her disorderly candy store on First Street from where she

<sup>65</sup> Fannie Cohen to Hon. Magistrate Barlow, Jefferson Market Police Court, 29 June 1911 in Correspondence, Comm. of 14. There is another denunciation of the hated Louis Soviner, relating to his bringing a Lena Cohen from Hot Springs, Arkansas to 440 Sixth Avenue, misfiled with material on the white-slavery convictions of another Lena Cohen and her husband, Morris. James Schneider to George Wickersham, Attorney General, 21 April 1912, Correspondence file 159064 on the Mann Act, USJD. .

<sup>66</sup> For the incident and its pivotal importance for the strengthening of the Kehillah, Goren, *New York Jews*, pp. 148ff.



solicited for prostitutes. Some of the most successful practitioners were victims of cadets who decided to make the best of it. For example, one recent arrival from Budapest was seduced by a member of the noble knights and sold to Mrs. Hymen's Tenderloin brothel. Not liking the regime there she escaped, took up soliciting at the Alhambra Music Hall, and in a short time accumulated \$5000.<sup>67</sup>

As everywhere else, however, prostitution in New York was highly stratified, to say nothing of being unhealthy. Already by 1914 the call-girl racket was beginning uptown, where a telephone call got a girl for a minimum of \$5.<sup>68</sup> But downtown in the tenements at fifty cents a trick, prostitutes commonly lived lives of unremitting toil and inevitable disease. Thus at 143 Allen Street in 1912, Lizzy and Mamie, both forty-five years old and both syphilitic, were sharing a furnished room. Or on East Houston Street, Jennie Silver slaved away to support a two-year-old child and a husband who constantly beat her, dragging around a milk can when soliciting to avoid suspicion.<sup>69</sup>

Back in 1896 the IBA acquired a burial plot at the Washington Park Cemetery in deepest Brooklyn. Some of the members were interred there as they died off in the 1920s and 1930s: Big Aleck Harlig, the three Fox brothers, Sadie Chink's husband Sam Schimil Itscher, and a score of others. What happened to the rest? Max Hochstim is a mile away in another part of the cemetery, interred in a splendid mausoleum befitting the pioneer that he was. Like him, many others associated with the IBA probably made different plans for their eternal rest once they had outlived the golden age of Jewish prostitution, by which time the whole dark episode, and the ban along with it, was largely forgotten. The IBA continues to exist as a thoroughly respectable burial society. Of course characters like Jennie Silver, Lizzy, and Mamie—the chattel of the story—were never eligible to join in the first place.

<sup>67</sup> Stories 880, 13, and 93, JMC. 'Parlour Houses, 108 W. 31st St., Mrs. Hymen', in Investigation. Field Reports on Prostitution, Comm. of 14; 'Prostitution', Box 91, Lillian Wald Collection, CU.

<sup>68</sup> Story 1020, 11 March 1914, JMC.

<sup>69</sup> Stories 76, 29 September 1912 and 160, 4 November 1912 and 3 January 1913, JMC.

*Roads from New York*

Not only are underworld names a topic of amusement, they are also a source of evidence. We can only wonder about the personal characteristics that led to the sobriquet 'Issy Cockroach', for a fence and regular at Jake Wolf's saloon. Sadie Chink looked oriental and the very successful prostitute Jenny Morris, nearly six feet tall, was known as 'Jenny the Factory' because of her rather unusual capacity for work.

Then there are a whole group of individuals whose nicknames testify to the migratory nature of prostitution. 'Sam Pittsburgh', actually Jagoda, was an important IBA member who spent the lean years 1901-6 in that popular vice colony in Western Pennsylvania. 'African Jake', really Sam Jaffe, was another IBA mainstay who fled in the opposite direction, only to return to New York and go into partnership with Sam Pittsburgh in a Bronx whorehouse.<sup>70</sup> Then there are 'Sadie Afrikaner', 'Goldie Cardiff', 'China Morris', 'Sam and Meyer Boston', two pimps called 'Baltimore' and 'Africa', and finally 'Columbus', actually Abe Goldstein. Born in Russia, 'Columbus' boxed the western hemisphere in search of profits from prostitution. In 1909 he was deported from the Transvaal back to New York. His reported address? Segall's café at 76 Second Avenue. But this was only a temporary stop on his way to Boston.<sup>71</sup>

How much did New York's Jewish underworld contribute to prostitution across the country? According to G. K. Turner's nativist, anti-Tammany and ultimately anti-semitic 'Daughters of the Poor', the grafting and ballot-stuffing techniques perfected by the Tammany Hall machine and Lower East Side whorehouse owners and cadets were carried to most of the nation's other leading cities by members of the IBA. Of the so-called 'political procurers' Turner wrote in his influential muckraking piece of 1909,

The date of this new development of the white slave trade outside of New York corresponds almost uniformly with the time when the traders and cadets from the New York red light district introduced

<sup>70</sup> Story 807, JMC.

<sup>71</sup> On Columbus, Consul General, Johannesburg, to Assistant Secretary of State, 1 September 1909, 7 January 1910 in case 18274, State Dept. Minor File 1906-10, USDS.

New York methods into the other cities of the country in 1901 and 1902. Hundreds of New York dealers and cadets are still at work in these other cities. But much more important are the local youths, whom these missionaries of the devil brought by the sight of their sleek prosperity into their trade.<sup>72</sup>

Written in the heat of a local electoral campaign, this sort of statement was part and parcel of the broader national white-slavery panic that was nourished from 1906 to 1914 on traditional American fears of the corrupt city, of well-organised conspiracies, of the evil influence of foreign immigrants, and on anxieties about the liberation of women. As we have observed, anti-semitism naturally became part of this white-slavery hysteria, as it must because of the logic of any such panic. In reality New York Jews had much less central a role in American prostitution than Turner and other nativists alleged. It is true that IBA members got around, but when they managed to wheedle their way into the urban graft systems outside New York it was usually for a relatively short time. It is also true that other cities with large concentrations of Jewish immigrants harboured Jewish prostitution along the lines of the Lower East Side. But nowhere was any aspect of the problem as relatively substantial as in New York, with the possible exception of nearby Philadelphia.

For example, IBA members did insinuate themselves for a time into nearby Newark, New Jersey, where none other than Dr Adler was said to be the collector for the police. However, a feud between the pimps in 1907 led to an exposé, several convictions, and the escape of the principal figure to Panama.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, out in St. Louis by 1902 Max and Louis Soviner had a very nice deal going for themselves.<sup>74</sup> Arriving from the east, they quickly muscled in and took control of nearly a dozen brothels. At the same time Louis Soviner became treasurer of the Hebrew Jefferson Club, established by Police Captain

<sup>72</sup> Turner, 'Daughters of the Poor', 49-50.

<sup>73</sup> *New York World*, 22 December 1912; Report 17 October 1907, 2-4, Lillian Wald Collection.

<sup>74</sup> On the Soviners in St. Louis, *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, 31 January, 20, 21 February, 3 March, 7 August 1903; *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 26, 27 February, 3 March, 19 May 1903. Also, James Wunsch, 'Prostitution and Public Safety. From Regulation to Suppression 1858-1920', (University of Chicago Ph.D., 1976), discusses the incident, pp. 81-3.

Boyd to encourage the Democratic vote. The Soviners' cadets busily delivered the vote, many times over, and Captain Boyd closed his eyes to the Soviner vice empire.

That empire collapsed quickly. By 1903 the crusading Circuit Attorney, James Folk, had begun to seek answers to why so many male votes were tallied in streets where only women resided, that is to say, from whorehouses. Then one of the Soviner prostitutes came forward to complain, typically, that she had been defrauded by one of the brothers. Raids and arrests followed and the Soviners, always managing to stay ahead of the law, jumped bond and fled to Cuba. James Folk rode this episode to the Governorship of Missouri and Lincoln Steffens used Folk's story as the first installment of his classic *Shame of the Cities*.

Similar things naturally went on in places where there were major concentrations of Jewish immigrants. Philadelphia had a well-organised community of disorderly housekeepers and pimps who were reinforced from New York, just ninety miles to the north. About the only difference between the functioning of commercial vice in the two cities is that in Philadelphia the Republicans were in control and the vice chiefs paid protection money to and delivered the vote for the ward leaders of that party. There was also a heavy complement of Jewish prostitutes here, estimated in 1910 to be 900 by Louis Levy, President of the Association for the Protection of Jewish Immigrants.<sup>75</sup>

In 1901 the Law and Order Society, a private prosecuting group, became interested in the problem and in conjunction with Rabbis Henry Berkowitz and Joseph Krauskopf there ensued a frustrating twelve-year effort to cleanse the city. In 1902 the principals like George Idelman were arrested, but typically his accomplices escaped with light sentences while Idelman himself jumped bail.<sup>76</sup> At first some of the brothel inmates were known to be very recent arrivals, some lured right from the port of Philadelphia by runners for fake employment agencies.<sup>77</sup> But soon the familiar pattern of young ghetto

<sup>75</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), appendix 4.

<sup>76</sup> Philadelphia Public Ledger, 21, 24, 27, 28, 29 November 1902, 31 January 1904. *New York Times*, 22 November, 31 January 1904. *Philanthropist*, January 1903. Idelman is called Edelman in 'Daughters of the Poor'.

<sup>77</sup> *Vigilance*, April 1905.

residents drifting into prostitution asserted itself. Even a major crackdown in 1913 and the suicide of Abraham Fink, 'King of the White Slavers', did not quite end the Jewish involvement in Philadelphia commercial vice.<sup>78</sup>

Between 1880 and 1900 some 200,000 Jewish immigrants settled in Chicago and in its West Side ghetto the familiar problems appeared. The Jewish community here reacted vigorously and quickly, as we shall describe later. When Adolf Kraus, President of the International B'nai B'rith, which was based in Chicago, made careful enquiries in 1907, he learned that in the ghetto area some 20 per cent of the traffickers were Jewish. A few years later a badly rattled reform Rabbi Emil Hirsch declared that 75 per cent of Chicago white slavery was in the hands of the Jews, but there is absolutely no evidence for this and the situation was probably not as serious as in New York and Philadelphia. In 1909 Marcus Braun considered the French to be the most dangerous procurers in Chicago.<sup>79</sup>

It is fair to say that in this golden age of commercial vice, most major American cities harboured small communities of Jewish pimps, prostitutes, and brothelkeepers, many drifting in, some staying, other moving on. In Boston the men formed a 'pimp's club' that met at a restaurant on Washington Street.<sup>80</sup> In New Orleans their madams composed 'The Jew Colony' in Bienville Street in the fabled Storyville, prominently advertised in the first edition of *The Blue Book*, the unique guide to that most exotic of all American red-light districts. Interestingly, the term 'Jew Colony' was dropped from later editions because it was believed to be bad for business.<sup>81</sup> San Francisco Jews involved in vice frequented Zuckerman's kosher 'Little Hungarian Restaurant' and bought second-hand furniture from the Leyman Brothers, brothelkeepers themselves.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Vigilance*, September 1912, June, August, September 1913. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 14, 17, 18, 21 August 1912; 3 July, 6 August 1913. *The Peoples of Philadelphia*, ed. Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (Philadelphia, 1973), pp. 283-4.

<sup>79</sup> Adolf Kraus, *Reminiscences and Comments* (Chicago, 1925), 177-9. Hirsch cited in *Chicago Tribune*, 25 September 1909. 52484/C 'Braun's U.S. Investigation. White Slave Traffic', report of 23 January 1909, USIS.

<sup>80</sup> Reports of Inspector Daniel Leonard, 24 April, 6 May 1909 in 52484/11. Also further correspondence on Boston for 1912 in 52809/7e, USIS.

<sup>81</sup> Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans* (University of Alabama, 1974), pp. 100-1, 141. Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter* (New York, 1938), p. 425. *Vigilance*, 1 January 1910.

<sup>82</sup> 52484/9, USIS.



In some of these places, Jewish commercial vice was tied in with the most dangerous elements of organised crime. In Chicago Mike Pike, said to be a member of the IBA, was one of the vice kings of the West Side and was eliminated by enemies in the underworld only in 1931. At the turn of the century Abe and Isadore Shapiro migrated from New York to New Orleans, changed their names to Parker and raised the threshold of violence in Storyville.<sup>83</sup>

On the other hand, most Jewish pimps and prostitutes on the road in America were peaceable enough and minded their own business, much the same way as their counterparts in Asia, Africa, and South America. There were a number of well-trodden paths, one across the northwest through Butte, a wide-open mining town, Portland, and on to Seattle, which was the staging area for Alaska. In 1908 the head of the Jewish charities in Seattle claimed that the city harboured some 300 Jewish prostitutes.<sup>84</sup> Another popular route led to the southwest, and the miserable tolerated cribs of Texas' frontier towns and the mining camps of Arizona. Finally from both coasts there was a regular traffic to the Panama Canal zone and the woman-starved corps of engineers and the army. One US consular official based in Peru who took an interest in the subject was told by the wireless operator on the SS *Oruba*, which plied between New York and Colon, that 'these boats are full of prostitutes going from the Isthmus to their homes to spend the holidays'.<sup>85</sup>

Who made these journeys? There were the individuals forced out of the major cities by the constant moral reform movements of the progressive age. Also, there were the older and less

<sup>83</sup> Report, 17 October 1907, p. 7, Lillian Wald Papers; Herbert Asbury, *Gem of the Prairie* (New York, 1940), p. 276. George Murray, *The Madhouse on Madison St.* (Chicago, 1965), Ch. 30. Rose, *Storyville*, 67.

<sup>84</sup> Andrew Tedesco to Marcus Braun, 29 September 1908, in 52484/1, USIS. Also on Seattle and Butte, *Dillingham Report*, p. 80 and Appendix L. For a major case at Portland, *Vigilance*, August 1912.

<sup>85</sup> L. Frederic Lynch to the Secretary of State, 19 December 1910, with other correspondence, file 811.f 1152, USDS. There is other material on the Panama connection in the diaries of Inspector John Robinson, California Historical Society. Also, *New York World*, 22 December 1912; *Jewish Tribune*, 24 February 1911 on Benjamin Rosenthal; on a pimp managing an Avenue E moviehouse and receiving money from his prostitute in Panama, Abe Shoenberg, Vice Report of 20 November 1913, p. 36, JMC.

desirable prostitutes. In 1910 the Immigration Inspector for the region reported that 'Arizona contains a large number of Russian-Jewish prostitutes ... many of them having husbands and families in New York to whom they remit money weekly, monthly, etc. Most ... were gradually forced westward on account of their age.'<sup>86</sup> It was not unusual to find prostitutes over the age of fifty in the Rocky Mountain mining camps. Pimps also sent experienced prostitutes on mission. Dolly Harlig went on tour to help Big Aleck through some hard times and Rosie Goldberg helped Mortke acquire capital by working her way across the northwest. In fact, Mortke sent another one of his women along the same route. There was chronic hard feeling and jealousy between the two women, both of whom he set up as madams in the Tenderloin, and on one occasion a complaint from Rosie that 'I've been your slave for fifteen years' was repaid with a punch in the face.<sup>87</sup> Still, few managed like Dolly and Rosie to extricate themselves in style from the bordellos of the west, the Canal Zone, and Alaska, the prostitutes' last stops.

Finally, a substantial number of Jewish women who went west were very recent arrivals in the new world. At the beginning rather than at the end of their careers, they barely spoke English, but once broken in, they quickly learned that if caught practising prostitution within three years of landing, they were almost certain to be deported. They were subject to gross exploitation. While Mexican and native-born prostitutes far outnumbered Jewish women in the southwest, a small but steady stream of new immigrants from eastern Europe was brought to the region. Jewish pimps did business at the 'New York Restaurant' at Fort Worth; and at San Antonio, where Jewish and French macks worked in close collaboration, the Immigration Inspector reported there was a particularly heavy concentration of Jewish prostitutes.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Report of Charles Connell, Acting Immigration Inspector, 6 January 1910, in 52484/8C. There are other reports on this region in 52484/23, 52484/8, 8A and 8B. On older prostitutes, Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1967), p. 229.

<sup>87</sup> On Dolly Harlig, Vice Report, 20 November 1913, p. 7; on Rosie Goldberg, Kneeland, *Prostitution*, pp. 93-4, 328.

<sup>88</sup> Reports by F. R. Inspector Stone, 7 June 1909, 52484/8A; and 29 May 1909, 52484/8.

Typical of the kind of people who came through was Abe Rosenwald from Stanton Street on the Lower East Side, who posed as a second-hand clothes dealer and travelled with two sisters virtually just off the boat. Samuel London's Rabbi at El Paso, where there was a thriving 'reservation' sitting right on the border, reported them to the authorities in 1909 and they were arrested in Arizona.<sup>89</sup> This meant deportation for the women, a fate that befell perhaps about 100 Jewish prostitutes in the decade before 1914, including one batch of eighteen deported from Fort Worth not long before the outbreak of hostilities.<sup>90</sup> The whore houses of Texas were nothing to write home about, but could anything be worse than deportation to eastern Europe in 1914?

<sup>89</sup> Report of Charles Connell, 14 June 1909, 1910, 52484/23.

<sup>90</sup> Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service to the Commissioner General, 14 October 1913, 52809/7E, with the prostitutes listed.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Roads to Asia and Africa

#### *Constantinople*

North and South America were only two of the destinations available to the unclean ones. There were other opportunities all over the map, including places reasonably close to home. As the Jewish masses poured out of eastern Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century, small numbers of them filtered into the regions of long-established Sephardi settlement in southern Europe, the Near East, and Asia. Some even travelled down the coast of East Africa, to areas without any sort of Jewish settlement, in search of the livelihoods that were impossible in Russia, Rumania, and Galicia. Among this intrepid minority of migrants there was even a smaller minority, the unclean ones. They turn up plying their particular trade in dozens of places throughout southern Europe, Africa, and Asia, including the major cities of Bulgaria, Bosnia, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, India, Ceylon, China, Manchuria, the Philippines, South Africa, Rhodesia, and Mozambique.

We have had occasion to mention the sad circumstances surrounding the beginnings of Ashkenazi involvement in Salonika and Constantinople, relating to pogrom victims and prisoners of war. From those obscure beginnings at the Ottoman capital there developed to a trade in prostitutes that was second only to that of Buenos Aires. By 1876 according to the newspaper *Stamboul*, well before the subject of white slavery became popular, the Turkish Minister of Justice decided to cleanse Galata of its throngs of foreign prostitutes. They were rounded up and were about to be deported—we are told they filled two ships—but in the end the ambassadors protested and the ships never sailed.<sup>1</sup>

Jewish traffickers had no more of a monopoly in Turkey than in Argentina. In Buenos Aires the French and later the Italians were also heavily represented. In Constantinople Greeks and

<sup>1</sup> Cited in *Bulletin Continental*, May 1882.

Armenians, the trading people of the Levant, shared honours with the unclean ones, keeping brothels and arranging for their inmates to be imported. Furthermore, those inmates represented every nationality in southeastern Europe. If those ships had set sail in 1876 they would have carried their unusual cargoes to Russia, Austria, Romania, Hungary, and Greece.

As far as the Jewish involvement in white slavery is concerned, Constantinople had a twofold importance. It was the home of a large community of Ashkenazi families involved in commercial vice and it was an entrepôt for all points east. According to the Anti-White-Slavery Committee at Alexandria, whose president was the Jewish notable Baron Jacques de Menasce, the 'customary itinerary' from Europe was 'Alexandria, Cairo, or Port Said, Bombay, Colombo, Singapore, Saigon, Hong Kong, and Shanghai'.<sup>2</sup> Even this did not exhaust the possible stops. At the great port of Shanghai the road split and one leg carried north to the rail centre of Harbin in Manchuria while another led south to Manila in the Philippines.

Naturally not everyone who sought their fortunes in the east followed the same path, made every stop, or even left from Constantinople. Much depended on the local conditions prevailing at the moment. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 attracted camp followers to Manchuria and the same is true of the Spanish-American War and the Philippines. At least as far as India, however, the journey was fairly standard, with a stop-over in Egypt before passing through the Suez Canal. And even this Cook's tour of world fleshpots does not exhaust the byeways explored by the era's peripatetic prostitutes and pimps. When conditions were right in East and South Africa that region too became a popular stop. In this chapter we concentrate on the situation in Constantinople at the outset and then follow those who journeyed to Asia and Africa, examining their lives and the small communities that they forged.

Nothing was more disturbing to Jewish opponents of white slavery than the state of affairs at Constantinople on the eve of the First World War. The existence of a thriving community of

<sup>2</sup> *Rapport du Comité Exécutif, Société Internationale Pour la Répression de la Traite des Blanches à Alexandrie* (1907), p. 4, in *Alexandrie* 1C, 13, AIU.



Jewish traffickers and brothelkeepers was confirmed over and over again by pained observers from the B'nai B'rith, ICA, *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* (Relief Organisation of German Jews), *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (League of Jewish Women), and other interested organisations. Yet it was more difficult to make progress there than in Argentina where at least an anti-procuring law was passed in 1913. How can this be explained? First of all, Constantinople was a very busy port, where by 1914 15,000 ships annually disgorged their crews just below the Galata district. As in South America, the local culture was tolerant of prostitutes. After all, the commerce in European women to Turkish harems had been banned only in the 1860s, and while the official market at the Sublime Porte had been abolished, harems themselves still existed. Some traffickers were known to supply them as well as brothels.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, as Samuel Cohen observed of the Turkish authorities after his meetings with them in 1914,

The answer generally given by them when asked why the present state of affairs is permitted, is that the matter does not concern them so long as the inmates of the brothels do not belong to the Mohammedan faith ... Their argument is that if other nations and other religions permit women to act as prostitutes in their own country, why should they be prohibited from doing so in Turkey.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in those few cases where traffickers were brought to justice, the vexed system of capitulations made it almost impossible to punish them. Following the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 each great power maintained its own consular court which practised jurisdiction over those individuals who claimed its nationality. It was easy for enterprising characters when arrested through one consulate to provide false documents to show they were nationals of another country. In the circumstances those original Polish pioneers in Galata's Yukseh Caldirim multiplied and prospered. In 1911 Haskel Rabinowitz, a well-informed local correspondent for the Yiddish press, reported that the traffickers literally formed 'a third Jewish

<sup>3</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 144-52.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of an Enquiry Made in Constantinople on Behalf of the Jewish Association ... by the Secretary Mr. Samuel Cohen* (1914), p. 9.

community'.<sup>5</sup> The similarities with the 'second Jewish world' of Buenos Aires are striking, only in the Turkish context the majority of Sephardim and older Ashkenazi communities were counted as first and second whereas in Buenos Aires the Sephardim were not numerous enough to count.

From the point of view of the settled Ashkenazim at Constantinople, the situation was a disaster. In 1890 Aron Halévy, the leader of that group, wrote that 'exercising the most deadly influence on the young Poles, tolerated brothels full of lost Jewesses exercise their infamous commerce. The houses, which go on for a long way, are a black stain that terminates the good reputation of our German community.'<sup>6</sup> The Sephardic community could more easily afford to ignore the problem since they were not involved. But following the dislocations caused by the two Balkan Wars of 1912-13 even some Sephardi girls drifted into prostitution, causing considerable alarm.<sup>7</sup>

Haskel Rabinowitz reported that 200 families were involved and, assuming that his readers would not believe him, added 'Please don't think I've made a mistake—200 families, not people.' He described what was well-known to locals, that all family members had some sort of function, women collecting money at the brothel door, old people soliciting or helping run the synagogue. Yes, here too there was a separate religious institution that was developed when the respectable Jews barred their doors. Only this one was surrounded by a high brick wall which Chief Rabbi Moses Halévy had caused to be built to hide the ignominy.<sup>8</sup>

In 1915 the Turkish authorities finally tackled this community. Taking advantage of virtually dictatorial powers given him by virtue of Turkey's entry into the First World War, Osman Bedri Bey, the Prefect of Police, rounded up all the culprits that he could find. Osman Bey had long been interested in the problem and had even delivered papers on white slavery at international congresses. Some of the local principals escaped, but when the dust had settled, some 176 individuals were taken into custody. All but a few were Jewish.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Tageblatt*, 27 December 1911.

<sup>6</sup> Aron Halévy to AIU, 7 January 1890, Turquie, IC17.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, *Constantinople*, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Tageblatt*, 27 December 1911.

The eighteen Ottoman subjects were exiled to remote corners of the empire while foreigners were either banished from Constantinople or deported.<sup>9</sup>

The 1915 police swoop not only confirmed once and for all what distressed observers had been writing home about; the Ottoman police also managed to collect information about the nationalities and vocations of the accused. Although US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, one of the leading opponents of white slavery at Constantinople, explained to the State Department, when forwarding the information that the personal details could not be accepted as absolutely accurate, in the aggregate they have value. The majority of those arrested, some 102 out of 176, were Russian, two dozen were Romanian, only nine were Austrian, and six were Greek. Along with his wife, the well-known David Felken, whom Ambassador Morgenthau described as 'one of the most notorious and possibly the most capable of the entire group of those who had been working in this city', hailed from Argentina.<sup>10</sup> Thus the police uncovered a link between the two major centres. And who should turn up as president of the pimps' synagogue? Michael Pasha, the mysterious Michael Moses Salamovitz, one of the principals of the 1892 Lemberg gang who had been protected by the Turkish authorities. Allegedly an Ottoman spy, Michael Pasha's career spanned over a quarter of a century.<sup>11</sup>

Amongst the 176 the division of labour was fairly sharp. Eighteen individuals, fourteen of them women, kept brothels; some ninety-one men pimped at least part time and nine procured; most of the others seem to have filled auxiliary services and are described as tradesmen, barbers, cooks, haberdashers, jewellers, and even one as an interpreter. Finally there were two Romanian specialists, Joseph Germanoff and Nathan Ishar, who helped land new imports from incoming ships.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Morgenthau to the Secretary of State, 13 March 1914, with lists and photographs, 867.1152 (M353-39), USDS.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> On Salamovitz, *Traite des Blanches*, July 1901, where his alleged connection with the Turkish police is discussed. The allegations are contained in a pamphlet which has proven untraceable: Albert Ettiges, *Michael Salomonovich, Chef des Marchands d'Esclaves et Agent de la Police Secrète à Constantinople* (Zurich, 1901). Also, Paris, 19 May 1910, in Jacob Schild, 1910/2, VPA.

Haskel Rabinowitz had observed these two characters at work visiting ships which stopped off on the way from Odessa to Cairo, and occasionally he saw the men convince girls in transit to disembark instead of going on to Egypt. In the local vernacular Germanoff and Ishar were 'Pezewenks', Ottoman cadets or alphonsees, extremely well-dressed and sporting two gold watch chains across their waistcoats. As a Jewish journal noted in 1910 after Chief Rabbi Nahoum had tried to convince the authorities to do something about this class of characters, 'You can never mistake the Pezewenk after a few months' residence in the Levant.'<sup>12</sup>

No more than Zwi Migdal, however, was this community a monolith. Again it is a case of individual entrepreneurs and families banded together for mutual protection and comfort, and specialised for efficiency. And among such criminals and shady characters no formal organisation could eliminate conflict and dishonour. With wonderful irony David Felken in 1911 applied to the Austrian Consular Court for action against Moses Salzman, a trafficker born in Sadagora in Bukovina and residing in Czernowitz. Felken charged that Salzman, who was in league with Jacob Schild of Vienna, had twice played a dirty trick on him. In 1909 Salzman had sold Felken a prostitute for his brothel, but 'After 3 days she disappeared, as I suspected with the help of Salzman, probably in order to be brought to another house'. Salzman also disappeared but turned up two years later. Felken then bought another girl from him and was twice bitten. He told the bemused Consul, 'Yesterday night the girl disappeared with all her effects. Early today I encountered Salzman in the company of this girl in Galata and had him arrested. Since he claimed to be a Rumanian citizen, I brought him first to the Rumanian Consul General, where it was established that he was not a Rumanian.'<sup>13</sup> It seems almost unfair that Salzman was deported to Czernowitz.

Felken was far from loved. When Joseph Blumenzweig, a Romanian, was convicted at Lemberg in 1906 of attempting to procure Rivka Fingerhut, an unemployed maid living at Stryj,

<sup>12</sup> *Emmanuel*, 30 September 1910.

<sup>13</sup> Deposition of Jacob Felken, 15 March 1911 in Salzman, 1910/1, VPA.

for prostitution in Bulgaria, he described Felken as a usurer. Since Blumenzweig did not have the money to purchase the tickets for the journey, he had written to Felken for funds. While waiting for the money to arrive he was arrested. Apparently Felken supplemented the earnings from his brothel and from the trafficking of women to Turkey by earning interest from the region's freelancers.<sup>14</sup>

In his dispatch about the Turkish police raid, Ambassador Morgenthau wrote to the Secretary of State 'that up till about fifteen years ago, this line was principally occupied by Austrians; that most of this traffic has of recent years fallen into the hands of Russians; ... and [that] their principal sources of supply are Galicia, Roumania and southern Russia.' The low number of Austrians caught in the net is surprising, but not decisive proof that the Galicians and Bukovinians had given way to the Russians. The Hapsburg police were tracking Austrian traffickers to Turkey right up until the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. As at Buenos Aires, it seems that not all the Jewish participants in commercial vice belonged to the same synagogue-centred community, and that at Constantinople the Austrians remained apart.

Galicia was not the only Hapsburg territory to send forth its tribute to Constantinople. Earlier we saw that by the late 1860s, Muslim, Jewish, and Armenian traffickers were at work in and around Budapest. This continued to be the case and on occasion they came into sharp focus when transports notable for their size were intercepted by the authorities. In 1899 Samuel Bahr was stopped as he was about to leave Budapest for Galata with twenty-five girls. The door at his business premises appropriately carried the sign, 'Bahr, exporter to the Orient'.<sup>15</sup>

There were many Hungarians involved at the time and Bahr's subagents undoubtedly included the infamous Hirshfelds, Julie and Anton, probably the most prosecuted couple in the annals of white slavery. Born in the 1850s and spanning the whole era, the Hirshfelds' antics in recruiting both innocents and prostitutes alike can be traced right up to the eve of the

<sup>14</sup> Police Lemberg to Zentralstelle, Vienna, 30 January 1906, in Blumenzweig, 1906/2, VPA.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Pappritz, *Der Mädchenhandel und Seine Bekämpfung* (Berlin, 1924), pp. 5-6. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, 14 November 1899.



First World War. In 1893 they were involved in a particularly nasty venture with one Solomon David, a Romanian. David peddled cheap rings from door to door in the poor Jewish quarters of Pest always on the lookout for pretty girls. If he succeeded in finding one who was willing to listen to a sales talk about the virtues of Constantinople, David would promise to send along a friend who knew about jobs there tutoring the children of rich Turks. That would be the opportunity for Julie Hirshfeld or another agent, like Achmed Moskitos, to enter the picture and actually induce victims to leave for Turkey.<sup>16</sup>

From Hungary the route usually led along the Danube by river steamer to Galatz in Romania and then on to Turkey by one of the frequent coastal vessels sailing down the Black Sea. Until 1884 when as an economy measure it was stopped, Hungarian policemen always escorted the river boats as far as the Romanian border. But the deterrent seems to have done little good, especially since Romanian officials encouraged the importation of prostitutes in order to keep Romanian girls pure and also raked off a return from the exporters who dispatched girls on to Turkey. As a Turkish journal put it in 1882, 'The connivance of certain Romanian officials, for whom gold is not a chimera, favours the movement of prostitutes.'<sup>17</sup> That was a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

Given the circumstances, Romania became an important entrepôt for Turkey, with Jews and Greeks playing an important role in the traffic. There was no Romanian trading class to speak of; and the systematic foreclosing to the persecuted Jewish population of one economic activity after another by the brutal Romanian government surely pushed some men and women both into commercial vice. This is the explanation for the Romanian traffickers and pimps attached to the Constantinople community run by Felken and Salamovitz; for the Romanians in the Ashkenazi burial society at Buenos Aires; or for that matter for the ten Romanian traffickers deported from Alexandria in 1903 at the behest of the Austrian Consul, since the Romanian Consulate would never have bothered.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 342-4. Also, Berlin list of traffickers (1908), Ch. Two, note 9, above.

<sup>17</sup> Kemeny, *Hungara*, pp. 141-2, 305-8. *Bulletin Continental*, May 1882.

<sup>18</sup> On the deportations, 'Szarvasy Memorandum', 1905/1, VPA.

Over the years the ships from Odessa replaced those from the Romanian city of Galatz as the primary carriers of women to Constantinople's brothels. We have already met characters like Chaim Rosenblitt and Chaya Jacob, and the Chaim Pick gang, who lured innocent girls from Odessa's Jewish district to Turkey. By 1884 the Russian Police at the Black Sea port had appointed a special agent to keep watch on female passengers leaving through the port, and in 1896 the police chief there claimed that the embarking of innocent victims was impossible. He added, however, that there were some ten to twelve cases per year of Jewish men taking out their wives voluntarily and then selling them to brothels.<sup>19</sup> To keep those dozens of pimps employed at the Turkish capital, the total traffic must have been heavier than this.

Speaking of the women from the Hapsburg regions, the knowledgeable Austrian Consul at Constantinople wrote in 1896,

Most of these girls have already practised professional prostitution earlier in their homeland and from need as well as in the hope of lucrative earnings, throw themselves into the arms of Galician and Bukovinan procurers who accompany them unmolested via Budapest-Belgrade or via Bukarest-Galatz-Kustendje to Constantinople and deliver them to brothels.<sup>20</sup>

Some of these women have already crossed our path and others young and old, travelling with pimps, in pairs and alone, make fleeting appearances in the police files.<sup>21</sup>

Yet when all is said about voluntary prostitution, there are still a baffling number of atrocious cases of white slavery at Constantinople. This is not true for locales further to the east. What would entice an honest young woman in pursuit of a job as governess to go to India or Manchuria? Even middle-class women occasionally got caught up in the net. As a Jewish journal observed, 'Unfortunately the poor middle-class Jews in

<sup>19</sup> *First International Congress for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic* (London, 1899), pp. 25-6. Shrank, *Mädchenhandel*, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> 'Überwachung Mädchenhandler', 6 May 1896, 1904/2, VPA.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Golda Prager, Peppi Beiner, Yenta and Nehama Kammengiesser in 1906/1, 1906/2, 1910/1, VPA.

Russia and Romania are not discriminating, and the Pezewenk is able to delude Jewish girls of those regions under the pretext of obtaining for them employment as teachers in wealthy Turko-Jewish families.<sup>22</sup>

As awful as any case in the annals of white slavery is one that Samuel Cohen learned about from a Russian journalist while on his visit to Turkey. The young writer, who was almost surely Haskel Rabinowitz, had recently been informed by the Committee for the Protection of Girls in Odessa that a Jewish girl aged seventeen had been trafficked to Constantinople. This was almost thirty years after Chaim Pick's gang had been uncovered and almost twenty years since the Russians said it was impossible. How many others had there been in the meantime?

With the help of a photograph and with the advice of a local postman, the journalist found the victim after days of searching. The madam did not hinder the departure and the girl was rescued. According to her story, she had been made love to by a young man at home in Odessa, and in her compromised state was easily convinced to elope with him to Constantinople, where her lover said he had a fine business. She was hidden in the coal bunkers of the ship, a familiar feature in oriental white slavery. She was put straight into a brothel, beaten when she resisted, and sent to hospital when it turned out she had contracted syphilis from her trafficker. And she was forced back into the house on the threat that unless she obeyed, she would be turned over to the Russian consul who would deliver her to the anti-semitic Russian police. Unfortunately, the story seems too elaborate for her to have contrived.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, looking at the women as a class, how did they progress? As was the case elsewhere, it depended on luck, good looks, and hard work. A few Galician prostitutes made good. Gusta Farer, whose son Usher procured for her, made a big profit in 1910 when she sold her brothel in Synagogue Street; and she still had another place at Brusa, the site of an ancient Jewish settlement in Anatolia.<sup>24</sup> As in Buenos Aires, however, there was a social division between prostitutes. There as a

<sup>22</sup> *Emmanuel*, 30 September 1910.

<sup>23</sup> Cohen, *Constantinople*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>24</sup> On the Farers, 1907/3 and 1914/5, VPA.

general rule the French were said to charge more and serve the middle class while the Jews formed the proletariat. In Constantinople the class division followed the geographical boundary between the two European districts, Galata and Pera. In Galata the prostitutes, who were mostly Jewish and were housed in brothels, served the sailors and poor Turks. In Pera there were more 'flash' prostitutes, some their own bosses, whose clientele came from the better off Turks and foreigners. For the most part these women, many of whom worked in night clubs and brasseries, and their keepers were Greek, Armenian, French, Romanian, and Russian.

By all accounts the life of an average prostitute at Galata was not much of an improvement over Galicia. As Samuel Cohen wrote,

I thought that the sights I witnessed in Rio de Janeiro were bad, but these brothels in Constantinople beggar description. The inmates of the brothel are seated on low stools or on boxes or on low couches, with almost nothing on in the way of clothes. Their faces are painted and powdered, but the haggard look in their eyes cannot be hidden. In almost every case, each prostitute sits in a small compartment not more than 20 to 24 inches wide with a wire netting in front facing the street. Some few have small windows ... They permit the girls to call out to the passers by. In every house the 'Madame' sits near the door or close at hand to watch over the inmates. The whole scene is revolting.<sup>25</sup>

European sensibilities were more offended by the Asian than by the Latin American ambience. But it is clear that girls who got caught up in this cheap meat market stood little chance of becoming wealthy.

### *East of Suez*

The completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 opened up Asia and East Africa to Europe's peripatetic pimps and prostitutes. Before the pivotal date, we hear about small numbers of them in India. Judging from the claims of Sara Kamoieski, a Bombay brothelkeeper, and twenty-seven of her co-workers, they were present at the creation of city's red-light district in 1868. In

<sup>25</sup> Cohen, *Constantinople*, p. 6.

1894 these women petitioned the authorities there for protection against the Bombay Midnight Mission, spearheaded by the British purity reformer, Alfred Dyer. The missionaries warned away customers at the brothel doors and paraded with placards reading 'Stop, Eternity is Just Ahead'. The women bombarded them with garbage and more than one missionary was beaten up. It is difficult to tell who needed protection from whom. But Sara signed a memorial on behalf of these 'defenceless European women residing in 2 streets, viz. Cursetji Sukhlaji Street within the Fort of Bombay, where they have resided for the last 30 years and during that time have never been reported to the government'. This was the main street in Bombay's so-called segregated area and Kamoski's group must have started out there years before as prostitutes, and moved up to own their own houses.<sup>26</sup>

From Calcutta there are also some early echoes. In 1866 there was a widely publicised murder there of one Isaac Greenman, who was killed in the street during a quarrel about a self-styled 'slave' whom he had brought out from Odessa. The local press reaction to this 'shame' to the 'conquering race, the white aristocracy, the civilizing power', makes it clear that a small colony of poor European adventurers was already resident in Calcutta.<sup>27</sup>

The late Isaac Greenman had arrived from Egypt, where he ran a 'grog shop'. This was the typical path of progress. After mid-century increasing numbers of Ashkenazi Jews moved into Egypt, swelling the Jewish populations of Alexandria, Cairo, and to a lesser extent Port Said.<sup>28</sup> These were poor people commonly engaged in marginal economic activities and a few of them inevitably drifted into the unclean sphere there or made Egypt one of their stops on the long path to India and beyond.

Police data for Alexandria in 1903 show that between 70 and 80 per cent of the prostitutes in tolerated houses there were Jewish women from Galicia, Bukovina, and Romania. At that time the Austrian Consul in the city arranged for the deportation of twenty-two Austrian and Romanian procurers, many of

<sup>26</sup> *Sentinel*, May, June, July 1894, June 1895.

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj* (London, 1980), p. 124.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (New York, 1969), pp. 8ff.



them well-known in their craft, individuals like Israel Klopper of Rio and Joseph Stark, who turns up in the 1915 Constantinople police raid.<sup>29</sup>

In response to these developments the Jewish Association of London dispatched several emissaries to Egypt, including Claude Montefiore and Albert Phillips, to confirm the facts and spur local notables to action. Phillips made contact with a very famous figure in Alexandria, Mr Rudolph, a Jewish convert to Christianity who ran a charitable asylum that all communities participated in and trusted. From Rudolph he learned of the Jewish women, that

... the larger number come voluntarily: some from Russia but mostly from Romania. They are sunk too low in their own country, in which they are the dregs of the land, not otherwise too refined. They live in no man's land, have no political or social rights, or privileges, any more than the beasts of the field, with whom they are classed. What can be expected of such, but the almost certainty of becoming a pariah class existing and increasing in such numbers as to necessitate migration to other countries, contaminating the atmosphere wherever they go, and sinking lower and lower as they journey south; until as I have been informed, in India the poorest of the poor will not even be buried with them, and they have a cemetery all to themselves.<sup>30</sup>

The situation was truly pitiful but should again be seen in perspective. While Jewish women were heavily represented in the houses in Alexandria's two-mile long Sister Street, through Egypt's major cities the Greeks were an unrivalled majority among European prostitutes, to say nothing of the throngs who came from the Levant. The situation got so bad that in 1912 the Greek government passed a law requiring women going abroad to obtain a permit from their local town mayors. The Italians also were heavily involved and in 1915 a major gang was broken up in Genoa that had been shipping women from Italy and Malta on to Egypt.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> 'Szarvasy Memorandum', 1905/1, VPA.

<sup>30</sup> Albert Phillips to Mr Halford, 19 April 1903, in 31 October 1903, ICA, vol. 1. On Rudolf, Landau, *Egypt*, pp. 253-4, 264.

<sup>31</sup> *Vigilance Record*, April 1912. *Traite des Blanches*, September 1909. Coote comments in *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 November 1908. On the Italians, 'Memorandum', 30 July 1915 in FO 371/2513/111991. PRO.

Nor did Jewish prostitutes always perish miserably in India. Throughout the Orient there were some real opportunities as we shall see. The risks were great, to be sure, but some of these voyagers managed to do reasonably well. What is known of the small communities of Jewish prostitutes strung out from Egypt to the Philippines? To judge from contemporary comment, they made a strong impression upon the rulers of the British Raj. Thus Rudyard Kipling in his 'Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House', writing of Calcutta's red-light district,

From Tarnau in Galicia  
To Juan Bazar she came  
To eat the bread of infamy  
And take the wages of shame.

Even Lord Kitchener, at the time Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, wrote about them, complaining that they were too numerous and indecent for the good of his young soldiers.<sup>32</sup> But official ideology took the opposite position and insured a role for European prostitutes; largely Jewish, on the grounds that they preserved the purity of the ruling British race. The police chief of Bombay explained,

As regards the English prostitute, it has for years been an unwritten law to draw a distinction between her and her foreign European sister. The latter is accepted as an ugly but necessary fact; the former if found, is 'induced' to leave India. This unwritten law is known far and wide and ... has arisen ... [for] preserving as far as possible the moral character of the governing race.<sup>33</sup>

It was the same ideology that encouraged foreign prostitutes in Turkey, Romania, and elsewhere.

Given all the comments about their presence in India, it is surprising how modest the numbers were who actually made the trek east of Suez. The totals were certainly lower than the Jewish Association was led to believe by reports from local Jews

<sup>32</sup> Earl Kitchener to Major-General John Stratford Collins, 22 August 1907, Mss. Eur. A77, IOL.

<sup>33</sup> S. M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary to Government, Judicial Department, Bombay, 2 January 1913, L/P&J/6/1207, IOL. Hereafter cited as 'S. M. Edwardes, 2 January 1913'.

and Christian missionaries. In July 1914, on the eve of the war, the Jewish Association received a most urgent message from India, an appeal from a group of public figures, including the Viceroy's wife, a host of former provincial governors and their wives, the Bishop of Calcutta and Miss Louise Sassoon, daughter of a local Jewish notable. This impressive group, put up to the task by Christian rescue workers in India, asked that a Yiddish speaking emissary be sent out to survey the ground and begin rescue work among the subcontinent's Jewish prostitutes.<sup>34</sup>

The outbreak of hostilities prevented the request from being followed up. But Samuel Cohen succeeded in getting the imperial government to undertake a survey. The results showed that in 1916 there were only some 186 Jewish prostitutes in India, and they were divided between Jews from Europe, totalling 101, and from Persia and Iraq making up the balance. It is true that there had been a marked decrease since some had been deported as enemy aliens. But there is abundant and firm evidence, since secret prostitution was virtually impossible here for Europeans, that even before the war there were never more than some 250 European Jewish women practising prostitution at any one moment.<sup>35</sup>

Most were located in the two great coastal cities, Bombay and Calcutta, where they served imperial soldiers and bureaucrats. Small numbers were reported in the region's other major cities like Karachi and Rangoon. Up north at the Punjabi capital of Lahore, Jewish pimps were in the habit of leaving their women penniless only to reappear after their workers had accumulated some money. Things were more civilised to the south at Colombo, where until she was deported to Marseilles in 1913, the famous and rich Caroline Goldenberg boasted that

<sup>34</sup> 14 October 1915, ICA vol. 1. The full exchange of correspondence between the notables, Samuel Cohen and the Indian government is in L/P&J/6/1416, IOL.

<sup>35</sup> JAGM, 20 February, 5 October 1916, 31 May 1917. F. A. M. Vincent, Commissioner of Bombay, to Secretary Government of Bombay, 24 July 1916; and 'Enquiry by J. A. Regarding Prostitution Among Jewesses in India. Answers from Local Officials', in P/9952 Judicial Series, pp. 245-57. Samuel Cohen to Under-secretary of State, 7 December 1916, with minutes of 23 November 1916, L/P&J/6/4800, IOL. For some pre-war data, Memorandum to the Marquess of Crewe, 24 July 1913, L/P&J/6/4346 (1912).

she had imported 1,000 girls in her twenty years of brothel-keeping in Ceylon.<sup>36</sup>

Beyond the British Raj there were further concentrations. In 1916 the Jewish Association's correspondent in India said that 'Singapore was perhaps even worse than any other part of the East'.<sup>37</sup> With an American army of 60,000 in the Philippines following the Spanish-American War of 1898, it was an easy jump for pimps and prostitutes to reach Manila. In 1902 Rabbi Stephen Wise, then based on the Pacific coast at Portland, Oregon, wrote to the Jewish Association that a local resident had just returned to Portland after eighteen months with the US Army Hospital Corps at Manila;

According to the statement of my informant, a large number of Jewish women in Manila are to be found in the ranks of prostitution ... at one time the number reached 200, but ... now the number is less than 100, thanks to the measures of the American Government. These women are mainly of Galician, Russian or Rumanian birth. It is almost too shaking to put to paper, but according to Mr. Rubinstein, the statement of a man that he is a Jew is followed invariably by the question 'Have you any nice women to sell?' ... They are in the main ignorant and unlettered, and have come to the Philippine Islands via Bombay, or Singapore; Japan or China.<sup>38</sup>

Similar crowds descended upon the rail centre of Harbin in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. As observed later, 'hosts of parasites followed the Tsarist army to its headquarters at Harbin. The life of extraordinary dissipation led by some members and the hangers-on of that army is a historical fact.'<sup>39</sup> Harbin was a city that materialised out of the uninhabited steppe when it became the centre for the construction of the Chinese-Eastern Railway. Its frontier ambiance and

<sup>36</sup> Note 35, especially 'Enquiry'. Also documents from Deputy Commissioner Lahore, 13 December 1912; Chaplain of Lahore, 28 November 1912; G. B. H. Fell, Secretary of Government Burma, 7 January 1913; Lieutenant Colonel J. Ramsay, Baluchistan, 22 January 1913; all in L/P&J/6/4346. And H. M. Wilson, Ceylon, 4 March 1913, L/P&J/6/1225.

<sup>37</sup> JAGM, 20 February 1916.

<sup>38</sup> Rabbi Stephen Wise to Rabbi S. Singer, 6 July 1902, in 31 October 1903, ICA vol. 1.

<sup>39</sup> *League of Nations. Committee of Enquiry into the Traffic in Women and Children in the Far East. Report to the Council*, 10 December 1932, p. 35.

popularity with prostitutes long outlasted the end of hostilities in 1905. The Japanese were heavily represented, as were the French. Jewish women went to Harbin from outposts on the Asian coast like Vladivostock and Shanghai, and its attractions became part of the prostitutes' folklore in Poland:

A girl goes without a penny  
She takes her pocketbook and goes to Harbin  
In Harbin its good, no better can it be  
In Harbin its good—the money is brought into the house.<sup>40</sup>

From Egypt to the Philippines, at any given time early in the century there were perhaps 700 or 800 Jewish women plying the trade of prostitution, along with a few hundred pimps. Numbers apart, the most salient feature of the Asian traffic was that at its core were a group of families of varying complexity, many originating at Czernowitz. After all, that is where the term 'Bombien' was coined to describe these characters. A simple example is the three Stanger sisters, Rivka procuring in Europe, Anna keeping a brothel at Port Arthur on the coast of Manchuria, and Mina keeping another in Tientsin in China. More complex is the connection between the Schachter sisters: Lotti married to Aron Riemer and Rachel to Mottl Chussel, who in turn was just one of three Chussel brothers. Then there were the mothers and fathers. This web of relationships tied in Czernowitz and Bukovina with brothels in Constantinople, India, and Shanghai.<sup>41</sup>

At its simplest the traffic meant the sojourning of couples to greener pastures. In 1906 Aron Riemer, who owned a cab at Czernowitz, left there with Lotti Schachter and a few months later the couple turned up in Penang, Malaya, where they were making the rounds of European brothels.<sup>42</sup> Most of the women were not as lucky as Lottie Schachter, however, because they did not have reliable husbands. That meant that in order to reach the East, or even Egypt, they were at the mercy of pimps whose main preoccupation was to get them into debt.

<sup>40</sup> Wanwild, *Bayne Yidn*.

<sup>41</sup> Reconstructed from Czernowitz list 1907/1, VPA. Also, Stanger, 1906/2, VPA.

<sup>42</sup> Aron Riemer, 1906/3, VPA.



This is exactly what happened to Rose Kram, who took up with Samuel Schuh, a room painter and pimp in Lemberg. Kram worked for him there before they travelled to Alexandria and Cairo in 1903, where she decided that he was exploiting her. When she tried to leave him, Schuh presented her with a bill for 240 Kronen, the cost of her passage to Egypt. He then put her in Bertha Grossman's brothel in Alexandria where it took Rosa three months to pay off the debt.<sup>43</sup>

The Austrian Consul in Alexandria described this situation as being endemic. Local brothelkeepers charged fourfold for clothing and other supplies to put their inmates deeper in debt. At that point an inmate was 'generally transmitted to a brothel in Cairo or Port Said, more rarely to India or China. But her belongings are retained by her former owner to cover the remainder of her would be debt. Thus a procuress in Alexandria had two large stores filled with coffers, retained in that way.'<sup>44</sup>

Even if these women cleared their debts in Egypt they incurred new liabilities getting to India. The Bombay Chief of Police noted that 'sometimes when they have shaken themselves almost free of debt, the "fancy man" swoops down from Port Said or Singapore and fleeces them of all their ready money.' To keep going they borrowed from the local userer at 40 per cent. One character named Finkelstein, Bombay's banker for prostitutes, was deported in 1913 after amassing a considerable fortune in this way.<sup>45</sup> He was the Asian counterpart of Argentina's Ema the Millionaire.

Debts apart, what was the life like in the East? Like elsewhere it depended upon what sort of brothel one went into. In India the European houses were clearly divided into three classes. While all were better than the Asian houses, a first-class European establishment, reserved for the upper reaches of imperial society, was much more lucrative and sanitary than a third-class place. Jewish women were to be found in all three classes of house, virtually all kept by former Jewish prostitutes who had made good. Police kept a careful watch on all of the houses and madams knew they would be deported for infractions

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Schuh, 1905/1, VPA.

<sup>44</sup> 'Szarvasy Memorandum', 1905/1, VPA.

<sup>45</sup> 'S. M. Edwardes, 2 January 1913', for the following also.

of the rules. The Bombay police chief noted of the city's nineteen European houses and 126 women in 1913, 'as a general rule the mistresses are not unduly hard upon the women ... The "Mistress" has usually something at stake and cannot afford to show undue cruelty or keep a really disorderly house.' In China, the Philippines, and elsewhere beyond British rule, however, the regime was probably worse.

Another factor that determined the womens' fate was the proximity of their pimps. As in South America, the alphonse kept women at work all over the region, travelled between cities collecting payment for past debts or current work, and spent most of their time at certain home bases. Not only did the absence of the men enable women in Rio to salt away more money, it also temporarily removed the threat of violence. For the spectre of physical harm was always present in the ambivalent relationships that developed between the partners. At Bombay for instance Rosa Schweitzer complained to the police in 1887 that Leffanski, her pimp who kept a brothel in Calcutta, had assaulted her when she refused to go to Europe to procure fresh women. The notorious Nathan Spieler was deported from Singapore in 1912 when one of his terrified women went to the police and swore out a complaint against him.<sup>46</sup>

In the East there were several home bases, including Calcutta, where the influential missionary movement spurred the police into uncovering in 1893 three clubs consisting of about fifty European pimps who controlled some seventy local women.<sup>47</sup> They may have lived there because the Bombay authorities were stricter. The size of another base at Shanghai was probably about the same, and the inner workings of that group are particularly worth exploring. Like many of the other way stations in their path, Shanghai was divided between a prosperous Sephardic population which in this case had settled there in the mid-nineteenth century as part of the great Sassoon

<sup>46</sup> Henry L. Harrison, Commissioner of Police Calcutta, to Chief Secretary Government Bengal, 6 February 1888. Government of India, Home Department Proceedings, Judicial, July 1888, 3200 IOL. On Spieler, Austrian Consul Shanghai, 16 September 1913, in Nussem Lechner file, 1913/1, VPA.

<sup>47</sup> Rev. John Ashton to Private Secretary, Lieutenant Governor Bengal, 26 April 1894. John Lambert, Police Commissioner Calcutta, to Chief Secretary, Government Bengal, 22 May 1894, J&P 950/1895, IOL.

trading firm of Baghdad, and Ashkenazi immigrants from Europe. The small colony of unclean ones were attracted by the growing population of European traders who were gaining concessions in the great port, and by its central geographical position, offering excellent communications up and down the Asian coast.

By the turn of the century there were at least two major western groups at Shanghai, one a mixed French gang centring on the brothel of 'Albert the Greek', actually one Albert Cohen. This nefarious lot shipped French women not only to China, but also to Manchuria, and even as far as Alaska. It also had links with the most resourceful French trafficker of the era, 'George le Cuirassier', also known as George Hayum and actually born George Haymann in Paris in 1865. His enterprising gang not only trafficked French women to Asia but brought Japanese girls to South Africa, where they were put to work in brothels frequented by the indentured Chinese mine workers who were also being imported to the Rand.<sup>48</sup>

The other group, the eastern-European expatriates, made their headquarters at the boarding houses at Haimovich, a Romanian, and Guttman, a Bukovinan known to his intimates as 'Toothless Itzig'.<sup>49</sup> By 1904 a motley collection of about a score of experienced traffickers were assembled at these dives, a number of them from Guttman's hometown of Suczawa, living off local prostitutes and distributing other women throughout the Far East, to Harbin, Tientsin, and Vladivostock. They included Samuel Schuh, who came here after he was expelled from Alexandria for exploiting Rosa Kram; Mottl Russ, whom we have also encountered on a round-the-world tour that wound up in Buenos Aires; Aron Bussgang, whose wife Malka was based back at Cairo; a Russian called 'Aron the Japanese' for reasons that are easy to guess. They were all in place to take advantage of the Russo-Japanese War and they

<sup>48</sup> On the French gang, 'Individus suspects', n.d., F14855; 'Vladivostock, 1911-14', F14862, AN. Also on Hayum, 'Pourvoyeurs-Courtiers des Maisons de Tolerance', DB 411 PP; Charles van Onselen, 'Prostitutes and Proletarians, 1886-1914', Unpublished Paper, pp. 33-4. *Vigilance Record*, July 1902.

<sup>49</sup> On the east European group, Nussem Lechner, 1913/1; Aron Spieler, 1906/3; Wechsler, Neger, Langberg, Blum, 1912/2; Aron Bussgang, 1905/1; Bertha Blumenreich, Mottl Russ, 1914/5, VPA.

made repeated trips to bring the Russian army at Harbin what they described to the police as 'supplies and provisions'.<sup>50</sup>

In 1905 they were reinforced by the two most dynamic characters of the lot, whose travels are truly notable, Nussem Lechner, also from Suczawa, began in 1895 by trafficking a girl to Constantinople and then moved between the following points, always living off women: Alexandria, Colombo, Aden, Port Said, Zanzibar, Cairo, Constantinople, Shanghai. Soon after arriving at Shanghai Nathan Spieler, alias Nate Neger, became known all over East Asia because, according to the police, he became the main financier of the white-slave traffic between northern and southern China, amassing 45,000 Kronen in a short time. He kept women and had shares in brothels as far apart as Constantinople, Bombay, and Singapore; and his photograph, signed in his *nom de guerre*, 'Nate of Shanghai', could be found in a bar run by the 'Jew Kid', a local gangster in Ikolo in one of the southern Philippine Islands. This was a far cry from the pretzel baking that Spieler had forsaken as a youth.<sup>51</sup>

The gang at Haimovich's and Guttman's boarding houses dissolved before the First World War. Some members drifted to other climates, Lechner and his girl ran off to Sarajevo in 1913 with a supply of Chinese vases just before the police were about to arrest him for living off immoral earnings. We last hear of Lechner selling groceries to the brothelkeepers at the Bosnian capital and that is probably what he was doing on 28 June 1914, that fateful day for Sarajevo and the world.<sup>52</sup> Spieler was deported from Singapore to Egypt for beating up his local girl. Motion was at the heart of the white-slave traffic and there is little doubt that these characters kept moving for years to come.

And what of their women? As in other regions distant from home they helped keep themselves going by maintaining a vestige of religious observance. Thus in the Philippines, they were said to be

not drunken and hilarious and [they] frequently weep over their degradation. Special services were held for these unfortunates on the

<sup>50</sup> Protokoll, Aron Bussgang, 16 February 1905 at Shanghai, 1905/1, VPA.

<sup>51</sup> Nussem Lechner, 1913/1. Neger, 1912/2, VPA.

<sup>52</sup> Sarajevo, 7 August 1913 in Nussem Lechner file, 1913/1, VPA.

High Holidays, which all attended; the earnestness of their participation was a moving sight. Nearly all these women send regular remittances to their homes—some of them as much as 100 dollars monthly.<sup>53</sup>

The patronising sentimentality of Rabbi Stephen Wise's informant is clear to see; but as we have observed the report itself corresponds detail by detail with those from other places. Remitting money home was especially widespread from the East. The Bombay police chief described how the women 'often support their relatives in Southern Austria, Poland and Russia out of the wages of their shame; and if anyone cares to pay a visit to the General Post Office in Bombay on the morning of the outgoing mail he will find several of these "*declassés*" sending money home to parents and kinsfolk.'<sup>54</sup>

One such individual was Dina Gontcharoff, whose parents lived in Odessa. She was particularly fortunate, having travelled out with a cousin, like herself a prostitute. Dina was able to keep completely free of pimps, wisely turning down an offer of 500 Rupees to go into partnership with a man. The local alphonsees were so angry they made false accusations against her to the police.<sup>55</sup> But the general practice of sending money home shows that many of these women could accumulate savings, and it was very well known among the authorities in Asia and Europe that prostitutes commonly returned from the East with nesteggs that were invested in a small legitimate business, or which formed the basis for a comfortable marriage. Observers at Bombay, Colombo, Alexandria, and Czernowitz all agreed about this.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the police at the latter city noted that with prostitutes returning all year long from brothels in the Near and Far East and living in comparative luxury, there was no way of preventing others from following them. Unlike South America, where some of the money saved through this

<sup>53</sup> Rabbi Stephen Wise to Rabbi Simeon Singer, 6 July 1902 in 31 October 1903, ICA vol. 1.

<sup>54</sup> 'S. M. Edwardes, 2 January 1913.'

<sup>55</sup> Harris, Nairne, Birdwood, and Trevor to Principal Secretary of State for India, 11 April 1894, J&P 771/1894, IOL.

<sup>56</sup> 'S. M. Edwardes, 2 January 1913'. 'Extent, Distribution and Regulation of the Social Evil, Colombo' (n.d., 1919), L/P&J/6/1448, file 2987; 'Szarvasy Memorandum', 1905/1, VPA. Memorandum, Czernowitz, 24 December 1906, 1907/1, VPA.



form of primitive accumulation remained to be invested locally, Asia was not a region of settlement and the funds were brought home. Even some of the women exploited by the thugs at Haimovich's boarding house in the Minghong Road at Shanghai were able to save. In 1913 Bertha Blumenreich returned to Czernowitz after a ten-year stay in Shanghai, where she had formed a partnership with one Solomon Schonbaum. She was retired, living off her savings and thinking of emigrating to America.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike most of those in South America and Constantinople, European Jewish prostitutes at these distant outposts in Asia were aristocrats when compared to their local counterparts. Most Indian and Chinese prostitutes led miserable lives in the foulest brothels. Furthermore, in addition to the scandal of enforced juvenile prostitution in Japan and China, the Indian authorities knew of some 500 cases annually by 1919 of young girls being abducted from the villages of Bengal, Madras, and Burma.<sup>58</sup> This was real slavery.

As for Asian Jewish women, they were little better off. On average before the war some 200 Jews of Iraqi and Persian extraction swelled the proletariat of Indian prostitution. Many were brought in directly from Baghdad as part of a traffic in prostitutes as well organised as the one from Europe. Before reforming legislation in 1920, Iraqi Jewish women at Burma were called 'miserable slaves in the hands of the brothel-keepers.'<sup>59</sup> At the town of Madhupur on the East Indian Railway a party of Jews of Asiatic descent from Calcutta, including some forty men and ninety women, worked through the cold winters of 1914/5 and 1915/6, with the women visiting the railway premises after dark for prostitution.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Deposition of Bertha Blumenreich, 22 June 1913, 1913/1, VPA.

<sup>58</sup> 'Extent, Distribution and Regulation of the Social Evil in the Cities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and in Rangoon Town' (n.d., 1919), 4; L/P&J/6/1448, file 2987, IOL.

<sup>59</sup> *League of Nations Enquiry into ... the Far East* (1932), pp. 86, 333, 342, 356, 412.

<sup>60</sup> 'Enquiry by Jewish Association ... Regarding Prostitution', in P/9952 Judicial Series, p. 252. There is much documentation on this subject including documents from C. C. Watson to Government of India, Home Department, 13 January 1913; Lieutenant Colonel J. Ramsay, 22 January 1913, all in L/P&J/6/4346. F. A. M. Vincent, 24 July 1916, in P/9952.

These wretched people had settled in India from Baghdad in the previous century, worked together as families. Their misery was complete. Europeans like Bertha Blumenreich, Dina Gontcharoff, or Shifre Ikifman from Zhitomir, who travelled back with Lechner to Sarajevo, were more fortunate. And who can say that the exploitation and humiliation they endured was any worse than the fate they would have suffered had they never followed that road to Asia?

### *South Africa*

In June of 1898 a remarkable scene took place at the Southampton docks. It was moving day for Joe Silver's brutal Stamford Road gang of east London. These pimps and procurers had done well for themselves in England, but the police and the Jewish Association had closed in and it was time to set sail for greener pastures in South Africa. Rabbi Simeon Singer of the Jewish Association describes the scene as Samuel Cohen, another committee member, and the police raced to the SS *Tonic*, about to sail for Cape Town:

They did not come in vain, for they met on board about 15 traffickers, accompanied by 20 to 25 young girls, mostly such however as had already been made prostitutes here in London ... All that could be done was to warn the victims against the fate in store for them, but it was of no avail. The traffickers, embittered by the heavy loss they had suffered through the recent law-court proceedings, assumed a threatening attitude towards the representatives of this Committee, but in the face of the police protection near at hand, confined themselves to mere hooting and using bad language.<sup>61</sup>

Born in 1869 in Kielce, Poland, Silver had become one of the craftiest traffickers in the business.<sup>62</sup> He emigrated to the United States in 1885 and soon became an active member of the Pittsburgh underworld. By 1893 he was actually working as an agent for Dr Charles Parkhurst's Society for the Prevention

<sup>61</sup> 17 December 1899, ICA. Also MePol 2/558, 21 May 1901, Metropolitan Police, CID, Special Report on Traffic in Girls.

<sup>62</sup> I am grateful to Professor Charles van Onselen, who is preparing a biography on this incredible character, for his Confidential Draft, 'A Brief Outline of the Criminal Record and Major Movements of Joseph Silver'. This was of value particularly for Silver's career outside England.

of Crime in New York, making a thorough study of the New York vice scene, undoubtedly for his own personal uses. It was Parkhurst's anti-vice crusade, however, that led to the temporary fall of Tammany Hall in 1894 and the change in climate for criminal entrepreneurs. Silver knew which way the wind was blowing and in 1895 he sailed for England.

He established himself at the American Hotel, a brothel in Stamford Road near London's Waterloo Station. And from there he organised the gang that recruited girls and women in the East End rag trade for prostitution. Things started going wrong for the Silver mob in early 1898.<sup>63</sup> Two of the procurers, Jacob Shrednicki and Simon Kumcher, took out a pair of recent immigrants from Poland, Tauba Gordon, seventeen, and Fanny Rosenbaum, only fifteen, got them thoroughly drunk, and raped them. The girls' guardian, an honest East End leather merchant by the name of Baumwoll had the two men arrested, along with the couple at whose restaurant/brothel the rapes had taken place.

In the meantime, the law was closing in from all sides on Joe Silver himself. First he was charged for stabbing and badly wounding Henry Joseph, a pimp who lived in a neighbouring brothel. Then he found himself under indictment for raping seventeen-year-old Rachel Laskin, yet another immigrant from Poland, in that same restaurant. Remarkable to say, the gang beat every charge. They bribed the wounded pimp into leaving the country; they bribed some of the witnesses in the two rape cases and assaulted others. They sent out a courier to Warsaw to dig up dirt about Baumwoll, the private prosecutor in one case, and managed to undermine his credibility, despite the man's full support by the Jewish Board of Guardians.

Worse, when Samuel Cohen got to the *SS Tonic*, he discovered none other than Rachel Laskin on board. Cases like Rachel's illustrate how difficult it is to gauge the issue of free will. Silver had taken the trouble to court her for a few weeks before keeping her out all night. Following a few days of love he had Beile Firestein, an accomplice who kept the brothel, introduce Rachel to prostitution. She yielded everything to

<sup>63</sup> For Silver's career in London, the main source is the long JA report in 17 December 1899, ICA, where all of the subsequent cases are discussed in detail. Also, *Times*, 8 February, 17 February 1898.

Silver, who beat her in order to break her will utterly. Barely speaking the language in a strange country, with experience only in button-hole making and domestic service, her self-respect gone, Rachel gave in. That is not difficult to follow; but then after prosecuting her tormenter she changed her mind again and sailed off with him to South Africa.

In the débâcle the Jewish Association did manage to save from Silver a few other young Russian immigrants, including Jesse Blavatt, who had been recruited from another East End sweatshop and would have been taken along if Samuel Cohen had not found her cloistered up and in complete ignorance of her fate the night before the voyage.

Why South Africa? Primarily because it offered a booming wide-open frontier short of women. Gold was discovered on the Rand in 1886 and when the development of deep-level mining in the mid-1890s caused the greatest influx of workers and adventurers, the ratio of men to women in Johannesburg was already 1.78 to 1.<sup>64</sup> Silver's party landed at Cape Town and despite a cable that warned the local police of their arrival, nothing could be done.<sup>65</sup> The troop went immediately to Johannesburg where their leader was reunited with some of his old acquaintances from New York who had gone straight to the Rand between 1894 and 1896.

Such pioneers were known in these remote parts as the 'Bowery Boys'; they held the Frenchfontein vice quarter in an iron grip, enforcing their control of prostitution and gambling with six shooters, controlling *in toto* the unarmed 'Morality Police' and even the staff in the Public Prosecutor's office. It has been estimated that at Johannesburg before Silver's arrival there were about 100 or so east European pimps, of whom 50 to 70 were 'Bowery Boys'; another 50 to 60 French *souteneurs*; between 20 and 40 Germans; and a mixed bag of others.<sup>66</sup> As far as the brothels are concerned, a substantial number were French run, indicating some co-operation between the two leading groups in keeping them filled. And soon after

<sup>64</sup> Charles van Onselen, 'Prostitutes and Proletarians 1886-1914. An Essay on commercialized sex in the changing social formations engendered by rapid capitalist development in the Transvaal during the era of imperialism', unpublished paper, p. 2. I am again grateful to the author for this most useful work.

<sup>65</sup> *JA Report* (1900), pp. 26-7.

<sup>66</sup> Van Onselen, 'Prostitutes', pp. 10-11.

the Bowery Boys made their appearance, large numbers of Franco-American traffickers made the same trek, as did other figures from Paris, leaving Johannesburg with a mix of French and Jewish participation similar to that in Buenos Aires. Of the prostitutes themselves, we have the testimony of Morris Abrahams, an English Jew who arrived in Johannesburg in the late 1880s and who pioneered in Hebrew education there and served as a correspondent for the *Jewish Chronicle*. He recorded in an unpublished memoir that 'In the palmy days of Johannesburg, what is known as the Social Evil assumed prodigious proportions. It is melancholy to relate that large numbers of Jewish girls were found amongst those who followed the wretched calling.'<sup>67</sup>

The already mature situation was ideal for a man with Silver's nerve and energy. By late 1898 he had co-ordinated the Bowery Boys and his own mob into the 'American Club', popularly known as the 'Pimps' Club.' Among the fifty founding members were Abe Goldstein, the 'Columbus' whom we encountered above, and others who over the next ten years would become fixtures in the Frenchfontein quarter of Johannesburg and the other fleshpots of southern Africa.<sup>68</sup>

How did the Johannesburg 'American Club' compare to the other major Jewish vice organisations across the world, the IBA, the Zwi Migdal, the synagogue-based community in Constantinople? There is not sufficient evidence for a thorough exploration of this subject. But, from the *Standard and Diggers' News*, whose editor Emmanuel Mendelsohn gave intensive coverage to the embarrassing topic, and from revelations forthcoming from schisms in the group, some of the inner workings of the American Club can be reconstructed. More than any other grouping of its kind, this one was dominated from the centre by one individual, Silver, who used a 'secret committee' meeting at the clubhouse to make decisions about organising brothels, recruiting women in Europe, paying off the police, and the like. Undoubtedly he quickly expanded the Jewish share of commercial vice in the city. However, Silver's grip

<sup>67</sup> Abrahams cited in Gustav Saron, 'The "Morality Question" in South Africa', unpublished memorandum kindly supplied by the author.

<sup>68</sup> *Standard and Diggers' News*, 7 December 1898, p. 7, 22 February 1899. There is a membership list in the 7 February edition. Van Onselen, 'Prostitutes', pp. 16-17.



was so tight that he rendered the organisation, composed as it was of independently minded toughs, inherently unstable. Thus the American Club was the shortest lived of these widely scattered institutions. Within months three pimps broke away, Krakower, Rosenchild, and Rosenberg. What is more Krakower took with him Silver's own girl, Lizzie Josephs.

Within days Silver had found Josephs and savagely beaten her. Then he suggested that she should press charges against Krakower, his old friend from New York, for 'theft by means of fraud', or extortion. But this act of revenge, set in train Silver's downfall. At the trial Krakower told all about the American Club and was acquitted.<sup>69</sup> Not that Silver lost his nerve simply because of complete public exposure. The former anti-vice worker wrote this letter to the *Standard and Diggers' News*,

My name having been freely mentioned as being one belonging to the pimping fraternity, so that I can only express my desire to hold a mass meeting during the next few days, with the object of discussing the desirability of having these shameless ruffians driven out of our midst.<sup>70</sup>

In the meantime, the legal climate was changing as well. With white prostitution in the mining capital burgeoning out of all control, President Kruger of the South African Republic finally stepped in. In mid-1898 he appointed none other than the young Jan Smuts as State Attorney, and in turn Smuts hired as his subordinate a fearless, tireless, indeed fanatical deputy against whom the likes of James Folk of St. Louis paled into passivity.<sup>71</sup> With the passage of a tough new anti-white-slavery law in December 1898 the handwriting was on the wall. Mostyn Cleaver, the young prosecutor in question, played his cards brilliantly, using a combination of threats and plea-bargaining to split the pimps even further. Not only did he obtain the testimony of Krakower, he even squeezed evidence out of Jacob

<sup>69</sup> *Standard and Diggers' News*, 7, 30 December 1898, 2 February 1899. Van Onselen, 'Prostitutes', p. 26.

<sup>70</sup> *Standard and Diggers' News*, 10 December 1898.

<sup>71</sup> See, *A Young South African. A Memoir of Ferrar Reginald Mostyn Cleaver. By His Mother* (Johannesburg, 1913), pp. 3-4, 19ff.

Shrednicki, who had been left in London to anchor that point of supply for Johannesburg's brothels. In 1899 Joe Silver was convicted of procuring and given two years at hard labour, to be followed by banishment from South Africa.<sup>72</sup>

This was not the end of Jewish commercial vice on the Rand, nor of the redoubtable Silver himself, nor was the phenomenon limited to the Johannesburg region. In early 1900 a young American-trained rabbi, leader of the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation, came to the Jewish Association in London with some disturbing intelligence.<sup>73</sup> It was J. H. Hertz, later to become Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. Hertz had arrived in South Africa in 1898 and become very alarmed by the vice scene. His regional enquiries led to the estimation that 'There were on the East Coast of Africa from Delagoa Bay northward to Port Said, roughly speaking, not less than 750 such women (who were Jewish prostitutes).' Hertz placed sixty to 100 in the Mozambiquan port of Lourenco Marques, where in late 1899 he tried to organise the local Jewish community against the evil. Furthermore, at Beira in Mozambique as well as Salisbury and to a lesser extent Buluwayo in Rhodesia, Hertz insisted that the small Jewish communities were deeply involved in the white-slave traffic.

Some of this makes sense. In 1895 the rail link between Johannesburg and Lourenco Marques was completed, opening up a cheap new route from Hamburg via the German East African Shipping Company. Prostitutes of many nationalities were brought in via Mozambique, and some lingered at the port.<sup>74</sup> We have also had occasion to mention traffickers like Nussem Lechner further up the coast at places like Zanzibar as well as the Drucker family, with its brothel at Delagoa Bay in Mozambique. If some of the procurers set themselves up early in the expansion of Beira and Salisbury, where white women were in short supply, it would not be out of character. After all, they did the same thing in provincial Argentina and Brazil, or for that matter in Montana.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. Van Onselen, 'Prostitutes', p. 29.

<sup>73</sup> JAGM, 22 April 1900, also Hertz' letter read at 18 February 1900. On Hertz, Sefton Temkin, 'Orthodoxy with Moderation: A Sketch of Joseph Herman Hertz', *Judaism* 24 (1975), 278-95.

<sup>74</sup> For another case at Lourenco Marques, involving a fake Johannesburg employment agency, Erroll Macdonnell, Consul General to Secretary for the Interior, Pretoria, 7 August 1913. FO 369/611/42322. PRO.

The outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899 led to a massive outflux of vicious characters from the Boer Republic. Some fled for safety to the Cape Colony. Others, like the lucky Joe Silver, were released early and deported by the hard-pressed government. For Silver there followed a complicated criminal odyssey through the Cape Colony, the Orange River Colony and German South West Africa, ending in 1906 with a prison sentence in Windhoek for brothelkeeping, which he served partly in Germany. That prostitutes and pimps could no longer do business with Rand goldminers hardly mattered; they now had the British army. During the Boer War the Bowery Boys and their French counterparts relocated in the ports of Cape Town and Durban in Natal, both of which received a steady influx of prostitutes from New York, Hamburg, and France.<sup>75</sup>

With the end of hostilities in 1902 and the passage of tougher anti-procuring legislation in the Cape and Natal, our subjects inevitably concentrated again at Johannesburg, especially since the new British governors were relatively lax on the vice question. The history of vice is a history of cat and mouse. So it came about that as a sequel to the American Club, the Jewish pimps formed the longer-lived but less centralised 'Immorality Trust', which was reinforced by further expatriates fleeing from the latest purification efforts in America, characters who ultimately included the Soviner brothers, Jack Idelman of Philadelphia fame, Jenny the Factory, 'African Jake' Jaffe, Sadie Solomon, and many others.<sup>76</sup>

Thus the Jewish experience in Southern Africa illustrates that the cycle of repression and relocation had a world dimension as well as a local dimension. There is little more of consequence that need be added about the South African experience, except for one unique development that marked the beginning of the end of Jewish involvement here. In 1908 the prostitutes of the

<sup>75</sup> Ferdinand Dreyfus studied 400 dossiers dated 1902-6 at the French Interior Ministry and emphasised the importance of the French traffic to South Africa. See Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, p. 423n. Some of the cases turn up in Series BB 18: Berger, Bourgeois, Pailusseau, Papille, AN.

<sup>76</sup> Van Onselen, 'Prostitutes', 33. For the Soviners in Johannesburg, State Archives, Law Department, Attorney General, File 172 (1906), kindly called to my attention by Professor Van Onselen. For some of the others, *New York World*, 22 December 1912, and the JMC, as cited above.

'Immorality Trust' revolted *en masse*. We have spoken of individual revolts against pimps all over the map. But a revolution against male exploiters as a group is unprecedented in the annals of the subject. The authorities in Johannesburg used the evidence of over 100 prostitutes to break the 'Immorality Trust', ultimately deporting hundreds of foreign-born pimps, including Abe 'Columbus', back to Europe and America. Others fled to Buenos Aires.<sup>77</sup>

Why the rebellion? There is evidence that some of the prostitutes had been decoyed there from Germany, France, and Lithuania, for example by the notorious Berlin-based Max Malitzki.<sup>78</sup> The revolt spread, however, from the longtime prostitutes of Harry Epstein, one of the tough old Bowery Boys. By early 1908 there was a full-scale economic depression on the Rand, and most likely to protect their profits the 'Immorality Trust' made further demands of its workers, demands that they refused to meet. There must have been a Spartacus in the group and it would be nice to know who she was, for she essentially brought to an end one of the leading colonies in our saga.

<sup>77</sup> Van Onselen, 'Prostitutes', p. 39-40.

<sup>78</sup> On the Lithuanian case, *Standard and Diggers' News*, 7 June 1899. The traffickers were successfully prosecuted by the new Jewish Vigilance Committee, see below, Ch. Seven. On Max Malitzki's criminal activities, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 24 October 1908, tracing his first conviction back to 1905. Also, *Bericht über die 7 Deutsche Nationalkonferenz zu Internationaler Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels ...* (1909), p. 34. The trafficking of Marguerite Lefort by one Mr. Berger, may have been criminal, BB 18, AN.





**Part Three**

**Fighting Back  
Before 1914**



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Jewish Response, 1

#### *Mass Knowledge*

How did Jews respond to the moral blight just described? Some reactions were spontaneous and immediate, based on the individual or communal need to reply to the unclean ones directly. At a more formal and institutional level there was debate among philanthropists, social workers, rabbis, journalists, and others that in its turn led to co-ordinated organisational work. And this work itself had two dimensions. It drew on the resources of some of the great Jewish voluntary institutions of the time and led to the formation of denominational anti-white-slavery committees nearly all around the world. At the same time, Jews participated actively in the interdenominational anti-white-slavery crusade begun by William Coote.

We begin with the question of how widespread was the knowledge of the phenomenon outside the official sphere of organisations? In the first place, some knew from direct experience because it was not always possible to avoid Allen Street, as Abe Cahan advised. While some made their peace with working prostitutes, we have come across instances of real fear and intimidation among working-class Jews in places as scattered as Kovno, London, Warsaw, and New York. Furthermore, the unclean ones left their mark by causing both individuals and committees to be humiliated. In New York Shoefeld reported that at their first lesson a class composed of immigrant boys had been called 'little pimps' by their physical-education teacher. In Buenos Aires Samuel Cohen described how 'every Russian or Polish Jew was believed to be a trafficker, no matter how respectable he might be.'<sup>1</sup> And we have seen the pain of the old German Ashkenazi community in Constantinople and the insults hurled at Jews in Warsaw, Vienna, and elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> *Federation Review*, March 1910. Cohen, *Visit to South America*, p. 24. Also, J. X. Cohen, *Jewish Life in South America* (New York, 1941), pp. 98-9.

Where Jews did not have first-hand knowledge of white slavery their journalists, dramatists, and writers did a good job calling their attention to the subject. Newspaper coverage of local developments, international meetings, and criminal cases was more thorough than one has reason to expect, given that Jewish writers at that time were predisposed to avoid touching on sex or any subject that collectively shamed their people. Only the French-Jewish journals seem to have largely ignored white slavery, in keeping with the very defensive posture of the community there during the aftermath of the Dreyfus case.

There is actually a small genre of Yiddish literary works on white slavery, and we have had occasion to mention several contributions to it. Sholem Asch claimed that his *God of Vengeance* was the most frequently produced drama in the Yiddish repertory. It played without incident all over Europe but ran into trouble from squeamish Jews in New York in 1923. Rabbi Joseph Silverman of the prestigious Temple Emmanuel backed its indictment under the obscenity laws and it took a three-year struggle to clear its name.<sup>2</sup>

A number of Yiddish novels on the theme were also popular enough to be dramatised and performed on the stage, including Asch's *Mottke the Thief*. Painting much more painful portraits than Asch of the misery of Jewish prostitutes were Peretz Hirschbein's *Miriam* (1906) and Moshe Richter's *Sklaven Hendler* (Trafficker) of 1910.<sup>3</sup> One of the masters of Yiddish literature, Hirschbein traces the downfall of a poor orphan from the Polish provinces who manages to support herself in the city by getting her own sewing machine, only to be seduced and impregnated by the rich landlord's son. Abandoned and ostracised, she meets an alphonse who puts her to work.

Moshe Richter's *Sklaven Hendler* is even more woeful. The author was editor of the *Lemberger Tageblatt* and one of Galicia's most popular Yiddish journalists and dramatists. Set first in Galicia, the Redlich family are victimised by a crooked match-maker in league with a gang of traffickers from Tarnopol and

<sup>2</sup> Zosa, Szajkowski, *Jews, Wars and Communism*, vol. 2 (New York, 1974), pp. 143-7.

<sup>3</sup> Peretz Hirschbein, 'Miriam (also called Barg-Arop)', in *Gezamelte Shriften*, vol. 5 (New York, 1916). Moshe Richter, *Sklaven Hendler* (Lemberg and New York ed., 1914). 1914).

New York. Despite her love for Tevyeh, young Lea is given by her father to Mr Cohen, a rich visitor from America. Later the Redlichs themselves emigrate to New York, only to discover that Lea has been arrested in a raid on a Twenty-Sixth Street brothel. Just when Tevyeh offers to marry and redeem her, it becomes clear that the match is impossible: Lea is an *agunah* since Cohen had abandoned her. When the immigration officer arrives to deport her as an alien prostitute, the wretched Lea commits suicide.

Richter's melodrama is nothing if not topical. Having spent time in America, he knew of the Tenderloin and he was present when *Sklaven Hendler* was performed in 1912 at the Third Avenue Theatre. The thrust of these works is to create sympathy for the women as victims and to point criticism at Jewish customs that abetted the traffickers—matchmaking, the orthodox law of divorce. The earliest and most famous novel in the little group on white slavery, Mendele Mokher Sefhorim's *Vinchfingeril* (Magic Ring), has the same set of didactic goals.<sup>4</sup> First written in 1865, Mendele rewrote the book in 1888, adding a second section called 'In the Valley of Tears'. At that time he was living in Odessa, having moved from Zhitomir, both cities which would have provided him with real material on the subject.

Mendele's 'Valley of Tears' is a Pale city whose orthodox brothelkeepers and procurers are excoriated as 'A shame on the house of Israel'. Their victims are *shtetl* girls misled by fraudulent job offers and marriages. They are beaten in brothel cellars, catch VD, and hang themselves. The moral is that the Jewish world should be more forgiving of the girls, since poverty put them off their guard. But he criticises less enlightened Jews than himself for passively tolerating the exploitation. Of Levi Bucher's house of horrors Mendele writes, 'The religious Jews spit when they go by, but do nothing. Only Satan mentions this to God.'

By the time the Argentine Yiddishists take up the same subject, mostly between the wars, it is from a more sophisticated social perspective concerned with the traffickers and prostitutes and their wider relationships with the Jewish community and the official world of Buenos Aires. In this hothouse of bad

<sup>4</sup> Mendele Mokher Sefhorim, *Dos Vinchfingeril*, in *Alle Werk*, vol. 4 (Warsaw, n.d.).



feeling, dramatic works about white slavery literally became calls to war and produced mass violence and near murder as the respectable Jews tried to rid themselves of the unclean ones.

Therefore from direct experience, newspaper coverage, literature and drama; from mass publicity by the anti-white-slavery leagues; from 1,500-page serialised potboilers like *Der Froyen Hendler* ('The Trafficker in Women. Or a Beast in Human Form. A Novel. A True Picture of Life in Europe and America'), issued four times a week in New York in 1894; from all these things, white slavery became widely known in Jewish communities.<sup>5</sup> On a tour of Galicia Bertha Pappenheim discovered that the subject was a topic of conversation in the ante-chambers of the wonderrabbis and in the marketplaces.<sup>6</sup> When Sholom Aleichem wrote his *Man From Buenos Aires*, an artfully drawn short story about a brief encounter on a train, he never had to mention the 'Man's' business: 'What do I deal in? ... Not in prayer books, my friend, not in prayer books ...'<sup>7</sup> For his readers Buenos Aires was synonymous with prostitution, a firm mental association whose diffusion is confirmed in Isaac Bashevis Singer's memoir of his youth in Warsaw. He

... heard the servant girls ... talking about how procurers drove about at night ... picked up innocent young women ... They were forced into a life of sin, and then they were ... taken to Buenos Aires ... then a dangerous worm got into their blood and their flesh would begin to decay.<sup>8</sup>

Jews were subject to the same fears about abduction as everyone else. One widely covered story in the Jewish press of an altogether unlikely incident in Galicia puts this into perspective.<sup>9</sup> It was reported in 1909 that a Hasidic girl from Nowy Targ was convinced by some peasants and a local priest to go to Cracow for baptism. On the way she fell into the hands of a band of white-slave traffickers and was rescued only just

<sup>5</sup> *Der Froyen Hendler* can be found in the Jewish Division, New York Public Library, 8\* PTR.

<sup>6</sup> Pappenheim and Rabinovitch, *Zur Lage der Jüdischen Bevölkerung*, p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> Sholom Aleichem, 'The Man from Buenos Aires', in *Tevye's Daughters* (New York, 1949), p. 140.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, p. 126.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Forward*, 8 October 1909. *Jewish Tribune* (Portland) 29 October 1909.

before being sent to America. Here two fears are compounded—enforced baptism and enforced prostitution—each with just enough basis in fact to keep them smouldering in the collective subconscious of the people.

### *Mass Action*

In the immediate sense, how did Jews respond to the knowledge and experience of white slavery? It is to be expected that most had more important things to worry about and did nothing. Bertha Pappenheim complained incessantly about the indifferent Jewish middle classes of Europe and was particularly bitter about scenes in Galicia and Romania where she 'was shown such apparently pious men with Kaften and side-locks walking along on Saturday afternoon', who were actually well-known traffickers. They were accepted as part of the local scene.<sup>10</sup>

Despite such indifference, much was done through both the anti-white-slavery movement, as we shall see later, and in the immediate communal setting. There was a range of responses, beginning most simply with violence. In 1903 a Jewish Vigilance Society in Cardiff took to assaulting the unclean ones, after paying their fares home and providing work for them had failed to solve the problem.<sup>11</sup> We have already investigated the Warsaw '*Alphonsenpogrom*' and the Torah riot of Rio de Janeiro. In Buenos Aires respectable Jews also occasionally made violent forays against brothels. There in 1908 the *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) Party sponsored a performance of Hirschbein's *Miriam*. The unclean ones frequented and sometimes dominated theatres wherever they lived, and in the brothel scene the white-slavery crowd started guffawing. This caused N. Syrkin, the *Poale Zion* leader, to challenge them, triggering a bloody battle in which the young Zionists forced the pimps out of the theatre, at least for the time being.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), p. 147.

<sup>11</sup> Chief Constable Cardiff to the Lord Mayor, 28 September 1908, HO45/10354/149817, PRO.

<sup>12</sup> Shoskes, *Mit Yidn*. Shmuel Roshansky, *Dos Yiddische Gedruckte Vort in Theator in Argentina*, in Hirsch Trivaks (ed.) *Yovel Buch* (Yiddish: Jubilee Book) (Buenos Aires, 1950), p. 297. Roshansky dates the battle a year later in 1909.

These Polish and Latin American incidents suggest more than blind rage. They point to well-directed mass working-class support, so sorely lacking in the elitist international movement against white slavery. Was mass Jewish opinion ever mobilised outside Poland and Latin America? In the United States on occasion brilliantly organised campaigns could galvanise the Jewish masses into opposing prostitution. This was the case with the Committee of Fifteen in 1900-1. Begun with the participation of celebrities like Jacob Schiff, the financier, and E. R. A. Seligman, the Columbia professor, this anti-vice committee managed to strike up an effective alliance with the Lower East Side. David Blaustein, called 'perhaps the most gifted Jewish community worker on the East Side' was pivotal in this coalition.<sup>13</sup> Harvard graduate, briefly a rabbi, and director of the social-service centre known as Hebrew Educational Alliance, Blaustein helped mobilise the residents themselves to come forward and speak out against prostitution. Other young downtown leaders like Paul Abelson and Henry Moscovitz organised clubs to support anti-vice candidates in the 1901 city elections. Meyer Shoenfeld, father of Abe Shoenfeld the famous Kehillah vigilante, was one of them; he defeated Max Porges, a notorious brothelkeeper, in the election that returned reform Mayor Seth Low.<sup>14</sup>

It was impossible to sustain mass public interest and we know the pimps returned. By 1907, with Jewish crime having become a very sensitive political issue providing fuel for advocates of restrictionist immigrant legislation, the Federation of Jewish Organisations pleaded with its supporters on the Lower East Side:

The growth of criminality is worse for the Jewish cause than the pogroms ... Now each of us by adopting the methods of the Federation can assist in checking the evil. The Federation for the present deems it advisable to confine its efforts to preventing white slavery, which is widespread among Jews ... Decent people often know of these evil

<sup>13</sup> Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> For David Blaustein's later comments, *Chicago Tribune*, 3 October 1909. For a glimpse of how Blaustein and the Alliance helped organise tenants against brothelkeepers, Box 7, Comm. of 15. On Meyer Shoenfeld, Abe Shoenfeld Interview, p. 3. Also, Felt, 'Vice Reform'.

doers but are afraid to bring them to account because of the protection they are said to enjoy. The Federation, however, which counts many prominent and influential men among its members, is able to reach the malefactors that degrade our race and honest citizens can help in our fight by informing the Federation of persons who live by white slavery.<sup>15</sup>

This accomplished little because the Federation was a weak institution and the exclusion issue was not yet critical. But with the formation of the New York Kehillah's vigilante squad under Abe Schoenfeld in 1912 there was more success in mobilising public opinion.<sup>16</sup> The Kehillah itself had the support of a broad cross-section of New York Jewry, from notables like Jacob Schiff, Adolf Lewisohn, Louis Marshall, and Felix Warburg, to the leading figures on the Lower East Side. By September 1912 Magnes reported that more than 300 men had volunteered to help gather information and work as vigilantes. Later, in March 1914, Magnes filled Kessell's Theatre with the largest audience ever to attend a Jewish Institute lecture, the subject being white slavery.<sup>17</sup> Magnes explained all about crooked lawyers and bail bondsmen and Abe Rabbelle's café. Some of the underworld were actually in attendance, though not 'the Rabbi', who said next day he would never have let Judah Magnes get away with it. Still, Abe Shoenfeld's comments that the meeting was unique, and that his vigilante work would be much easier if only gatherings like this could be held regularly, show that there was no real mass mobilisation. The Kehillah's success depended mostly upon Shoenfeld's effective staff and the helpful attitude of the authorities.

In the meantime, David Blaustein, who was so pivotal in that earlier campaign, had moved to Chicago and taken the superintendancy of the Hebrew Institute. G. K. Turner had done for the windy city in 1907 exactly what he was to do for New York two years later, expose vice and corruption in the immigrant quarter, colouring it out of all reason in the process.<sup>18</sup> Chicago Jews were deeply distressed and we have seen

<sup>15</sup> *To the Delegates of the Federation of Jewish Organizations* (n.d., 1907).

<sup>16</sup> Goren, *New York Jews*, for the definitive account.

<sup>17</sup> Story 1044, pp. 23-4, March 1914.

<sup>18</sup> G. K. Turner, 'The City of Chicago: A Study of the Great Immoralities', *McClure's Magazine* 28 (1907), 575-92.

that Adolf Kraus, President of the B'nai B'rith, immediately took up the challenge. Then in September 1909 the prominent reform Rabbi Emil Hirsch of the Temple Sinai preached a sermon in which he exposed the situation. Having learned from testimony in the trial of a corrupt policeman that the brothers Julius and Louis Frank owned brothels and paid protection money to the police, Rabbi Hirsch thundered from Sinai that the orthodox congregation Anshe Calvaria must expel them.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Julius Frank had been president of that synagogue for the previous fourteen years.

This occasioned the greatest mass expression of Jewish anger against white slavery in the United States, orchestrated by David Blaustein. Within days of the sermon Blaustein had organised a Union of Jewish Presidents' of Congregations and Rabbis with eighty-four members, whose goal was to cleanse the Jewish West Side of prostitution. As one of their meetings was described,

Chicago perhaps has never seen a more touching scene than that at the evening meeting of the Jewish churchmen. Gray-bearded rabbis shed tears as they talked in broken voices of the former glories of God's chosen people and the newest danger that is threatening that racial morality which has been the boast of people for thousands of years.<sup>20</sup>

The local Jewish press, hitherto 'hopelessly negligent' on the subject according to Blaustein, was harnessed for the effort. The Chicago edition of the *Forward* wrote of little else in these weeks, even issuing a special edition on the Frank question and intoning, 'Are there not left in your Jewish streets any modern Maccabees who will drag down the swine from the altar?' Morris Rosenfeld, poet of the sweatshops, added, 'The Calvaria congregation must cast out the black sheep from its midst.'<sup>21</sup> To this chorus was added that of mass meetings held by the Jewish Branch of the Socialist Party, their leaders speaking out on the economic causes of prostitution just as the

<sup>19</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, 25 September 1909. Also, Egal Feldman, 'Prostitution, the Alien Woman and the Progressive Imagination, 1910-15', *American Quarterly* 19 (1967), 196.

<sup>20</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, 4 and 3 October 1909. See also *Jewish Tribune* (Portland), 22 October 1909.

<sup>21</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, 9 October 1909. The actual Chicago edition of the *Forward* has proven impossible to locate either in Chicago or New York.



Bundists had done in Poland and Russia. Blaustein had reason to state two weeks after the Hirsch sermon that 'The amount of public sentiment we have created against white slavery is remarkable.'<sup>22</sup> The community had not been mobilised like this since the 1904 Russian pogrom protests.

The outcome was less remarkable but still worth the effort. As for the immediate goal of forcing the Franks' expulsion, the Ansche Calvaria congregation actually re-elected Julius Frank their president in these days, suggesting the worst about the other members of that synagogue. Frank bowed to public opinion, however, and stepped down to assume the lesser role of superintendent of their cemetery.<sup>23</sup> The job of cleansing the West Side of Jewish vice had already been undertaken by the B'nai B'rith. Now efforts were redoubled. In the aftermath of the Frank affair, with the help of private prosecutors in the employ of the vigilantes, US District Attorney E. W. Sims rounded up a couple of dozen Jewish pimps and brothelkeepers including some old hands from New York.<sup>24</sup> Yet the most enduring outcome of this burst of moral outrage was to add the Jewish voice to the swelling demands that the mayor appoint a Vice Commission, similar to those operating in other cities across the country. Blaustein was on that Commission, though he died sadly in 1911. Following the report of the Chicago Vice Commission, some of the oldest Jewish dives in Chicago were finally dislodged, as Mayor Harrison ordered the closing of the main red-light district on the South Side. The West Side vice kings held on a bit longer, Mike Pike being sent to Leavenworth in 1916 and some of his pals going on into the 1920s.<sup>25</sup>

Mass political action against white slavery like that in Chicago in 1909, New York in 1900-1, Warsaw in 1905, or Buenos Aires in 1930 could not be sustained for long. There were more important problems to worry about. Nor could it be decisive

<sup>22</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, 9 and 8 October 1909.

<sup>23</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, 9 October 1909.

<sup>24</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, October 1909. *Jewish Tribune* (Portland) 15 October 1909. *Chicago Tribune*, 9, 11, 12, 17, 23, 29 October; 1, 4, 7 November 1909. *Dillingham Report*, pp. 87-9.

<sup>25</sup> *The Social Evil in Chicago. The Vice Commission of Chicago* (1911). Julius Rosenwald helped finance this report. Asbury, *Gem of the Prairie*, p. 276; Mark Haller, 'Organized Crime in Urban Society: Chicago in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Social History* V (1971-2), 220.

where the Jewish community was not powerful enough to change permanently the political landscape. There was, however, another form of collective action which was more or less self-enforcing once it was put in train. This was exclusion and ostracism from the respectable community. It was called for everywhere that frustrated Jews confronted the unclean ones. In New York the *Federation Review* in 1909 pressed for

communal ostracism, as is being adopted by our people in Buenos Aires. There they excluded the traffickers from the synagogue, from the services of the shocket [kosher slaughterer], and finally even from the cemetery, the excommunicants were compelled to find their own synagogue and their cemetery. Let us do the same here. Let us push them out from our midst, till they go and band themselves together, to stand forth in the eyes of all as a community of lepers.<sup>26</sup>

Even this journal was bound to admit that ostracism would do nothing to quiet the anti-semites. In fact, in Catholic Austria one anti-semite taunted the Jews for not excommunicating their traffickers.<sup>27</sup> Be that as it may, it is difficult to imagine how such a strategy could be effective in a city with over a million independent Jews. As we have observed, despite problems in the 1890s most IBA members wound up finding their eternal rest in quite respectable surroundings. In a number of places with smaller Jewish communities, however, ostracism was seen as a moral imperative whose practical results could be no worse than mingling or resting with the unclean ones in sanctified places.

The relentless Buenos Aires boycott, like the one in Rio, began in the earliest days, with the formation of the *Chevra Kaddisha* in 1894 to supervise burials in the Ashkenazi cemetery, and the traffickers' continual approaches to join. Given their economic and political power and free-wheeling charity to Jewish causes, it was not an easy application for the poor and fledgling community to turn down. But spearheaded by the Zionists, the exclusionists won the debate easily. Rabbi Reuben Hacohen Sinai captured the feelings of the majority in an

<sup>26</sup> *Federation Review*, December 1909. See also the February 1908 number praising the Johannesburg boycott.

<sup>27</sup> J. Seidl, *Der Jude des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Graz, 1899), p. 57.

eloquent sermon: 'in case the *temeyim* [unclean ones] were accepted into the sacred field, he would write in his testament that after his death he should be interred in the municipal cemetery. "I prefer to be among honorable gentiles than among our *temeyim*."' <sup>28</sup>

Only at the Yiddish theatres and cafés was there social intercourse between the two Jewish worlds of Buenos Aires.<sup>29</sup> As in New York and Warsaw, in Argentina too, the pimps and prostitutes loved to attend the two Yiddish theatres. It was a matter of business and pleasure both. The pimps bribed cashiers for the best seats and pushed some of the respectable clientele into the galleries. Some prostitutes solicited there, others came to relax on Friday evenings in their madams' private boxes. The unclean ones subsidised some productions, their women patronised some of the actors, and generally they were able to control what was produced. The battle over Hirschbein's *Miriam* in 1908 was just the opening shot in a kind of *Kulturkampf* fought out at the theatre between the two sides. As we shall see, it broke out again in the 1920s with the struggle to produce Leib Malach's bitterly *anti-temeyim* drama, *Ibergus*, a controversy that galvanised respectable Jews against the impure and led for a time to the hanging of signs reading 'unclean ones forbidden' in Buenos Aires' two Yiddish theatres.

At Constantinople feelings were just as bitter between the settled Ashkenazi Jews and that portion of the recent arrivals who trafficked.<sup>30</sup> When the latter were excluded from the respectable synagogues, they formed their own. A few years before the deposition of Sultan Abdul Hamid in 1909, the Ashkenazi Jews managed to get the offensive institution shut down. But the Chief Rabbi of Turkey, the Sephardic Moses Halévy, agreed to let it reopen provided it was surrounded with a high brick wall. The Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi, Dr Marcus, tried to buy up the objectionable place, but the traffickers insisted that eleven of their members be permitted to pray at his house of worship.

<sup>28</sup> Mirelman, 'Jews in Argentina', pp. 131-5.

<sup>29</sup> On this subject, Weisbrot, *Jews of Argentina*, pp. 103-4. Shoskes, *Mit Yidn*. Sheintuch in *Sefer Dov Sadan*. Pesach Burstein, *Geshpilt A Leben* (Life Upon the Yiddish Stage), New York, 1980. Also, sources to follow, Ch. 9.

<sup>30</sup> *New York Tageblatt* (Yiddish), 27 December 1911. Also, Bertha Pappenheim to Sophie Mamelok, 8 April 1911 in Dora Edinger, *Bertha Pappenheim* (New York, 1968), p. 70.

The community rejected this and the pimps' institutions continued to function until the police roundup of 1915.

The South African pimps were either less observant or more transient than their counterparts in South America and Turkey. The formal ostracism they faced in Johannesburg does not seem to have bothered them one bit and they never founded their own synagogue. By 1899 the three Jewish congregations there were refusing funeral rites to the outcasts and following the Boer War in 1902 the *Chevra Kaddisha* and synagogues passed this resolution:

That it is the duty of every Jewish congregation and institution in this town to take immediate steps to withdraw privileges of every kind by expulsion from persons who are directly or indirectly connected with the immoral traffic, and expects the committees of the various synagogues and institutions to show their detestation of such un-Jewish conduct.<sup>31</sup>

About the only practical result is that in the earliest Jewish cemetery in Johannesburg, Braamfontein, there was a small fenced-in portion where discredited individuals, mostly those who rented out property for immoral purposes, were buried. The fence has long since been removed.<sup>32</sup> It is interesting, however, that the South African ban was widespread and fully enforced. When Joe Silver and some of his friends moved to Bloemfontein in the Orange River Colony following the Boer War, they were excluded from the synagogue.<sup>33</sup> Similar things happened half-way around the world in some of America's smaller cities. In Omaha, Nebraska, the Jewish community sent to the Chicago B'nai B'rith in 1910 for a private detective who ferretted out local offenders. The rabbis of the city then agreed to refuse all rites to anyone associated with prostitution. Unfortunately, that included three rich members of the local B'nai B'rith chapter who let premises for immoral purposes.<sup>34</sup> All of this boosted the morale of the offended parties and some-

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Gustav Saron, 'The "Morality Question" in South Africa'. See also, *Federation Review*, February 1908.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Information from Professor Charles Van Onselen, 19 February 1980.

<sup>34</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, January 1910.

times caused discomfort to opportunists who cared about respectability, like those Omaha gentlemen.

There is one last related communal response to prostitution that occasionally arose in these years. From the time of Maimonides it was an agreed part of Jewish law that gifts from a prostitute to a synagogue were acceptable as long as they were not in the form of money, the direct wages of sin.<sup>35</sup> There was nothing wrong in accepting a curtain for the ark or a cover for the Torah. Where prostitutes had their own congregations no question of law arose. But what of those who lavished such gifts on regular synagogues? There are just a few cases on record. The Chief Rabbi of Cairo, Raphael Aharon Ben Simeon, had two decisions to make between his arrival there in 1891 and 1908. On the one hand he permitted the acceptance of a Torah scroll dedicated by a prostitute. On the other hand he forced a curtain to be removed which had the donating woman's name embroidered on it. Gifts had to be anonymous.<sup>36</sup>

Crown Rabbi Mazeh of Moscow took a harder line, in keeping with the general revulsion felt by European rabbis to the whole subject. After taking over the Mizubi Synagogue Mazeh saw there the most beautiful Torah curtain in his life. The sexton explained it had been inherited from the old brothel-keepers' congregation, which had received it from 'The Golden Hand', a legendary Jewish madam and thief. Mazeh preached a Yom Kippur sermon on the subject, rejected Maimonides, ripped off the curtain and replaced it with one of plain cloth. We are told that old man Wissovsky, the tea magnate, cried during the sermon.<sup>37</sup> For some rabbis there could be no compromise with prostitutes. Others, however, took a more broad-minded view and also played a role in the organised movement against white slavery.

#### *A Debate: Pros and Cons*

In the more formal and institutional setting did Jews think they could accomplish anything against this problem? On this difficult question debate continued for many years in the Jewish

<sup>35</sup> *EJ*, vol. 13, 'Prostitution', p. 1245.

<sup>36</sup> Rafael Aron ben Shimon, *Nehar Mizraim* (Hebrew: River of Egypt) (Alexandria, 1908), p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Mazeh, *Zikhonot*, vol. 2, pp. 46-56.



press, at the Jewish international conferences against white slavery of 1910 and 1927, within the confines of the special Jewish protection committees and also among the leadership of the great voluntary institutions of the day.

Telescoping the long debate into a manageable field of vision, the opponents of intervention insisted that trying to deal directly with white slavery could only bring down shame and anti-semitism on Jewish heads. In 1904 Rabbi Henry Berkowitz gave a Succoth sermon at Philadelphia's Congregation Israel in which he reflected that 'Never in all the past had the purity of Jewish womanhood been tainted until now and here.' This was followed by a letter to the press on the same subject from a Dr Oldstein. Then came the inevitable storm of abuse and censure from those who felt it was dangerous to speak out.<sup>38</sup> By the same token when the B'nai B'rith, first in Chicago and then nationally, decided to tackle white slavery, many members counselled against, for fear of causing '*richus*' (trouble). They were said to be 'frightened out of their wits'. The *Jewish Tribune* of Portland, Oregon, dismissed the overcautious ones as 'old miserable soreheads and ... young ignorant upstarts'.<sup>39</sup> But the negative perspective was shared in the United States by the resourceful Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), whose president found the anti-white-slavery crowd 'reckless', for supplying ammunition to the enemy.<sup>40</sup>

In terms of Jewish teaching, this predisposition to caution was formalised in the concept of *chillul hashem* (profanation of the name). At first this was a purely religious idea carrying the imperative that the House of Israel were guardians of God's reputation in the world. For a Jew to do evil was a special insult to God. By the later Middle Ages, however, the concept took on practical implications. Where a Jew did evil he caused danger to the community. The emphasis on *chillul hashem* came to be placed on refraining from acts which would bring disgrace and danger to Jewry.<sup>41</sup> In our context the concept cut both ways: Jewish pimps brought on such disgrace as the New

<sup>38</sup> *Jewish Exponent* (Philadelphia), 30 September, 28 October 1904, 3 February 1905.

<sup>39</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, October 1909. *Jewish Tribune*, 10 September 1909.

<sup>40</sup> HIAS, *Annual Reports* (1909), p. 17; (1913), p. 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (New York, Schocken ed., 1971), p. 41; *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (New York, Schocken ed., 1962), pp. 101, 158-62. Dr A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (London, 1932), pp. 24-5.

York Kehillah pointed out, but so did talking about them. *Chillul hashem* was employed on both sides of the debate. *Der Israelit*, the German orthodox paper, wrote the following about its liberal opponents in the German Union of Rabbis who had sent Rabbi Rosenak to Galicia where he had convinced the Galician rabbis to issue an official statement against white slavery. The Germans had forced Galician orthodoxy to commit a triple error:

First they commit a folly ... second they commit a *chillul-hashem* against God. Third their communities confront them with the words, 'You've given our enemies a sword to smite us with'.<sup>42</sup>

Far from all orthodox rabbis were against the anti-white-slavery work, and *Der Israelit* was not an obscurantist opponent. It praised the cautious work of the Hamburg-Jewish Committee Against White Slavery. But given his vantage point the editor could not hope for much. He predictably blamed Jewish prostitution on the lack of religious and moral education in the rising generation, and in the Galician case, on the growth of official state schools which replaced religious school for some Jews.

This brings us to the next range of negative attitudes, those which insisted that little could be accomplished because prostitution was just a symptom of a deeper malaise. Zionists shared this perspective with the orthodox, changing the underlying cause to the inevitable deformation of life in *galut* (exile). At the 1910 Jewish international conference Israel Zangwill, an enthusiastic Zionist, said, 'As long as we are in *galut*, so long is it impossible to deal with any Jewish question except by playing with it.' Israel Auerbach in *Die Welt*, a leading Zionist journal, was particularly sarcastic about the well-covered Rosenak initiative of 1902:

Spiritual care is dead: Social politics lives ... the [liberal] Rabbis have spoken: that the only means of eliminating Jewish white slavery is the improvement of the social conditions of the Jews ... Schools and teachers bake no bread for the people ... but Zionism was not discussed!<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Der Israelit*, 2 April 1903; also 3 November 1902. On the Kehillah, Goren, *New York Jews*, p. 160. *The Jewish Chronicle*, very strong for the work, wrote, 'There must not be the slightest hesitance on the score of *chillul hashem*', 30 October 1908.

<sup>43</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 67-8. *Die Welt*, 25 July 1902.

Bundists and socialists like Ben Zion Hoffman and Meyer Schoenfeld substituted as the underlying cause industrial capitalism for loss of orthodoxy or loss of nationhood. Pioneering social workers like Max Kreutzberger emphasised prostitution as a product of poverty. Psychoanalysts like Erich Fromm turned the tables on the reformers and insisted that they were 'tilting at windmills'. Since their real goal, eliminating prostitution, was virtually impossible, they had displaced it on to what Fromm considered, wrongly we might add, to be the phantasm of white slavery.<sup>44</sup>

Naturally most of these outstanding people knew that prostitution was caused by many factors. In 1929 Kreutzberger wrote that 'One cannot separate the question of Jewish prostitution in the east from the questions of economic boycotts, damaging of centuries-old economic positions, "Luftmenschen-tum"', migration and emigration, statelessness, family separation, childbearing, etc.'<sup>45</sup> Some of the orthodox and socialists participated actively in the movement against white slavery. But where individuals were already mobilised behind an all-powerful ideology, or where they could not be convinced, like Erich Fromm, that a minority of the prostitutes were actually innocent victims, or where their social vision was too penetrating and therefore pessimistic, like Kreutzberger's, they were not likely to be very sympathetic with the movement.

Moving to the positive range of attitudes, why did people become actively engaged in the white-slavery work? For those with a Victorian turn of mind, and the work started in the 1880s, there was real desperation about the plight of the prostitutes. We need not be too critical about any potentially nasty subliminal motives involving the repressed desire to possess fallen women or vicariously become a harlot; nor about the culturally determined myopia that saw all prostitutes as victims. After all, from what we have seen in the above survey, there was enough misery in the oldest profession to make the elimination of commercial prostitution a comprehensible if remotely attainable goal. Samuel Cohen fits this Victorian mould. In the

<sup>44</sup> Fromm, 'Zur Psychologie des Mädchenhandels'.

<sup>45</sup> Max Kreutzberger, 'Das Problem des Internationalen Mädchen-und Frauenhandels', 193. Kreutzberger did attend the 1930 International Congress Against the Traffic, held in Warsaw.

face of arguments from Kreutzberger in 1929 that the problem was intractable, Cohen replied, 'Should one sit with one's arms crossed and tolerate that meanwhile vice develops as it likes. We must continue the struggle against sin and deceit, in order to ameliorate suffering, free the innocent and save the fallen.'<sup>46</sup> An impasse between Victorian prudery and modern sociology? Perhaps, yet at that time there were a number of real Polish victims in South American brothels. Of course that was better than being caught in Poland in 1939, though this is an extraneous element for a debate that took place ten years earlier.

Claude Montefiore articulated a similar moral imperative, grounded however in a sophisticated Liberal Judaism that emphasised the importance of social ethics. Montefiore explained his activities against white slavery 'as motivated by prophetic concepts of social justice. Unlike those who joined universalist ethical societies, Montefiore understood moral activity as "distinctively religious".'<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, we should recall the fact that the pre-war era was one of improvement and reasoned belief in patient meliorism. As the editor of the *General Anzeiger* added in 1902 to the long debate,

Should we therefore entirely despair? No! Moral progress moves at a very slow tempo. How long did it take until the white race [abolished black slavery]. The day will come where moral peoples will discover and be shamed by the disgraceful condition of the white slaves. Also for the poorest of the poor will there come the hour of freedom from the lowest slavery.<sup>48</sup>

Along with unreconstructed Victorians, ethically oriented Jews, and meliorists, Jewish feminists also believed that something ought to be done about white slavery because it was the most potent expression of male domination and the double standard of sexual morality. From the days of Josephine Butler's new-abolitionist crusade in the 1870s and 1880s, the prostitution question had been near the top of the feminist agenda. Rescue

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Cohen, 'Zur Diskussion des Problems des Internationalen Mädchen-und Frauenhandels', *Zeitschrift für Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege* (November-December 1929), p. 290, continuing the debate from the previous issue, cited in n. 44 and 45.

<sup>47</sup> Dr Steven Bayme, 'Claude Montefiore, Lilly Montagu and the Origins of the Jewish Religious Union', p. 7, scheduled for publication.

<sup>48</sup> *General Anzeiger*, 15 October 1902.



work, travellers' aid work, agitation against the tolerated system as well as against juvenile, enforced and migratory prostitution were dear to the hearts of late-century feminists. In Europe the immensely able Bertha Pappenheim moved the prostitution question to the forefront of Jewish feminism.

From the time of Ernest Jones' revelation in his classic biography of Freud, it has been well-known that in her early adulthood Bertha was the 'Anna O' of the Freud and Breuer *Studies in Hysteria*.<sup>49</sup> While she was not psychoanalysed herself, her case influenced the evolution of early psychoanalysis. Born into a rigidly conventional orthodox and middle-class household in Vienna, Pappenheim suffered the onset of severe hysterical symptoms while nursing her father in his terminal illness. Following his death she broke down completely and was treated by Dr Breuer between 1880 and 1882. Her psychoanalytic biographers explain the subsequent interest in white slavery as a great act of sublimation. As a young lady she is said to have suffered from unconscious conflicts resulting either from a wish to possess her father, or to become a whore, or both. Following her breakdown, recovery and move to Frankfurt, she was able to resolve these inner conflicts by rescuing prostitutes and calling attention to the evils of seducers and procurers.<sup>50</sup>

It would be idle to deny the element of truth in this and Pappenheim's own letters reveal, for example, an uncomfortable fascination with a beautiful Jewish prostitute she encountered in Salonika.<sup>51</sup> But psycho-history becomes more than condescending, it becomes irrelevant when one considers that her *Jüdischer Frauenbund*, established in 1904, ultimately enrolled some 20 per cent of all German-Jewish women.<sup>52</sup> Like Josephine Butler, her interest in prostitution may have been neurotic in aetiology, but like Butler too her thousands of followers found Pappenheim charismatic. By placing prostitution near the top

<sup>49</sup> Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (London, Penguin ed., 1961), pp. 202-4. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies in Hysteria* (London, Penguin ed., 1974), pp. 73-102 and *passim*.

<sup>50</sup> Lucy Freeman, *Story of Anna O* (New York, 1972); Richard Karpe, 'The Rescue Complex in Anna O's Final Identity', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 30 (1961), 1-24; Ellen M. Jensen, 'Anna O—A Study of Her Later Life', *Ibid.*, 39 (1970), 269-93.

<sup>51</sup> Bertha Pappenheim, *Sisyphus Arbeit: Reisebriefe aus den Jahren 1911 und 1912* (Leipzig, 1924), p. 40.

<sup>52</sup> Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, pp. 10-11.



of her agenda, she spoke to one of the great concrete and symbolic women's issues of the day. As Pappenheim wrote in 1913, the condemnation of white slavery 'is an ethical demand that in the circles of womanhood who are awakening to self-consciousness is continually forging ahead.'<sup>53</sup>

Jewish-feminist interest in white slavery extended far beyond Germany. On her frequent missions to the east Pappenheim stimulated women's participation in Galicia, Bukovina, and even Bulgaria.<sup>54</sup> Middle-class Jewish ladies also spearheaded the anti-white-slavery movement in Poland, Hungary, and France. In the United States Sadie American, the dynamic President of the New York Section of the Council of Jewish Women, visited London in 1899 and discovered what European women were doing about the protection of women. With the revelations about prostitution emerging from the Committee of Fifteen struggle over the following two years, the ladies decided to see if they had a role to play. In part the answer was supplied by the investigations of Frances Kellor, the social worker, into bogus employment agencies; and as Sadie American later wrote, the Council 'made an investigation and found that many [immigrants] had failed to reach their destination and that numbers had fallen into evil hands.'<sup>55</sup>

This led to the creation of a Department of Immigrant Aid with sweeping scope. In 1904 the Council of Jewish Women was permitted to place a Yiddish-speaking worker on Ellis Island, Mrs Meiwitz, whose salary was paid by the Baron de Hirsch Fund. Her very full job involved recording the names of all unaccompanied Jewish females between the ages of twelve and thirty and interceding in difficult cases where deportation was threatened but might be avoidable. Sadie American saw the Ellis Island work as the first link in 'a complete chain of protection'. There was a rescue home on Staten Island for wayward girls and lady correspondants in 250 cities

<sup>53</sup> *Ost und West*, August 1913.

<sup>54</sup> Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, p. 121, and below.

<sup>55</sup> Leo Jung (ed.), *The Jewish Library*, 3rd series (New York, 1934), Ch. 6, esp. p. 118. Sadie American to M. S. Isaacs, President, Baron de Hirsch Fund, 30 March 1904, Box 55; Sadie American to Executive Committee ICA, 20 September 1910, Box 50. Baron de Hirsch Fund Papers, AJHS. There is a copy of the latter in 17 December 1910, ICA vol. 3.

who paid home visits to the thousands of persons logged by Mrs Meierowitz.<sup>56</sup>

Those male members of the Jewish establishment who were uncomfortable with the issue of prostitution had their Victorian sensibilities particularly offended when their attention was called to the 'social evil' by gentlewomen like Pappenheim and Sadie American. The feminists complained bitterly about the failure of men in general and the orthodox in particular to respond to them. Writing from Budapest in 1911 where she was on an organising mission, Pappenheim advised a colleague that when she approached a prominent rabbi who headed the childrens' protection society, he responded, 'I am not interested in this matter'. Writing of their Lakeview home for wayward girls in 1914, Bertha Proskauer of the Council of Jewish Women reminded the membership of how when it was first opened in 1906 they had to play it down: 'Remember this was before the days when the sex problems, the social evil and white slavery made parlor conversation, and when the Jewish community objected to having its daughters spoken of as not virtuous. In fact, we were like the puritans, Miles Standish—"not of words but of actions"'.<sup>57</sup>

Proskauer's remarks imply some easing of these attitudes, at least in New York; and even in Europe orthodox patriarchalism was never complete. In Cracow, for example, during his tour Rabbi Rosenak discovered that Rabbi Charles Horowitz was for the full participation of women in the work; and a decade later Rabbi Osias Thon, the revered Jewish statesman, was largely responsible for initiating a Union of Jewish Women that undertook white-slavery work.<sup>58</sup>

At least Jewish feminists and paternalists had a shared sensitivity to anti-semitism. As veterans of the interdenominational International Congresses for the Suppression of the White-Slave Traffic, Bertha Pappenheim and Sadie American sensed anti-semitism even in those relatively friendly sur-

<sup>56</sup> This work is described in the *Year Books. New York Section. Council of Jewish Women*, 1903/4 and ff. See also, Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, and Sonya Michel, *The Jewish Women in America* (New York, 1976), pp. 170-5.

<sup>57</sup> Pappenheim to Sophie Mamelok, 9 March 1911 in Edinger, *Pappenheim*, p. 37. Also, Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, p. 121. *Year Book. New York Section. Council of Jewish Women* (1914/5), p. 89.

<sup>58</sup> Rosenak, 'Bericht', p. 6, and below.

roundings. After attending the 1910 Congress in Madrid, Sadie American reported, 'There were representatives there from every European country, and underneath it all, like powder ready for the match, was the fear that the whole Conference would be turned into detestation and denunciation of the Jews because of the Jewish traffickers.' Pappenheim usually came away with similar feelings, and even Moro, when reporting on the 1907 Congress, admitted 'it was easy to perceive that there was an undercurrent of feeling'.<sup>59</sup>

And here we come to the strongest rationale for attempting to combat white slavery, the desire to meet the anti-semites head on. In part this was based on the faulty assumption that visible Jewish efforts against white slavery would literally deny the use of the 'Jewish-trafficker' stereotype to racists. As Montefiore said in private, the fact 'that Jews and Jewesses were doing their utmost to combat this horrible trade would in his opinion be the best antidote for anti-semitism.' More broadly speaking the work was related to the movement of self-defence against anti-semitism, especially in Germany, where by the 1890s Jews began actively fighting back against prejudice.<sup>60</sup>

By 1901 Arthur Moro had deluded himself into believing that the work 'has had the effect of softening the anti-semitic feeling to which the traffic naturally gives birth. This is true not only as regards England but of other countries as well, including Russia.'<sup>61</sup> How hopelessly wrong. Yet at the level of moral imperative the theologically minded argued that the work had to go ahead. Thus Montefiore as an old man soliciting more funds from ICA in 1932, trying

to avoid the disgrace to our Jewish name and fame which would ensue if our efforts [in Argentina] to punish the guilty, and to rescue their victims, were suffered to lapse. It is, I think, a real case of *Kiddush* [sanctification] or of *Chillul Hashem*. Which shall we choose?<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> American in *Proceedings. Council of Jewish Women* (1911), p. 85-6. Pappenheim in *Ost und West*, August 1913. Moro in 20 April 1907, ICA

<sup>60</sup> JAGM, 11 February 1902. Louis Maretsky, *Reden und Adhandlungen* (Berlin, n.d.), p. 41. U.O.B.B. Zweigkomitee, *Protokol*, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> 12 May 1901, ICA, vol. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Claude Montefiore to Edouard Oungre, 19 October 1933 in 13 December 1933, ICA vol. 4.

Those who sought sanctification of the name on these terms, and this was the final positive rationale for the work, forged a chain of committees that nearly stretched round the world and that drew in some of the major Jewish philanthropies. The two foci of these developments were Britain and Germany and much of promotional work for the rest of the world, excepting the United States, emanated from there. The British initiative was first, in keeping with its position as the mother of voluntary movements and the leading philanthropic as well as political power of the age.

### *The Lead from Britain*

Unselfconsciously, the original departure in Jewish organisation against prostitution took place in Britain as part of the famous 1885 crusade against juvenile prostitution. Early in that year philanthropic lady friends in the East End of London brought to the attention of Constance Rothschild, daughter of Sir Anthony, the fact that there was no rescue house for Jewish prostitutes. This was a subject that neither Constance nor her sister Annie, who also became active in the work, knew anything about. Indeed, their upbringing has been described as 'almost stiflingly sheltered'. Constance's only connection with social questions was her interest in the temperance movement and she had taken the total pledge in 1884. She was, however, a member of the 'cousinhood' of rich English Jews and once determined to undertake rescue work she was able to mobilise influential kin and friends. As she recorded in her diary, 'Have spent nearly four months in London, a time of *very high* pressure and full life. Rescue work was what I had set myself to do, rescue work and the Sabbath school.' By March 1885 there was a Jewish Ladies Society for Preventive and Rescue Work, with Constance Rothschild as Honorary Secretary, her cousin the Baroness Rothschild as President, and cousins Claude Montefiore and Arthur Moro on the Committee, along with orthodox Rabbi Simeon Singer and others.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Constance Battersea, *Reminiscences* (London, 1922), pp. 418ff. Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood* (London, 1971), p. 144. Battersea Diary, British Museum A.M. 47938, 12 August 1885, 6 January 1886. V. D. Lipman, *A Century of Social Service 1859-1959. The Jewish Board of Guardians* (London, 1959), Appendix 1. First Minute Book. Formation of the Association, 23 March 1885, JWB. For Montefiore, Lucy Cohen, *Some Recollections of Claude Goldsmid Montefiore 1858-1936* (London, 1940), Ch. 6.

At first there was little to distinguish this modest society from the many Christian rescue groups that mushroomed in the period. The gentlewomen opened Charcroft House as a rescue home in Mile End, and offered the standard redemptive regimen of laundry work and prayer. Occasionally a Jewish prostitute was transferred there from one of the Christian homes. On the preventive side the husband of Charcroft's matron met boats from the continent and shepherded unprotected females to the Society's temporary shelter or to the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter in Leman Street.<sup>64</sup>

By the late 1880s however, the gentlewomen were overtaken by events. London had become a major transshipment point for the Jewish masses flooding out of eastern Europe and the ladies began receiving reports, like one in 1888, 'giving a terrible account of the gross immoralities of the Jewish people in the East India Dock Road'.<sup>65</sup> Constance Rothschild had not bargained for this. London was developing its own Jewish vice scene. Some of the unclean ones settled there and pre-war data show that in the East End borough of Stepney, which contained the Whitechapel ghetto, about 20 per cent of convictions for brothelkeeping were against Jews.<sup>66</sup> Many more passed through on their way to South America and South Africa, recruiting, as we have seen, in the East End sweatshops or even in places of recreation like Kennington Park. Of the women involved, the expert police official Frederick Bullock reflected, 'They leave England, having perhaps acquired a taste for the pleasures of a life in which luxuries are costly and alluring ... Aliens speaking a language totally foreign to those among whom they are cast, they leave this country with scarcely a trace behind them.'<sup>67</sup>

With these local revelations and clear confirmation of the regular traffic to Buenos Aires, the Society evolved to become the world centre for the Jewish work against white slavery. First in 1889 the ladies resolved that 'a Committee of Gentlemen

<sup>64</sup> First Minute Book, *passim* to 22 September 1887, JWB.

<sup>65</sup> Minutes of the General Committee, 20 January 1888, also 13 November 1888, 11 December 1892, JWB.

<sup>66</sup> The data are for 1901-10, and are derived from *Metropolitan Borough of Stepney. Annual Reports*, legal proceedings against brothels.

<sup>67</sup> For an interesting description, *Lost London. The Memoirs of an East End Detective* (London, 1934), Ch. 12, 'White Slave Traffic Evils'. F. S. Bullock, 'White Slave Traffic', New Scotland Yard 12 June 1913, copy in L/P&J/6/4346 (1912), IOL.



should be asked to supervise the work of the Society'.<sup>68</sup> The women were left in charge of the rescue work but the new emphasis was reflected in the altered title of the group, Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, registered in 1896. Rabbi Simeon Singer and Arthur Moro, as Honorary Secretary, took over the fight against white slavery. As the totally devoted Moro wrote much later on his eightieth birthday, 'During the last 44 years, the greater portion of my time and thoughts have been spent in the service of my fellow beings, and in the endeavour to prevent the good repute of my co-religionists from being tarnished by the evil deeds and traffic done by a few of them.'<sup>69</sup>

In 1896-7 the Society made the decisive change, acquiring the important financial support of ICA and expanding its work overseas. Even in England with its relatively hospitable climate for Jews, it was not an easy decision to tackle the problem in a major way. Of that decision, we are told 'The Association did not enter into their new field of work without hesitation and mature reflection.' Alarming overseas reports; confirmation of 'The worst fears' by Colonel E. L. Goldsmid, ICA's agent in Argentina; pleas for help from abroad; and news that German Jews were beginning to organise, all motivated the leap forward.<sup>70</sup>

Claude Montefiore was the bridge to ICA's central office in Paris. He interested Alfred Cohen, a prominent British Jew and uncle of ICA's president, and the pair obtained for the Jewish Association a £1,200 annual subvention to be used as the two of them saw fit. Cohen even got Chief Rabbi Zadok Kahn of France to advocate their cause in ICA's councils, pointing out that 'Not only is this a horrible traffic, it is a traffic that touches ICA in two ways—the merchandize is Jewish women of Russia and Romania, and the outlet for the most part the Argentine republic.' ICA was won over. The subsidy was later increased and lasted until the 1930s; and ICA also subsidised French committees and made available its Russian

<sup>68</sup> Minutes of the General Committee, 15 October 1889, also 30 December 1889, 2 April 1890, JWB.

<sup>69</sup> 13 March 1932, ICA.

<sup>70</sup> *JA Reports*, (1896/7), pp. 7-10; (1897/8), p. 23; JAGM, 21 June, 8 November 1896.

emigration bureaux for the eastern end of the anti-white-slavery protective and intelligence network.<sup>71</sup>

The Jewish Association was the best organised group of its kind and the conscious model for similar endeavours from Warsaw to Buenos Aires. Guided by members of the Anglo-Jewish elite, it never sought a mass membership but worked where practical with other Jewish institutions like the Board of Deputies and the Board of Guardians. As far as its domestic posture is concerned, it was a vigilance committee: guarding travellers, lobbying for legal changes, gathering intelligence and sharing it with the police and Coote's NVA, stopping and prosecuting traffickers, rescuing girls, and reforming prostitutes.

In the early years the travellers' aid work was particularly frustrating. Speaking of the long-suffering Mr Sternheim, appointed in 1890, Moro explained, 'When he first began to work at the docks every obstacle had to be faced unaided by dock, ship, railway officials or even by the police. All regarded with doubt and suspicion the intervention of an inspector of an independent charity.'<sup>72</sup> From this inauspicious beginning, however, public and private officials were won over as the whole movement gained status. Medical inspectors at Tilbury alerted the Jewish Association to unprotected steerage passengers. The railway and shipping companies issued special boarding passes, platform tickets, and valuable intelligence. Shortly before the war the Royal Mail and Pacific Lines to South America were supplying full passenger lists for all incoming and departing ships. At the height of the traffic in 1906 the police sometimes 'sent as many as seven detectives to watch the departure of the boat-train carrying passengers from London [Waterloo] to Southampton.' In a typical year like 1910 the Jewish Association's three Yiddish-speaking agents, all bedecked with Hebrew badges, aided nearly 700 women at London's docks and stations.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> 4 July 1897, 11 November 1911, 13 March 1932, ICA. Alfred Cohen to Chief Rabbi Zadok Kahn, 28 May 1897, Box 457, ICA Archives. And below.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the Council, 12 March 1901, JWB.

<sup>73</sup> Minutes of the General Committee, 5 July 1895, JAGM, 7 June 1896. Also 14 October 1915 and 30 June 1906, 18 September 1911, ICA.

Furthermore, at every major port-of-entry and exit Jewish subcommittees were organised, in some places with the assistance of the Jewish Board of Deputies. Russian and Polish transmigrants who took the Northern route from Hamburg or Libau to Hull or Grimsby and then crossed by train to Liverpool were as carefully scrutinised as those who passed through the port of London. At Liverpool Lord Mayor Lewis Cohen was a mainstay of the work and at the other end of the country in Southampton so was Alderman Emmanuel. By 1913 it could be claimed that 'any Jewish girl who enters England at the East Coast ports on her way to the US, Canada or South America is met upon arrival (75% of such girls are under 21 years of age).'<sup>74</sup>

What did this human Maginot Line, staffed we might add in co-operation with other groups like the National Vigilance Association and the Travellers' Aid Society, actually accomplish? Just the occasional success, hardly enough to justify the great expenditure of energy and money. In 1891 Sternheim and a colleague from another organisation managed to prevent a known trafficker from leaving Fenchurch Street Station with two women who had just arrived on the crowded boat train. Years later, in 1910, another Jewish Association inspector saved a young woman from a similar fate at Liverpool Street Station.<sup>75</sup> In between there was more frustration than rescue. Perhaps the greatest futility of all was having to deal with migrants who were taken to the Association's temporary shelter, having been given on the continent the addresses of known brothels and then refusing to listen to the truth. Defence workers were faced with the cruel anomaly of themselves handing the women over to pimps and then having to rescue them later.<sup>76</sup>

Along with the travellers' aid effort, legal work was another mainstay of groups like the Jewish Association. Part of the ICA grant was used to prosecute the Stamford Road gang and Alfred Cohen anticipated the benefits of having the convictions 'pub-

<sup>74</sup> *JA Report* (1913), p. 24. The fluctuating fortunes of the local committees can be followed through the minutes, the reports to ICA and the published reports. On the assistance of the Board of Deputies, *JA Report* (1908), p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> JAGM, 3 December 1891, 24 September 1910, ICA, vol. 1.

<sup>76</sup> JAGM, 15 October, 19 November 1899, 6 January 1900, 2-3 July 1904, ICA vol. 2.

lished all over Poland and Galicia'. In the event, not only did Silver and his friends finally go free, by 1901 the whole detection effort was in a shambles. The Jewish Association had employed Mr Littlechild, a leading English private detective. With his subordinates Littlechild tried to gain evidence against another gang but concluded 'that no case he ever had to deal with has so taxed his skill and resources'. He advised that Polish Jews be engaged for the task, but such detectives were hard to find.<sup>77</sup> In the end, however, some of the barriers were indeed overcome and the successful prosecutions increased. The Association received enough intelligence from the East End community and co-operating groups overseas to compile impressive statistics. Between 1902 and 1912 it carried out no less than 472 investigations concerning pimps and brothels and saved 51 women from being trafficked. Another 426 women between 1905 and 1912 were found to be practising prostitution, apparently of their own volition.<sup>78</sup>

Strengthening legislation was the final domestic goal of the Jewish Association. There were weaknesses in the law that for years had frustrated the anti-white-slavery forces, especially the requirement that police have an arrest warrant to detain suspected procurers. Furthermore, just as in the United States, mass immigration became a controversial subject by the 1890s. Inevitably the subject of alien crime arose and the connection was drawn in London between the Jews and white slavery. Two of the leading figures in the anti-alien movement, Major W. Evans-Gordon and Arnold White, were quite explicit on the subject, White going so far as to cite in his *Modern Jew* of 1899 Thomas Fritsch's notorious *Anti-Semitic Catechism*. Not many readers of the long excerpt from that proto-Nazi libel would have been impressed by White's caveat that Fritsch's charges about Jewish white slavery were slightly exaggerated.<sup>79</sup>

The public opinion created by works like these and by widespread publicity about alien prostitution contributed to the

<sup>77</sup> Alfred Cohen to ICA, 21 March 1898. Moro to Arthur Cohen, 21 March 1898, Box 456, ICA Archive. 10 June 1900, 12 May 1901, ICA.

<sup>78</sup> Compiled from data in the Jewish Association published annual reports.

<sup>79</sup> Major W. Evans Gordon, *The Alien Immigrant* (London, 1903), pp. 89, 140. Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (New York, ed., 1899), pp. 85-7. See also, Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society* (London, 1979), pp. 44-7; Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, pp. 169-71.



passage of the mildly restrictive Aliens Act of 1905. While Montefiore in particular was no friend of mass immigration, it was at that point that the leadership of the Jewish Association decided to obtain amendments to the law, so that those parties who were giving the honest immigrants a bad name could be punished or chased from the country. Legislation took time, however, and in the meanwhile the anti-aliens kept up the pressure. Moro reported in 1906 that in the context of public discussion about white slavery, 'the word "foreigner" was, we fear, but a polite disguise for the word "Hebrew"'.<sup>80</sup> We might add that this was despite the heavy role played by the French, Germans, and Belgians in London prostitution.

In 1908, the year that the popular balladeer George R. Sims made exaggerated allegations in the *Daily Telegraph* about a powerful pimp's syndicate, meetings were being held at Claude Montefiore's house to draft new legislation against procuring, brothelkeeping, and living off immoral earnings. The Jewish Association had conferred with the Jewish Board of Deputies, with which it had long been on cordial terms, and whose president, the barrister D. L. Alexander, took a keen interest in purity questions. In fact he later became a member of the British National Committee for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic. The two Jewish groups decided to form a Conjoint Committee with the leading social-purity pressure groups of the city, Coote's NVA and the Bishop of London's Public Morality Council.<sup>81</sup>

It was 1912 before the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed, and the mass public pressure exerted on behalf of the legislation created one of those waves of hysteria in London about the dangers of white-slave traffickers. Yet from the point of view of Montefiore, Alexander, and Moro the legislation was worth the wait. Not only did it make the detention of suspects much easier, it permitted flogging for living off immoral earnings. The threat of the lash always concentrated pimps' minds. It had sent them scurrying around South Africa as one territory after another added flogging to its laws. The

<sup>80</sup> 30 June 1906, ICA vol. 1. A year later Moro also reported 'much antagonism' caused by foreign Jewish prostitutes and pimps, 20 April 1907, ICA.

<sup>81</sup> The origins, passage and results of the legislation are discussed in Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, pp. 191-4.



outflux of 'bullies', as they were called, was nearly as great from London in 1912 as it was from Buenos Aires in the following year.

The policy departure of 1897 was meant especially for international work and within a few years the Jewish Association was subsidising or advising groups within the empire and the sphere of British interest in South America. In South Africa the Jews organised shortly after the revelations about Joe Silver's American Club. As Rabbi Joseph Hertz later explained, in May 1899,

The leaders of the various Jewish communities of Johannesburg brought this matter before the annual meeting of all the Jews of Johannesburg. Meanwhile the memorandum of this [Jewish Association], together with the covering letter from [Chief Rabbi] Adler arrived, which called their attention to the condition of things and suggested the formation of local watch committees. Thereupon the Jewish Vigilance Society of Johannesburg was formed with Mr Bension Aron a very active worker as President and the three Jewish Ministers of Johannesburg as Vice Presidents.<sup>82</sup>

Before the Boer War disrupted their work, the aroused Jews of Johannesburg banned the vicious and successfully prosecuted a Jewish couple who had lured a fifteen-year-old girl all the way from her family in Lithuania to a local brothel with false promises of employment.<sup>83</sup> With the advice of London, Jewish vigilance committees were formed in five other regional cities as well. The most effective was at Cape Town, where the young and energetic Cambridge graduate, Rabbi Alfred Bender, was instrumental in obtaining an Immorality Act in 1902.<sup>84</sup> After the ending of hostilities the struggle against the unclean ones continued, with Rabbi Hertz chairing an influential interfaith 'Morality Committee' that helped obtain yet another piece of legislation, the Transvaal Immorality Act of 1903. It was difficult, however, to sustain the vigilance committees and by 1910 the work of exchanging information with

<sup>82</sup> JAGM, 22 April 1900. Also described in Morris Abrahams' Manuscript, cited by Gustav Saron, 'The "Morality Question" in South Africa'.

<sup>83</sup> *Standard and Diggers' News*, 7 June 1899. JAGM, 22 April 1900.

<sup>84</sup> *JA Reports* (1901), p. 14; (1902), p. 28.

London was being undertaken by the Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>85</sup>

A number of factors made it possible to carry on the South African work, at least for a time. There were the efforts of interested and able young rabbis like Joseph Hertz and Alfred Bender; there was the support of an editor like Emmanuel Mendelsohn and wealthy laymen like Samuel Marks of Pretoria; finally in this outpost of European civilisation, the tradition of voluntary legal and political activity, of legislative lobbying and vigilance work, had taken root. In trying to organise Egypt and India, however, the Jewish Association had little success. The split between Ashkenazi and Sephardi hindered the work, as did the relatively small size of the communities and the absence of that same tradition of voluntary political, as opposed to charitable work.

After visiting Cairo and Alexandria in 1903 Albert Phillips reported that as far as white slavery was concerned 'no consideration whatsoever has ever been given to the grave scandal' by any of the Jewish institutions. A year later Claude Montefiore interested the wealthy Baron Jacques de Menasce in the problems and they started up a small society in Alexandria, subsidised by London and the Baron. The committee soon became non-sectarian and the Jews contributed a large house used as a home for girls rescued from traffickers.<sup>86</sup>

Speaking of India, Arthur Moro complained 'Indifference, egotism, repugnance and real (or pretended) incredulity, are among the obstacles which stand in our way, and prevent our obtaining the cooperation which we so much need in Eastern countries.' The offer of a £100 annual subsidy had failed to get a committee started in Calcutta in 1909, though the rich Sir Jacob Sassoon of Bombay seemed most interested in paying the way of any unclean ones repatriated from India. In truth this was realistic and not cynical. The women here were virtually all long-serving professionals. When the Indian government was brought into the debate during the First World War, the

<sup>85</sup> Van Onselen, 'Prostitutes', pp. 34-6. Saron, 'The "Morality Question" in South Africa'. ICA, 18 September 1911, vol. 1.

<sup>86</sup> 31 October 1903, 20 May 1905, 18 September 1911, ICA. *Conférence Internationale Pour la Répression de la Traite des Blanches*, Zurich, 15-16 Septembre 1904, pp. 36-8. NVA Minutes, 4 April 1905.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.

6. A 'Bombien' from Czernowitz:  
Moses Maierhoffer, c.1907.

7. Adolf Dickenfaden, 'Napolean',  
'King of the Traffickers' on the Buenos  
Aires - Warsaw route for 40 years.

8. Israel Meyrowitz, twice  
convicted in Germany.

9. Lisa Berger, a  
Meyrowitz accomplice.

10. Noé Traumann, c.1907. A founder  
of and principal operator in the  
Zwi Migdal Society.

**BRAZIL AND RIVER  
PLATE SERVICES**

**ROYAL MAIL LINE**

**"A" and "D"  
VESSELS**

**NOTICE**

**Young Women Travelling Alone.**

All Royal Mail passenger vessels are met on arrival at Buenos Aires by a lady representative of The National Vigilance Association who will be pleased to render advice and assistance to young women travelling alone. The lady can be met at the Purser's Office after the steamer has docked, or at the following address:

LAVALLE, 341 (Office 3BS).

**BUENOS AIRES.**

**NOTICE**

**Dames et Jeunes Filles Voyageant Seules**

Une dame de confiance de l'Association Nationale de Vigilance (The National Vigilance Association) se rend à bord des paquebots de la Royal Mail, à leur arrivée à Buenos-Aires, et se fera un plaisir de conseiller et d'assister les dames et jeunes filles voyageant seules. On peut trouver cette dame au Bureau du Commissaire après l'accostage du navire ou à l'adresse suivante:

LAVALLE, 341 (Bureau 3BS).

**BUENOS-AIRES.**

**PASTABA**

**JANUOM MOTERIM VAŽIUOJANCIOM VIENOM**

Vises Royal Mail kelviniuis garliavus, kurie atstabiuoja i Buenos Aires, sutinka moteris kuri atstovauja Tarptautinio Apsaugojimo Draugijai, maloniamai suteiks pagelba jaunioms moterims kurios keliauja vienos. Sia moteri galima rasti laivo kabininko rakinje, kuriomet laivas sustoja uoste, arba sekanciu adresu:

LAVALLE, 341 (Kontoras 3BS).

**BUENOS AIRES.**

**UPOZORNENIE**

**MLADYM ŽENAM SAMOTNE CESTUJUCIM**

Všetky osobne ladi spoda mosti Royal Mail su pri prjazdu do Buenos Aires osakavane zastupkyvou spolku "Narodne Ubranne Spoluzeni", ktora ishodne pada radu i pomok zenam samotne cestujucim. Tato zastupkyva moze byt vyhlanena po pristati ladi v kancelari pokladneho dostavku (Purser's Office), alebo pod nasledujucou adresu.

LAVALLE, 341 (Office 3BS).

**BUENOS AIRES.**

*Už, kaip ir kelywning liff...  
...Royal Mail...  
...atstovauja...  
...maloniamai...  
...suteiks pagelba...  
...jaunioms moterims...  
...keliauja vienos...  
...Sia moteri galima...  
...rasti laivo kabininko...  
...rakinje, kuriomet...  
...laivas sustoja...  
...uoste, arba...  
...sekanciu adresu...  
(Kontor... 341...)*





12. 'The Agent' by Rahel Szalit. From Edouard Fuchs,  
*Die Juden in der Karikatur.*



13. Anonymous portrait of the young  
Bertha Pappenheim.





14. The New York Independent Benevolent Association's Cemetery in Brooklyn.



15. The Zwi Migdal Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

Bombay Police Commissioner concluded, 'I am doubtful of the success of a special agency to work amongst European Jewesses in India.' Indeed, on one occasion in 1891 when the Jewish Association and NVA both had sought to free a 'white slave' taken from London to Bombay, they discovered that young Fanny Epstein knew exactly what she was doing and had actually purchased a brothel upon arrival. One can easily understand the great alarm, however, because Fanny's poor father had received an anonymous letter from an enemy of Fanny's male companion, claiming falsely that the young woman was being worked to death in a brothel.<sup>87</sup>

South America was an altogether different story, with the very integrity of the Jewish community in jeopardy and women in need of help. It was imperative to organise. But how? In 1896 Colonel Goldsmid of ICA wrote that his Argentine contacts discounted the vigilance-society approach, 'owing to the indifference with which the authorities regarded the traffic'.<sup>88</sup> By 1901, however, it was possible to organise a Buenos Aires branch of the Jewish Association. This followed a newspaper attack on the traffickers in 1900 and an offer from Dr Frederick Perugia, brother-in-law of Leopold de Rothschild, to undertake the preliminary work. Perugia obtained promises of assistance from the police and the Austrian Consul. He obtained Henry Joseph for the presidency. Actually a British businessman, Joseph had acted as rabbi there since receiving a special certificate from the French Consistory in 1882. The busy secretaryship would be undertaken for the first sixteen years by the very reliable Alfred Gelphy, a clerk at the Austrian Consulate, whose salary was paid directly from London.<sup>89</sup>

At first the group 'found the work disagreeable and unthankful'. But gradually Henry Joseph and Gelphy made official contacts and started getting things done. In 1903 Gelphy began attending registrations of prostitutes at the dispensary and was soon inscribing the girls himself, at least blocking under-age

<sup>87</sup> 24 September 1910, 5 June 1909, ICA. *JA Report* (1908), p. 25. F. A. M. Vincent to Secretary, Government of Bombay, 24 July 1916, P/9952, IOC. On Fanny Epstein: material in J&P 1609/1891, J&P 1709/1891, L/P&J/2082, IOC. *Times*, 14 December 1891. Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj*, pp. 126-9.

<sup>88</sup> JAGM, 8 November 1896.

<sup>89</sup> 20 May 1905, ICA vol. 1. JAGM, Minutes, 15 October 1899, 4 October 1900. On Joseph, Mirelman, 'Jews in Argentina', p. 357.

applicants. In the same year the interfaith Argentine National Committee for Combating the White-Slave Traffic was formed, which Joseph joined and the Jews later dominated. It was a useful platform for calling attention to the traffic as a general rather than a Jewish problem. In the meantime, Gelphy and the small staff undertook the usual array of travellers' aid and intelligence work. A significant part of their rationale was to be available for the kinds of brothel rescues that we have had occasion to discuss. In a typical year, 1910, Gelphy, with photos from London and the help of a policeman, was present at the arrival of 477 transatlantic steamers and 996 coastal vessels from Montevideo. The office checked out enquiries sent from London and saved several women. It was instrumental in the arrest of at least sixty-one bullies.<sup>90</sup>

Zwi Migdal went on, but it was set on a collision course with the Buenos Aires branch, an institution which was able to rally the entire Jewish community in 1930 for the task of destroying the pimps' society. That was not yet possible. In 1913 Rabbi Halphon, posted to Argentina six years earlier by ICA, took over the presidency of the branch upon the death of Henry Joseph. Halphon wrote bitterly about the lack of public spirit, the moral indifference and divisiveness of the Buenos Aires Jews. They were, he wrote, the 'residue' of European Jewry rather than the 'elite' and it was very difficult to get any active help from them. 'They are so engrossed in their business that they have no spare time for other things.'<sup>91</sup> An uncharitable and unrealistic comment when we recall the permanent boycott and the role of the government in preserving Zwi Migdal.

The Jewish Association saw the advantages of interdenominational work in nations like Britain, Argentina, and Egypt: access to high places, the exertion of greater pressure, fighting the evil as a general rather than a Jewish problem. The opportunity to play a full role in such an interfaith movement came in 1898 when W. A. Coote felt called by God to organise an international crusade against white slavery.<sup>92</sup> He decided to

<sup>90</sup> There is a five-year 'Record of the Work Done' in 20 May 1905, ICA vol. 1. Also, 18 September 1911, ICA; Cohen, *Visit to South America*; *JA Report* (1907), pp. 32-7.

<sup>91</sup> Halphon letter of 22 February 1909 in 5 June 1909, ICA; 3 May 1910 in 24 September 1910, ICA. Also his comments in the Jewish Association Report, 27 June 1914, ICA vol. 1.

<sup>92</sup> W. A. Coote, *A Vision and its Fulfillment* (London, 1913), p. 21.

tour Europe and help initiate national committees against white slavery, and to hold an international congress in London in the following year. We have seen above how he was received with open arms in the highest circles across the continent.

When the leaders of the Jewish Association learned of Coote's plans they were deeply ambivalent. Coote himself was a good friend, an evangelical philosemite like Josephine Butler, who could be counted on to fight anti-semitism and struggle to integrate Jews into the movement. But the problem was on the continent. 1899 was, after all, the year of Dreyfus' retrial in which he was again found guilty and of the Hilsner ritual-murder trial. Moro explained,

When we first heard of this matter and of the extraordinary cordiality with which the scheme was hailed in France, Germany and Russia we were both dismayed and pleased. Dismayed because we feared that the Congress might lead to the expansion of anti-semitism from which our foreign coreligionists already suffer, pleased, because of the implied diffusion of public feeling and activity against the abominable traffic. After very serious consideration we decided heartily to support the movement.<sup>93</sup>

That meant a travel subsidy for Coote, some of it from the Rothschilds, introductions to rabbis in Europe, and money too for the Congress.<sup>94</sup> Inevitably, however, with delegates present from almost every continental nation, the question of Jewish trafficking broke through the polite veneer. Baroness von Langenau of Austria complained about that as well as an alleged Jewish press conspiracy of silence to protect the traffickers. The *Anti-Semitic Yearbook* and similar publications duly reported these remarks. Coote felt obliged to make the most generous statement about his cordial relations with Mr Moro and Chief Rabbi Adler. He added,

I mention this so that in the future formation of the national Committees in your respective countries you may welcome the cooperation of our Jewish brethren. No stronger demonstration of their interest and earnestness in connection with this work can be shown than the

<sup>93</sup> 10 June 1900, ICA.

<sup>94</sup> JAGM, 17 December 1900. *NVA Executive Minutes*, 24 May 1900.

fact that they voluntarily voted £200 towards the expenses of this Congress.<sup>95</sup>

In Germany, now to become the second focus of the work, this was duly noted. Having organised until this point in strict secrecy, interested German Jews like Dr Louis Maretski took the 1899 Congress to mean that they had nothing more to hide.<sup>96</sup> The next step was to contact the German National Committee. Even when they obtained entry after some delay, however, the tension was never far below the surface in the German outpost of this unusual social movement.

<sup>95</sup> On von Langenau: U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, p. 29. *Anti-Semitisches Jahrbuch* (1900), p. 54. On Coote: 10 June 1900, ICA. Also, *The White-Slave Traffic, Transactions of International Congress on the White-Slave Traffic* (London, 1899).

<sup>96</sup> Louis Maretsky, *Geschichte des Ordens Bnei Briss in Deutschland, 1882-1907* (Berlin, 1907), p. 217



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Jewish Response, 2

#### *Germany*

The German initiative against white slavery differed from the British in a number of respects. While the British ladies handed the leadership of the struggle to the gentlemen and remained content running rescue homes and doing some travellers' aid work, the German-Jewish feminists pushed their way into the centre of the fight. The British turned their attention overseas while the Germans concentrated on the embarrassing *Ostjuden* in Galicia. Samuel Cohen, Rabbi Simeon Singer, Moro, Montefiore, and D. L. Alexander all worked easily with Coote and the Bishop of London in the British National Committee; on the other hand the tensions in the German National Committee were never far below the surface and from beginning to end the German Jews were much more defensive than their British counterparts, as befits the more hostile climate in which they had to operate.

German Jews first debated the white-slavery issue in 1894, in both the Henry Jones Lodge of the B'nai B'rith at Hamburg and in that fraternal organisation's national council. At first Gustav Tuch, president of the Hamburg Lodge, almost single-handedly propelled this issue into the consciousness of that and other Jewish institutions. An old Hamburg liberal then aged sixty, Tuch had been shocked out of assimilationism by the growth of the anti-semitic movement. Interested in social and women's questions, he helped found the Jewish Humanitarian Womens' Society that same year in his home city. At his death in 1909, his colleague Maretsky wrote, 'with Tuch the era of systematic social work was instituted'. Much of that effort, we might add, was in the anti-white-slavery cause.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, pp. 4, 12. Maretsky, *Geschichte*, pp. 214ff., 113. *B'nai B'rith News*, March 1909. Helga Krohn, *Die Juden in Hamburg 1848-1911* (Hamburg, 1974), pp. 98-9, 171, 180. 'Gustav Tuch' in *Grosse*

On the first attempt Tuch failed to convince his fraternal brothers to commit themselves. Then a fast growing middle-class organisation of some 5,000 members in fifty lodges, the Germans decided to wait until the newly planned Austrian B'nai B'rith was launched. After all, the Viennese would have easier access to Galicia. It is easy to see why the B'nai B'rith held back in 1894. Anti-semitism had made big strides in the years immediately before their initial debate.<sup>2</sup> Always a straw in the wind, there was a ritual murder trial in 1892 on German soil at Xanten in Westphalia, where the wife and daughter of a Jewish ritual butcher were tried for the alleged ritual murder of a five-year-old boy. At the same time anti-semites mounted a campaign against kosher slaughtering and the Conservative Party added an anti-semitic plank to its platform. In the parliamentary elections of 1893 the anti-semitic parties made gains.

Furthermore, the association of the Jews with white slavery was being introduced into anti-semitic propaganda. We have had occasion to note that Otto Glagau, who has been called a bridge between the traditional and the new racial anti-semitism, covered the deportations from Brazil in 1879-80. Then and again in 1886 his articles motivated officials in parts of East Prussia to post public notices about gangs of Jewish traffickers passing through from South America.<sup>3</sup> By the early 1890s the image of the alien Jewish trafficker in Christian female flesh was a staple of the German anti-semites. Even before the Lemberg trial of 1892 individuals like Thomas Fritsch utilised this stereotype. Of Fritsch and his anti-semitic centre in Leipzig it has been said that his 'role in undermining the position of Jews by distorting their religion, their character and their

*Jüdische National-Biographie*, Band 6, von S. Winger, p. 149. 'Gustav Tuch' in *Festschrift zur Feier des 25 Jahr Bestehens des Henry Jones Loge*, XV-XVI. On Maretsky, *B'nai B'rith News*, February 1913, birthday tribute; *Jüdische National Biographie*, Band 4, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> Marjorie Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany* (New Haven, 1978), p. 7ff. Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism 1870-1914* (New York, 1972), Ch. 4.

<sup>3</sup> On the effect of Glagau's revelations, Toby Kellen, *Weibliches Sklaventum in Neuerer Zeit* (Leipzig, 1894), p. 64. On Glagau generally, Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany. Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870-1914* (London, 1975), pp. 260-2.

mentality cannot be overrated.<sup>4</sup> One of Fritsch's many observations was that Jewish proprietors of clothing shops assaulted their customers in the changing rooms, an anticipation of the rumour that provoked the remarkable French white-slavery panic of the 1960s.

Naturally the Lemberg affair received broad coverage in Germany and two other events of the same year did even more to perpetuate the association in the public mind between Jews and prostitution. During the summer, a few months before the trial, the Berlin Jewish community was shocked by the foul and semi-pornographic *Juden-Bordelle* (Jewish Brothels, Revelations From Dark Houses). Put together by Alexander Berg, another racist scribbler, the book was peddled in the Friedrichstrasse and nearby streets until the Berlin City Council, apparently without effect, passed an urgent motion asking the police to stop its sale. *Juden-Bordelle* was soon followed by a supplement revelling in the recent Lemberg trial.<sup>5</sup>

To provide additional food for thought, August Bebel, the Social-Democratic deputy, had made allegations in the course of an attack on state-regulated brothels in Hamburg that spring that Jewish women from Austria and Hungary were being brought to Germany for baptism so that they could then be shipped off to Russian brothels. The point was to overcome the Russian prohibition against admitting Jews. Finally, after another attack by Bebel in 1894, the Hamburg authorities rounded up all registered foreign prostitutes and shipped them home.<sup>6</sup> We can be sure that if 'foreign' was a code word for

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (New York, 1981), p. 304. Also, Tal, *Christians and Jews*, p. 266; Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (London, 1964), Ch. 6. For Fritsch on this theme, *Thatsachen zur Judenfrage. Das ABC des Anti-Semitismus. Auszug aus dem Anti-semiten-Katechismus* (Leipzig, 1891). *Deutsch-Soziale Blätter*, 26 June, 10 July, 28 August, 4 September, 9 October 1892, etc. For the following observation, F. Roderick Stalhelm (Fritsch). *Das Rätsel des Jüdischen Erfolges* (Leipzig, 1928, 7th ed.), pp. 237-40. On the Lemberg trial, *Deutsch-Soziale Blätter*, 23 October, 6 November 1892. And below.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Berg, *Juden-Bordelle. Enthüllungen aus dunklen häusern* (n.d., 1892). *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Anti-Semitismus*, 26 June, 3, 10 July 1892. Kellen, *Weibliches Sklaventum*, p. 63. W. Weihus, *Bordell Juden und Mädchenhandel* 'Ergänzung zu der Schrift Juden-Bordelle' (Berlin, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Urban, *Staat und Prostitution in Hamburg 1807-1922* (Hamburg, 1925), pp. 102-5. The author cites police documents on these alleged baptisms, but the documents are no longer extant at the SH. *Stenographische Berichte über Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, 1893-4, Band 2*, pp. 1025ff. The B'nai B'rith denied the truth of the baptism allegations in its U.O.B.B. *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, p. 55.

'Hebrew' in England, exactly the same was true in German public debate.

It took three more years of consideration for the B'nai B'rith to vote 1,000 Marks to establish a Special Committee for the Suppression of White Slavery. Louis Maretsky, the Berlin public-health expert and Grand B'nai B'rith president who was won over totally, later wrote of Tuch's 'stirring speech' at the 'memorable meeting' of May 1897. Tuch would be chairman and his committee consisted of Hamburg Jews of substance, like Alfred Cohn, James Simon, and M. Deutschlander as well as Maretski, Rabbi Rosenthal of Breslau and other notables. Still, the task was considered so sensitive that they proceeded in secret. Later when the Russian police enquired about the group they were assured by the German authorities that these Jews were not subversive.<sup>7</sup>

Why did the B'nai B'rith change its mind? German Jews started fighting back in the 1890s, defending their Jewishness in public.<sup>8</sup> In 1893 the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith was established. Its paper, *Im Deutschen Reich*, responded to defamations as they arose, surely not a decisive answer to anti-semitism, but later in the decade the Central Association entered politics. In 1891 gentile progressives formed the Association for Defence Against Anti-Semitism, whose journal filled the same role. By 1897 these anti-anti-semitic papers were answering so many highly-coloured anti-semitic press attacks about white slavery; and the respectable press, such as the *Hamburger Nachrichten* to which Tuch had been a longtime contributor, was giving such coverage to Jewish involvement, that the proponents of the work were able to carry it through as a necessary part of the Jewish defence movement. As Maretsky explained, 'The Order felt these facts as a heavy accusation pressing on it, and the Order feeling called upon to work for the moral improvement of Jewry,

<sup>7</sup> *Verhandlungen der Gross-Loge für Deutschland VIII von 1886-1902*, 16 May 1897. U.O.B.B. *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, pp. 8-9. Maretsky, *Geschichte*, p. 215; *Reden und Abhandlungen*, p. 113. *Der Israelit*, 10 July 1902. Russian Consul to Dr Roscher, Police Director Hamburg, and reply, 4, 22 February 1900, Akte Politische Polizei, SH.

<sup>8</sup> Lamberti, *Jewish Activism*, pp. 9-13. Also Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions*, Ch. 4, 5.



sadly seized this opportunity with power and energy and zealous thoroughness.<sup>9</sup>

What did the B'nai B'rith actually hope to do? From Maretsky's comments and from the resolutions passed in 1897 and again in 1899, it is clear that they wanted to draw in major Jewish organisations for an international initiative against Jewish prostitution. They also hoped to create the central link in a protective chain for Jews migrating from east to west. Finally, they hoped to launch a major effort at preventive work and social reconstruction in Galicia, which was politically accessible to Jewish social workers while Russia and Romania were not. With the German anti-semites barking at their heels about the backward *Ostjuden*, these 'endeavours to raise the cultural condition of the Jews in Galicia', as Maretsky's 1899 resolution phrased it, were compounded of self interest as well as charity, and were based on the assumption that anti-semitism was grounded in the moral and vocational defects of their unassimilated coreligionists.<sup>10</sup>

To look at the internal protective work first, Tuch, his son Dr Ernest Tuch, and Dr Maretsky began by drawing in other B'nai B'rith lodges, as in the port of Stettin, and by encouraging women's auxiliaries. Soon the resources of other institutions and individuals were also brought to bear. While the B'nai B'rith auxiliaries were never very numerous, Bertha Pappenheim's *Jüdische Frauenbund* (JFB), established in 1904, added weight to the cause. In the rescue field their home for wayward women and illegitimate babies opened in 1907 near Frankfurt was a humane advance over its Jewish predecessors at Paris and London and also at Breslau, where German B'nai B'rith ladies had set up a home in 1891. Pappenheim also organised girls' clubs throughout Germany and made the inevitable enthusiastic departure into travellers' aid work. By 1909 the JFB had organised twenty posts at ports and railway stations

<sup>9</sup> Maretsky, *Geschichte*, p. 214. See for example, *Im Deutschen Reich*, October 1896, July 1898, May 1899, May, August 1902. *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Anti-Semitismus*, 31 October 1896, 8 July 1899, 17 July 1901, 30 July 1902.

<sup>10</sup> *Verhandlungen der Gross-Loge*, 22 May 1899. On the assumption that Jewish defects caused anti-semitism, Schorch, *Jewish Reactions*, p. 84.



bedecked with Stars of David, where advice and a hostel bed were on offer to weary travellers.<sup>11</sup>

There was also participation from the reform religious establishment. The Union of Rabbis gave financial support, Rabbi Rosenak helped initiate travellers' aid work at the Port of Bremen while other reform rabbis led subcommittees at Breslau, Munich, and Kattowitz. The revered Marcus Horowitz of Frankfurt, orthodox yet one of the founders of the Union of Rabbis, was a staunch supporter of the work and was to appear at the International Congress of 1902.<sup>12</sup>

The *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*, formed in 1901 to regularise relief work among their coreligionists in the east, also came to play an integral part in the anti-white-slavery work. To a substantial extent the B'nai B'rith and the *Hilfsverein* shared a common membership; and when in December 1904 the two groups convened a conference at Frankfurt of all of Europe's Jewish relief organisations in order to co-ordinate assistance to migrants, white slavery was one of the issues considered and acted upon.

One outcome of the conference was the establishment of Central Offices of Migration Affairs at Hamburg and Bremen and of committees on the eastern border, all to be attached to the *Hilfsverein*. For those migrants who could not be convinced to stay at home in the first place, there was travel information, shelter, and even treatment for trachoma victims; and these branches also acted as intelligence posts against white slavery. At Hamburg Paul Laskar, a *Hilfsverein* social worker of great experience, took charge in 1905 and achieved more co-operation with the port officials than the B'nai B'rith committee under Tuch had managed. At the other end of Germany the border committees became the first line of defence. We have already

<sup>11</sup> U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, pp. 10-15, 44. Maretsky, *Frauen und der Orden* (n.d., 1902). *Für Mutter und Kind* (1928). Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, pp. 132-3. *Referate gehalten auf dem 2. Delegiertentage des Jüdischen Frauenbundes* (1907), pp. 31ff.

<sup>12</sup> U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, pp. 15, 44. U.O.B.B., Zweigkomitee, *Protokoll*, pp. 7-8, 16, 30. On Rosenak's work for emigrants from 1896, predating the white-slavery work, *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege und Socialpolitik* (December 1931), p. 424. On white-slavery work being added to the general emigration work, Deutsch Nationalkomitee, *Bericht über die III Deutsche Nationalkonferenz* (1905), p. 69. On the 1902 Congress and also the Union of Rabbis' meeting of that year, below.

observed Rabbi Winter at Myslowitz, where he participated in the trial of Lubelski in 1914 and was instrumental in the conviction of a band of traffickers the year before. Finally, even ICA's information offices in Russia were added to the protective network. There were about 400 of them in 1910 and though they varied in effectiveness and were subject to police harassment, they began to send forward intelligence on traffickers.<sup>13</sup>

In 1910, for instance, the Alexandrova office of ICA noticed that a suspicious character by the name of Leib Schneiderman frequently passed through with young girls on the way to Argentina. They wired ahead to Hamburg and had the party arrested. In 1913 the ICA committee at Warsaw caused Aron Jakubowitz and his woman to be arrested on suspicion of white slavery at the emigration hall in Myslowitz.<sup>14</sup> At the western end of the chain, Hamburg and Bremen were in constant communication with London and therefore Argentina. German Jews did succeed in forming the central link in a protective and intelligence network, partly purpose built and drawing partly on the general emigration committees, that stretched from Russia to Buenos Aires and effected rescues, arrests, and convictions.

Any success at all depended upon the support of officialdom and the state-subsidised German National Committee for the Suppression of White Slavery (DNC). That august group was composed of court figures like the Chamberlain to the Empress, representatives of the Foreign and Interior Ministries, upper-middle-class charitable ladies, and Protestant ministers from the popular national morality movement. Reacting to obscenity and prostitution, perceived as symptoms of national decay, this last grouping had a marked anti-semitic bias. The secretary of

<sup>13</sup> Mark Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety* (Philadelphia, 1948), pp. 99-105. Zosa Szajkowski, 'Jewish Emigration Policy in the Period of the Rumanian Exodus, 1899-1903', *Jewish Social Studies* 13 (1951), p. 58. *Erster Jahresbericht des Zentralbureaus für Jüdische Auswanderungs-Angelegenheiten. Hilfsverein*, 1905. On the white-slavery component: Paul Laskar in *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 April 1910; at the *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 70-1; and Laskar also at the *Deutsch Nationalkomitee, Bericht über die 8 Deutsche National-konferenz* (1911), pp. 58-9. *JA Report* (1912), pp. 31-2. Maretsky, *Reden und Abhandlungen*, p. 312. *Neunter Geschäftsbericht des Hilfsvereins der Deutschen Juden* (1910), pp. 147-8, says that Hilfsverein Committees had been doing white-slavery work since their founding and speaks also of the close contacts on white slavery with the ICA committees.

<sup>14</sup> *Der Yiddische Emigrant* (Yiddish), No. 23, 1910, 13. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, 23 July 1913 in folio 59, SH.

the General Conference of German Morality Association, the right-wing Henning, took part in the DNC organising conference in 1899 at the Berlin City Mission House.<sup>15</sup>

Following the 1899 International Congress the B'nai B'rith committee decided to emerge into the open and seek an 'Anschluss' with the DNC. At that group's organising meeting Count Von Moltke, the great military leader, had made the observation 'that as girls sold into Asia belonged mostly to Jewish families, the Jewish authorities should be asked to help.'<sup>16</sup> Yet when Tuch and Maretski began negotiations with Pastor Burkhardt, the popular Berlin preacher who had become President of the DNC, they were politely told that his group was meant to remain Protestant. Tuch commented bitterly, 'Also in philanthropy there is a ghetto for us.'<sup>17</sup> That *Anschluss* was effected in 1902, probably expedited by Coote, who was in Berlin shortly before the agreement. The B'nai B'rith grouping became a subcommittee of the DNC and soon the *Hilfsverein*, *Jüdische Frauenbund* and several other Jewish charities also became institutional members. The chief rabbis of Alsace and Bavaria and local Jewish voluntary institutions entered the regional subcommittees of the DNC.<sup>18</sup>

Rabbi Marcus Horowitz of Frankfurt expressed pleasure at the 'great tolerance' shown at the second triennial International Congress held in that city in 1902, the initial one at which German Jews were represented through the DNC. The *General Anzeiger* thought that Horowitz and others had done well explaining the social roots of Jewish prostitution; but *Der Israelit* was much less pleased about the airing of dirty linen in public.<sup>19</sup> The orthodox rabbis were right to anticipate trouble: refusal by

<sup>15</sup> On the founding meetings, a full report in FO 83/1943 PRO. For a detailed history of the DNC and all its subcommittees, Major D. H. Wagener, *Das Deutsche Nationalkomitee zu Internationaler Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels* (Leipzig, 1912). On Henning, R. J. V. Lenman, 'Art, Society, and the Law in Wilhelmine Germany: Lex Heinze', *Oxford German Studies VIII* (1973), 90. Also on the Morality movement, Richard J. Evans, 'Prostitution, State and Society in Imperial Germany', *Past and Present*, No. 70 (1976), 106-27.

<sup>16</sup> Meeting of 25 February 1899, in FO83/1943.

<sup>17</sup> U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, pp. 25-6. Maretsky, *Geschichte*, pp. 217-8.

<sup>18</sup> Jewish membership can be traced in Wagener, *Das Deutsche Nationalkomitee*.

<sup>19</sup> Horowitz cited in *Traite de Blanchés*, November 1902. *General Anzeiger*, 15 October 1902. *Der Israelit*, 10 July, 3 November 1902.

the DNC to condemn Russia for the Kishinev massacre; obnoxious anti-semitic comments followed by the appropriate rebuttals by Chief Rabbi Netter at the Strasbourg subcommittee in 1906 and Dr Langberg of the *Hilfsverein* at the DNC meetings at Stettin in 1912. The lid was nearly blown off the 1910 International Congress at Madrid when Major Wagener, the unpredictable but normally sympathetic secretary of the DNC, was only barely convinced not to break the unspoken rule by denouncing the Jews for causing the traffic.<sup>20</sup>

Given the inherent tension, it is remarkable that Coote was able to contain the situation for so long. But in Germany rewards of a kind did accrue to the Jews for participating in this late interfaith experiment. There was close co-operation with the resourceful special police office on white slavery; full co-operation in travellers' aid work between Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish groups at the ports; and joint work between Pappenheim's *Frauenbund* and the Christian railway missions.

### Galicia

Everything pointed to a German initiative in Galic. For one thing, B'nai B'rith investigations showed that 'Galic is the centre of *'Kaftismus'* and prostitution, as far as export is concerned.' Export meant Germany. For another, as Tuch explained, 'political conditions ... precluded useful activity' in Rumania and Russia. From the beginning the German opponents of white slavery had ambitious plans for Galic, not only protective committees but thoroughgoing social reconstruction. This is because, as Tuch and Maretsky wrote, full shocking insight into the dimensions of misery there, and of how prostitution was endemic to the social situation, became clear to the members of the B'nai B'rith committee as they made repeated visits to Galic through the 1890s.<sup>21</sup>

The first steps in the programme were modest enough. Rabbi Rosenthal of Breslau composed an explicit Hebrew

<sup>20</sup> Gustav Tuch, *Die Ursachen des Galizischen Mädchenhandels* (1903), pp. 16-17. U.O.B.B., *Auszug aus den Verhandlungen der 17 Ordentlichen Sitzung der Grosslage für Deutschland VIII*, Berlin, 25-6 March 1906, p. 75. *Im Deutschen Reich*, December 1912. *Proceedings. Council of Jewish Women* (1911), pp. 85-6.

<sup>21</sup> U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, 15. Tuch, *Ursachen*, pp. 20, 12, Maretsky, *Geschichte*, p. 255.



warning pointing out 'that Jewish girls from Galicia are increasing in the bordellos of all great cities.' Countersigned by some of the leading west-European rabbis and by members of the London and Hamburg committees, 500 copies of the long document were distributed to Galician rabbis and community boards by Cracow Solidaritas, a new B'nai B'rith chapter subsidised from Germany. Similar encyclical warnings had come before from London and would follow again and again for distribution to all of eastern Europe. By the time the Galician rabbis received their sixth warning in 1911, the shock must surely have worn off.<sup>22</sup>

A most important and difficult task was recruiting the assistance of the great Jewish voluntary institutions of the day. Particular attention was called to Galicia during the summer of 1898 by an outbreak of anti-semitic peasant riots at the western end of the province, provoked by the election to the Vienna parliament of Father Stanislaw Stojalowski, Christian People's Party leader. The situation became so dangerous that the government had to declare martial law.<sup>23</sup> Jewish institutions held a post-mortem. Vienna's *Israelitische Allianz* had long sponsored schools and special relief work in the poor province, and it sent its secretary to survey the ground. The Viennese then applied to ICA in Paris 'insisting on the necessity of concentrating all efforts to come to the aid of the miserable population of Galicia'. The idea was a combined Austrian, French, and German initiative. ICA's interests lay elsewhere, in using its vast funds to resettle Russian and Romanian Jews.<sup>24</sup>

In the meantime, in November 1898 the German, Czech, and new Austrian lodges of the B'nai and B'rith met at Prague. With great force Maretsky proposed a comprehensive plan of Galician reconstruction in which the Viennese lodge, *Humani-*

<sup>22</sup> On the warnings, U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, pp. 16-19, 17 December 1899, ICA. Alfred Cohen to unidentified correspondent, 7 September 1897, ICA Archives, Box 456. *Vigilance Record*, August 1891. Anglo-Jewish Association Executive Committee Minutes, 20, 27 November 1888, and Council Minutes, 4 November 1888, Mocatta Library. *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 154-7.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Brock, 'The Early Years of the Polish Peasant Party, 1895-1907', *Journal of Central European Affairs* XIV (1954), 222. Pulzer, *Political Anti-Semitism*, pp. 141-2.

<sup>24</sup> Dr Siegfried Fleischer, 'Enquête über die Lage der Jüdischen Bevölkerung Galiziens', *Jüdische Statistik* (Berlin, 1903), pp. 209-31. Files Austriche IDI Galicie, and France II H2-7, AIU. Vienna Alliance cited in 28 January 1901, ICA.



*tätverein*, would work out the practical plans and the Germans would provide material help. In the aftermath the brothers placed the Cracow lodge on a sounder footing and helped establish an influential outpost in Lemberg.<sup>25</sup> Then in 1900, with Viennese philanthropists like Dr Edmund Kohn and Paul Schiff laying the groundwork for a Relief Society for Galicia, Sigmund Bergel, a Berlin notable, travelled to America and lined up the support of the North American B'nai B'rith.<sup>26</sup> From revulsion with white slavery to a major scheme for improving the lives of Galician Jews, this was a large and ambitious leap.

In the event two factors intervened to sidetrack the plans. In late 1900 the emigration of desperate Jews from Romania became so heavy that the major organisations had to turn their attention to it. The assistance was so improvised that a group of outstanding German Jewish figures, headed by Paul Nathan, decided to organise the *Hilfsverein*, with the mission of systematically improving the social conditions of their coreligionists not only in Galicia, but elsewhere too. In other words, when the Relief Society for Galicia was finally launched in Vienna in 1901 it had less than the full attention of the Germans.

However, the two new relief groups did work out a *modus operandi*. With German subsidies the Austrians organised the economic work 'and had the special task of starting small industries and providing especially women and girls with the possibility of earning their bread.' This was a difficult mission and some of the ventures, like a hairnet industry, boomed and then went bust. Yet in 1910 the Relief Society for Galicia pointedly claimed that it was employing 4,000 women, about 10 per cent of the pool of unmarried and therefore particularly vulnerable females. Through their *Hilfsverein*, whose Galician subcommittee was dominated by B'nai B'rith members, and through their other institutions, the Germans concentrated on the social side, on a variety of moral, educational, and

<sup>25</sup> *Vierteljahresbericht für die Mitglieder der Österreichischen Israelitische Humanitätsverein, B'nai B'rith* (February 1899), pp. 5-32, 38-9; (October 1898), pp. 156-9; (October 1901, April 1902) on Leopold Lodge, Lemberg. Maretsky, *Geschichte*, Ch. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Verhandlungen der Gross-Loge für Deutschland*, 2 June 1901, p. 729. *Menorah*, June, December 1900; April, June 1901.

preventive initiatives relating to social amelioration in general and white slavery in particular.<sup>27</sup>

The German half of the programme was put into effect following two major conferences on white slavery in 1902 attended by delegates from all major German relief organisations, the Jewish Association, ICA, and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. How should they initiate the daunting task of transforming 'the miserable and decaying layers of the population', as the B'nai B'rith referred to them, into respectable westernised Jews? At the second of these significant conferences in November the debate turned on whether to send a group of female missionaries to start up a series of pilot projects.<sup>28</sup> Criticism of the idea was considerable. Dr Munk, a delegate from Lemberg, pointed out that he had managed to survive nicely for five years in that 'semi-asiatic environment'. 'In Galicia perhaps there exists more culture than generally assumed', Munk added. Furthermore, Munk, Bertha Pappenheim, and Paul Laskar all warned that the powerful orthodox rabbinate would prove a major obstacle to western emissaries.<sup>29</sup> They had disapproved even of the general and trade schools initiated by the *Israelitische Allianz* and taken over by the Baron de Hirsch Fund of Vienna. It was a popular tale among the Germans that some years earlier Rabbi Hillel of Kolomea had said of the Baron de Hirsch school's curriculum, 'One does not have to study geography, one scrounges around from place to place and learns practical geography.'<sup>30</sup> If the missionaries marched in under the white-slavery flag, then surely they would be scorned and ridiculed.

The funds were voted and a nurse and two young social workers were dispatched to start civilising Galicia. One came straight home, finding the rigours of life in the east too challenging. The nurse became ill. But Martha Baer, who had

<sup>27</sup> ICA, *Betreffend Galizien*, responses of Vienna Israelitische Alliance and the Relief Organization for Galicia. Maretsky, *Geschichte*, p. 270. *Verhandlungen der Grossloge*, 25-6 March 1906, p. 88. Bericht (1910) ... *Hilfsverein für die Notleidene Jüdische Bevölkerung in Galizien*. Rosenak, 'Bericht', pp. 12-14. *Geschäftsbericht des Hilfsvereins der Deutschen Juden* (1909), p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> On the 8 June meeting, *Die Ursachen des Galizischen Mädchendamens und ihre Bekämpfung*, U.O.B.B. *Zweigkomitee* (1903), pp. 14-15. On the 19-20 November meetings, U.O.B.B. *Zweigkomitee*, *Protokoll*.

<sup>29</sup> *Protokoll*, pp. 20-2.

<sup>30</sup> Rosenak, 'Bericht', p. 13.

received a remarkably thorough training in social work in Hamburg, overcame all obstacles. She started courses in reading and sewing and initiated a school for housekeepers in Lemberg; she lectured widely on white slavery and more practical subjects; she travelled through the province gathering intelligence on traffickers and began organising a Galician women's union.<sup>31</sup> Bertha Pappenheim's *Jüdische Frauenbund* then built on this outstanding achievement, initiating kindergartens and a small hospital, establishing girls' clubs, dormitories, and home economics classes for east European girls who had come to work in Germany, and recruiting the awakened women of Galicia and Bukovina for anti-white-slavery committees.<sup>32</sup>

While Martha Baer was defying the sceptics by having some success with pilot social projects, the Germans moved forward on the preventive front. They intended to blanket Galician cities with Jewish vigilance committees and for this, no less than for the social and educational work, the support of the rabbinate would be required. In July 1902, in the third important conference in a six-month span to be held on what was clearly seen to be a pressing issue, the Union of Rabbis considered what to do. Rabbi Cohn of Kattowitz suggested buying out the traffickers, but Werner of Munich and Horowitz of Frankfurt responded that this was impractical and unethical! In the end of course Rabbi Rosenak was dispatched to Galicia in order to recruit the rabbis there for the task of defeating white slavery.<sup>33</sup>

Despite forebodings about the obscurantism and factionalism of the Galician Jewish community, Rosenak and his travelling companion, Dr Rotter of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, were received cordially and assisted generously by Rabbi Charles Horowitz of Cracow. In place after place the initial reaction of shock and disbelief gave way to acknowledgement and to the assertion that something had to be done. After their departure the Chief Rabbi of Lemberg, Isaac Schmelkes, convened a meeting of the Galician rabbinate that resulted in 'A Warning

<sup>31</sup> *Verhandlungen der Grossloge*, 25-6 March 1906, pp. 80-3.

<sup>32</sup> Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, pp. 125-37. Also the summary in *Protokoll, Weltbundes Jüdischer Frauen* (1929), p. 62.

<sup>33</sup> On the meeting, *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, 10 July 1902; *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Anti-Semitismus*, 9 July 1902; *Der Israelit*, 10 July 1902.

to Jewish Parents' about the dangers of neglecting religious education. While this illustrated the limits of the orthodox perspective, there were greater things to come. The links forged by Rosenak and the B'nai B'rith finally led in September 1903 to a major meeting in Lemberg, one which sponsors looked to as the turning point in the campaign.<sup>34</sup>

Sponsored by the Lemberg Jewish community, the *Hilfsverein*, and the Hamburg Jewish Subcommittee, the affair in the meeting rooms of the community was attended by interested parties from all over Europe, and as important, from all over Galicia. Dr Emil Byk, member of the Austrian Parliament and head of the Lemberg community, chaired the meeting and proudly stated that 'It is notable that for 20 years no delegated meeting in Lemberg has boasted so numerous an attendance of orthodox rabbis.'<sup>35</sup> Even the two important religious adversaries, Ezekiel Caro of Lemberg and Osias Thon of Cracow, sent personal representatives. Clearly Galician Jewry was now taking white slavery seriously. This Lemberg convention of 1903 reaffirmed the commitment to social amelioration and prepared the ground for the Lemberg Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, boasting Emil Byk as president and Ezekiel Caro as one of the Vice Presidents, and meant to cover all of Galicia and Bukovina with its protective blanket.

For the anti-white-slavery movement, this was a turning point at which history failed to turn. The social and economic work continued at a very modest pace, slowed by the competing claims of the Kishinev massacre of April 1903, pogroms yet to come, and by recriminations between the Austrians and Germans over support for the effort. Furthermore, among the Germans themselves Gustav Tuch refused to go along with the division of labour, which called for his Jewish subcommittee to carry on police and intelligence functions while the Relief Organisations and *Jüdische Frauenbund* handled the social and economic side of the campaign. In October 1906 Tuch and the Hamburg contingent resigned from the Jewish subcommittee.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Rosenak, 'Bericht', *passim* and pp. 20-1. *Der Israelit*, 2 April 1903.

<sup>35</sup> Byk cited in *General Anzeiger*, 5 October 1903. See also, *Die Welt*, 30 September 1903. *JA Report* (1903), pp. 46-51. On Byk, Dr Oswald Byk, *Dr. Emil Byk. Ein Lebensbild* (Vienna, 1907).

<sup>36</sup> *Verhandlungen der Grossloge*, 25-6 March 1906. Wagener, *Das Deutsche Nationalkomitee*, pp. 45-6.



In Galicia itself, despite the impressive masthead, the new Lemberg Jewish Association soon succumbed to the realities of voluntary work in the east: the shortage of money and able volunteers and the overabundance of competing problems.<sup>37</sup> Complaining bitterly of the indifference of the rabbis and of the major Jewish organisations, and of the stupidity of the Austrian government, it was left to Bertha Pappenheim in 1907 to tour the region and establish eight interdenominational vigilance committees.<sup>38</sup>

Those at Lemberg and Czernowitz survived and the authorities at Vienna then forced them to become subcommittees of the Austrian League for the Suppression of White Slavery based in the capital. These two were joined by a third subcommittee in 1911 when Rabbi Osias Thon of Cracow helped initiate a Union of Jewish Women in that city and endowed it with a home for girls, thus providing an exception to Pappenheim's assertions that the orthodox would never work with women. By far Lemberg was the strongest of these organisations with nearly 500 members of all faiths in 1910, spearheaded by middle-class Jewish women like Emma Lilien, Dr Ada Reichenstein, and Dr Felicia Nossig. Between 1909 and 1912 about 35 per cent of the women helped by the Lemberg group were Jewish. All three committees engaged in travellers' aid and intelligence work, caused the arrest of traffickers and saved women. All were subsidised by the local Jewish communities. But again the realities of such work in the east were harsh. The Czernowitz committee was dogged by local indifference and had to be subsidised by Pappenheim from Germany. Realising that it would accomplish little until it became interdenominational, the Union of Jewish Women at Cracow struggled on against what it euphemistically called 'intolerable political conditions'.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> A plea to defray the 5,000 Kronen annual expenses was forwarded on behalf of the Lemberg Association to ICA by the Hilfsverein. It was apparently turned down. 2, 3 July 1904, ICA vol. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *General Anzeiger*, 3 November 1907.

<sup>39</sup> The annual reports of the Lemberg, Czernowitz and Cracow Committees are in *Bericht der Österreichischen Liga zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels* (1910, 1911, 1912, 1913). By 1911 the Vienna group was also calling itself the *Österreichische Mädchen und Kinderschutzliga*.



In the final analysis, what can we make of the Galician initiatives? For one thing, white slavery became so well known in Jewish circles that some potentially unwilling victims were warned off. As for the broader question, undoubtedly Tuch and Maretsky had pure logic on their side when they sought to attack white slavery at its roots. Practically speaking, however, it was impossible to revolutionise the economic, social, and religious life of nearly one million Jews (including Bukovina), as they wished to do, even if the campaign had been well co-ordinated, which it was not.<sup>40</sup>

Local suspicion of the godless intruders from the West continued. When Jewish women were sent back to Germany for training as nurses, it was suspected that they were going to be made into nuns, and that despite the fact that Pappenheim herself, who sponsored this work, was orthodox.<sup>41</sup> Osias Thon stated in 1910 that the results of the campaign 'cannot be seen even through a microscope'.<sup>42</sup> That was too pessimistic, given the 4,000 womens' jobs we have mentioned. In 1911 when through ICA's initiative all the educational, employment, and credit work was finally co-ordinated under a group called 'Mutual Aid', ICA's own comprehensive survey showed that the situation 'certainly has not worsened for some years. Young people leave school in greater numbers each year and find ... remunerative positions and the efforts of different societies contribute at least in a certain measure to aid the poor population.'<sup>43</sup> To an extent hitherto unacknowledged, some of that improvement can be traced back to the attempt to deal with white slavery.

#### *Towards the 1910 Conference and Beyond It: A Survey*

In April 1910 at the invitation of the Jewish Association, delegates from England, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Galicia, Holland, Hungary, Romania, Russia, and the United States gathered in London to discuss the state of the Jewish

<sup>40</sup> For a glimpse of some of the conflict between the Germans and Austrians, 'Generalversammlung des Galizischen Hilfsvereines' in *Jüdische Zeitung* (Vienna), 15 April 1910.

<sup>41</sup> *Protokoll, Weltbundes Jüdischer Frauen* (1929), p. 62.

<sup>42</sup> His answer in *Betreffend Galizien*, p. 93.

<sup>43</sup> ICA, *Rapport de l' Administration Centrale au Conseil D'Administration* (1911), p. 285.

movement against white slavery and to plan for the future. Despite the fact that the sessions were private and the press reports censored, the Jewish International Conference itself was a subject of considerable controversy. *Der Israelit* reported, 'Over the suitability of the Conference opinion in Jewish circles was strongly divergent.' German orthodoxy, as represented in this paper, had its doubts, and the *Jewish World*, the voice of British orthodoxy, wrote, 'Unhesitatingly we are of the opinion that such a gathering ought not to have been held ... In a task so difficult, delicate as this, Jews have no right to act alone.'<sup>44</sup> In the meantime, debate at the conference was heated and interesting, determined partly by the situations of the various delegations. Just what was the state of affairs in their movement in 1910?

Responding to the flow of traffickers across their nations men and women of great ability and means had built up the work in Britain and Germany as part of the defence against anti-semitism. They were the active leaders of the movement. In France and Austria the Jews were more cautious and the problem seemed less pressing. French Jews kept a low profile during the Dreyfus affair deciding, it has been said, to 'wait for French tolerance to assert itself'.<sup>45</sup> No anti-anti-semitic defence organisations emerged there and the logic of prudence dictated that no Jewish committee should be established to fight white slavery. Racist exaggerations about the Jewish traffic went virtually unanswered. Raphael Viau, on the staff of the anti-semitic *Libre Parole* made something of a speciality of the subject, writing there of 'Hayum, Israel and Company,' with reference to the remarkable French-Jewish trafficker usually known as George le Cuirassier. Viau also co-authored *Les Femmes d'Israel* (1898), which not only dug up the Lemberg trial and every other untoward incident, but appropriately for France included a chapter on 'Jews in prostitution and espionage'. As we had occasion to mention earlier, Drumont's best-selling *La France Juive* played on the same topical theme of sex and treachery.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Der Israelit*, 14 April 1910. *Jewish World*, 8 April 1910. *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish Exponent*, *Warheit* were all basically for the Conference. On the arrangements for privacy, JA, Preliminary Notice, 11 February 1910, File Angleterre IH12, AIU.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation. A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford, 1971).

<sup>46</sup> *Libre Parole* cited in Corbin, *Filles de Noce*, p. 428. Raphael Viau and Francois Bournand, *Les Femmes d'Israel* (Paris, 1898).

Some French Jews were interested in this form of philanthropy but they insisted on working through the non-denominational Association for the Repression of White Slavery. Ferdinand Dreyfus, prominent lawyer, senator, and secretary-general of that Association until 1909, absolutely refused to have anything to do with a special Jewish effort.<sup>47</sup> The travellers' aid work of the Association, whose vice-presidents included the Baroness de Rothschild, was heavily subsidised by ICA and the French Rothschilds. They knew that Jewish women were taken through French ports to South America and South Africa; but they saw no virtue in calling attention to the problem.<sup>48</sup> It was the same in Vienna, where Jews worked through the Austrian League for the Suppression of White Slavery, a semi-official group subsidised by the Viennese branch of the Rothschilds, the Vienna Jewish community and the Hapsburg B'nai B'rith chapters. Between 1909 and 1912, 22 per cent of the women advised, lodged, protected, and rescued by the Austrian League were Jewish.<sup>49</sup> In the absence of a special Jewish vigilance society, the *Israelitische Allianz* served as an intelligence link with the Jewish Association and other foreign groups, a function filled in Belgium and Holland by two institutions which helped emigrants, the Ezra Society and the Montefiore Union.<sup>50</sup>

While Jewish philanthropists and social workers in France, Austria, Holland, and Belgium chose not to call attention to the subject, they were able to participate in the normal and useful vigilance functions of watching ports and railway stations, and maintaining a flow of intelligence to and from the police and foreign communities. Things were much more difficult where violent anti-semitism was state policy. At Bucharest Frau Staedecker reported in 1909 that her committee was being strangled by anti-semitic laws. Bertha Pappenheim was reduced on two occasions to carrying petitions to the Queen of Romania, quite futile in a country where endemic race hatred

<sup>47</sup> 10 June 1900, ICA.

<sup>48</sup> *Association Pour la Repression de la Traite des Blancs. Assemblée Générale*, 12 May 1906. Senator R. Beranger to ICA, 25 September 1906, in 20 October 1906, ICA vol. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Derived from the reports mentioned above, note 39.

<sup>50</sup> *Jahresbericht der Israelitischen Allianz zu Wien* (1910), pp. 39-40; (1912), 54. *JA Report* (1913), pp. 30-1, 34.

was bound to outweigh any woman-to-woman approach.<sup>51</sup> Attempts to organise in Russia met with the same frustration. Coote visited St. Petersburg in 1899 and following an audience with Count Muraviev, the Foreign Minister, succeeded in gaining the express support of the royal family. Within a few months the Princess Helene of Saxe-Altenburg and Andrei Saburov, a senator and secretary of state, were leading a new Russian Society for the Protection of Women.<sup>52</sup>

What but trouble could come from an anti-prostitution committee supported by Nicholas and Alexandra? It turned out that the new Society's leaders were not as hopelessly inflexible as their imperial rulers on the Jewish question. Later it was either Princess Helene or Princess Eugenie, another member, who referred to the Jews as 'our pupils', a very charitable remark coming from Russian ruling circles.<sup>53</sup> In 1900 Princess Helene and Saburov made cautious approaches through Pastor Burckhardt to the Hamburg B'nai B'rith committee on the subject of the German work and on the possibility of Jewish representation in the Russian Society. Gustav Tuch asked Claude Montefiore for advice on how to handle this unusual opportunity. The German reply to Russia pointed out in no uncertain terms the reasons for the sorry plight of the Jews there, the futility of anti-white-slavery work without a change in state policy, and the uselessness of appointing a notable Jew to their Society unless he had some links with a special Jewish committee close to the masses.<sup>54</sup>

Princess Helene responded predictably that 'The place of the Jews in Russia is a question of internal politics in which our committee can scarcely get involved.' She did not, however, close the door to Jewish representation. Montefiore had also supplied Tuch with an introduction to David Feinberg, ICA representative at St. Petersburg. Feinberg replied to Tuch that 'I consider the question you bring up to be so important and

<sup>51</sup> *JA Report* (1911), pp. 29-30. *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Anti-Semitismus*, 23 June 1903. *Conférence Internationale Pour la Repression de la Traite des Blanches* (Vienna, 1909), pp. 140ff.

<sup>52</sup> Coote, *Vision*, pp. 60-4. Consular reports on the new organization in F083/1943, PRO JAGM, 6 May, 15 November 1900.

<sup>53</sup> Cited by Alexander Gunzberg, *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 69-70.

<sup>54</sup> The above and following correspondence of 1900 is in U.O.B.B., *Comitee zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels*, pp. 45-52. Also, JAGM, 6 January, 18 February, 24 June 1900.



profitable that I volunteer with heart and soul to advocate the good cause.' Feinberg interested Baron Horace Gunzberg, the philanthropist and head of the St. Petersburg Jewish community, in the subject and in 1901 the Baron was permitted to open a Jewish Section of the Russian Society in the capital.<sup>55</sup> This was a pleasant little charity that helped respectable girls find work, provided them with temporary shelter and even with holidays in the country. That it had little to do with fighting white slavery was perfectly clear to everyone, and Feinberg hoped at the same time to organise what would have to be interdenominational subcommittees with secret agents to do the real vigilance work. As if he needed the warning, the British and Germans alerted Feinberg to the dangers of using secret agents in Russia.

The moment of hope passed quickly. Such activities were always at the mercy of official whim and political change. At Vilna a committee along the lines advocated by Feinberg was formed and subsidised by the *Hilfsverein*.<sup>56</sup> But it seems to have gone under in 1905. After the political turmoil of that year the authorities even forced the St. Petersburg Jewish branch to suspend its Saturday social meetings. David Feinberg and Baron Alexander Gunzberg, who had taken over his late father's work, attended the 1910 London conference; a few weeks later in a fitting affair, Gunzberg and Henry Schlossberg, the noted lawyer and politician, spoke at a St. Petersburg conference on white slavery. Schlossberg made a fiery speech in which he denounced the emigration laws and declared that 'Migration is a factory of prostitution.'<sup>57</sup> For their efforts they discovered that the published protocols of the conference were bitterly anti-semitic.

Sadie American, delegate to the London Conference from the other end of the Jewish world, could claim more positive results in the United States. After visiting both the Jewish International Conference and later in the summer the Madrid Congress on White Slavery, she reported back to her members in the Council of Jewish Women that they boasted 'perhaps the

<sup>55</sup> Its fortunes can be followed in *Société Russe Pour La Protection des Femmes. Extraits des Rapports* (1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910).

<sup>56</sup> *Geschäftsbericht des Hilfsvereins* (1904), p. 57.

<sup>57</sup> *Der Freund*, 6, 8, 9 May 1910.



most complete and the most systematic of any similar work done by other women's organisations ...'<sup>58</sup> Not that the entire world of official Jewry in the United States appreciated Miss American's efforts. She was controversial within the Council, and while in Europe when she applied to ICA for additional funds to add more staff, the Jewish Immigration Committee of the New York Baron de Hirsch Fund refused to support the application, concluding 'that it is not the best policy to keep tabs on Jewish girls, as it conveys the impression that Jewish girls need more watching than girls of other nationalities.' Eugene Benjamin, head of the Fund, called Miss American 'importunate' and clearly wanted no part of her.<sup>59</sup>

Like Pappenheim, Sadie American and her colleagues resented what they considered to be lack of support from the male Jewish establishment. But surely their travellers' aid efforts would fail any test of cost effectiveness; and what do we make of this misleading portion of a leaflet that the Council of Jewish Women had distributed at European ports.

... any immigrant girl coming to America who is found not to be virtuous, or who allows herself to be misled after coming, will be sent back where she came from.<sup>60</sup>

Yet the women were spurred on by real cases of entrapment and by actual rescues. Furthermore, the Council was doing useful probationary work, reconstructing the lives of women like Rose Z. from near Kovno who became a prostitute and drug user in New York before being released to the Jewish social workers. They found her a job and she married happily.<sup>61</sup> Surveying briefly the Jewish response to white slavery in America by 1910, was it as lacking as the feminists suggested? While establishment groups like HIAS and the American Jewish Committee, fearing exclusionist immigration legislation, did little but deny the existence of the problem, the United States was a vast country with a large, diverse, and scattered

<sup>58</sup> *Year Book. New York Section. Council of Jewish Women* (1910/11), p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Immigration, 29 March 1911, Box 4. Eugene Benjamin to Messrs Kobler, Elkus, and Bijur, 2 March 1911, Box 55, Baron de Hirsch Fund Papers, AJHS.

<sup>60</sup> *Council of Jewish Women. Program of Work, 1911-14*, p. 38.

<sup>61</sup> *Year Book* (1917/18), pp. 57-8.

Jewish population.<sup>62</sup> As the issue of white slavery, with its gross exaggerations and anti-semitic implications swept the country, Jewish institutions and individuals played their part in the municipal cleanups and in the making of the state and federal legislation that followed in the wake of the hysteria. Many judged that to do so was in their best self-interest.

The mood of the activists was reflected in 1908 by the *American Hebrew*. Referring to the 'shudder' that accompanied the fight against the red-light district on the Lower East Side, the editor wrote,

It is to be feared that revelations similar to those which startled the world in 1900 may again be brought before the world, and this time not in one center but in many ... Before such a scandal arises it is pressingly necessary that Jews themselves shall take measures to abate and if possible to root out this terrible evil, which, if not checked, will bring shame to the house of all Israel ... Is it not possible that a similar [Jewish vigilance committee] should be formed in this country ... ? If Jews are the chief sinners it is appropriate that Jews should be the chief avenger of the dishonor done to their own people, and in many cases to their own women. We feel confident that unless something is done and done quickly, a scandal of the most intense character will break forth ...<sup>63</sup>

The logic of the situation made this an obvious forecast. From G. K. Turner's accusations in *McClure's Magazine* about the Chicago West Side ghetto in 1907 the heat shifted to New York, where Police Chief Bingham made exaggerated claims about Jewish crime in 1908 and Turner published his famous 'Daughters of the Poor' in the following year. The latent prejudice expressed so graphically, as we have seen, in works like *House of Bondage* was endemic. The United States was too large for a vigilance committee along the lines suggested in the *American Hebrew*; but the B'nai B'rith tried to fill the gap. Its push against white slavery in America derived from the same motives that drove on the German Lodge and that led the Americans to

<sup>62</sup> The American Jewish Committee passed along its communication from the Jewish International Conference, which contained a long list of recommendations for action, to the Baron de Hirsch Fund Committee on Immigration. See Max Kohler note on bottom of Benjamin letter cited above, n. 59.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in *The Philanthropist*, July 1908.

establish the well-known Anti-Defamation League in 1913: namely, defence of the good name of the Jews against anti-semites. When in 1909 the Executive and the *B'nai B'rith News* issued 'a trumpet sound to arms' to the lodges, it spoke explicitly of the need to sanctify the name of God, of *Kiddush Hashem*.<sup>64</sup>

Fortuitously, international B'nai B'rith headquarters were in Chicago. There President Adolf Kraus, who was born in Prague, responded immediately to G. K. Turner's 1907 revelations by hiring investigators who concluded that the accusations were exaggerated, but that there was still much to be done. Kraus got the B'nai B'rith Council to form a committee for the drafting of new state legislation against commercial prostitution. With broad interdenominational support, the bill passed the Illinois legislature unanimously in 1908. Then with the following year's storm over the Frank brothers, the Chicago B'nai B'rith hired Clifford Roe, a former Illinois State's Attorney, and one of the truly hysterical fanatics who helped engender the national panic, to act as general counsel for it and a group of other civic bodies. Kraus told him 'to catch guilty Jews first'.<sup>65</sup>

In the meantime, Kraus nationalised the B'nai B'rith campaign. Simon Wolf, the brotherhood's Washington representative, circulated copies of a model law, which was ultimately passed by six other state legislatures. Lodges in Cleveland, Kansas City, San Francisco, Omaha, and New Orleans all joined local cleanup efforts.<sup>66</sup> After Chicago, it was District 7, the South, which entered into the fray most enthusiastically. There brother Henry Dannenbaum, the Texas lawyer, organised the regional legal and legislative fight and went one step further. He convinced the Lodge to spend \$3,700 for the records of Samuel London, the pimps' lawyer, said to contain at least 1,200 names. He then arranged for London to be paid by Lodge 7 while they both went to New York to investigate white slavery, Dannenbaum as a Special Assistant to the

<sup>64</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, May 1909.

<sup>65</sup> Kraus, *Reminiscences*, pp 177-9. *B'nai B'rith News*, 10 October 1908; May, December 1909, May 1914. *Jewish Tribune*, 15 October 1909.

<sup>66</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, September, October 1909, January, March, April 1910, June 1913. *Jewish Tribune*, 22 October 1909.

Attorney General.<sup>67</sup> Even the B'nai B'rith, however, had its bad apples. In District 4, the West, a heated trial was held over two fraternal members from Butte who owned property used for prostitution and who brought in women to work in them. They were expelled.<sup>68</sup>

Along with the Council of Jewish Women and the B'nai B'rith, the rabbinate, especially reform rabbis, also took part in the struggle. At their annual conference in 1909 the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the reform group, was rocked by Stephen Wise's charges that the failure of the synagogue to reach the working man was 'indirectly to blame for the conditions which made possible the recent accusations about the white-slave traffic'. David Phillipson of Cincinnati, the President, admitted that the charges were not unfounded and that something had to be done.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to such luminaries as Henry Berkowitz, Emil Hirsch, and Judah Magnes, all of whom we have had occasion to discuss, many others came to play an active part. For example, in Fort Worth, El Paso, and San Antonio in Texas local rabbis worked with immigration officials and police to rid the region of Jewish commercial vice.<sup>70</sup> In Pittsburgh, Akron, and Oakland Rabbis Coffee, Gross, and Friedlander all played their part in local municipal cleanups. Following the conviction of two traffickers in San Francisco in 1910, Rabbi Jacob Nieto, chairman of the local B'nai B'rith committee against white slavery, had his life threatened twice. Nieto was in close contact with Clifford Roe back in the Midwest, who tipped him off about one of the culprits, James Bernstein, on his way to the Bay Area from St. Louis with the destination of Central America. Bernstein had tried to induce sixteen-year-old Rosie Sharfstein and her mother to accompany him from San Francisco. It is difficult to judge what all this accomplished, either in

<sup>67</sup> See note 36, Ch. Five.

<sup>68</sup> *Jewish Tribune*, 10 March 1911. Julie Coleman, 'The Jews of Montana', p. 75.

<sup>69</sup> Reported in *Jewish Tribune*, 19 November 1909 and *Emmanuel*, 26 November 1909.

<sup>70</sup> Report of Inspector Stone, 21 May 1909, Fort Worth, 52484/8; 7 June 1909, Fort Worth, 52484/8A. Report of Inspector Stone, 29 May 1909, San Antonio, 52484/8. Report of Inspector Connell, 14 June 1910, El Paso, 52484/23. USIS.



public relations or enforcement terms. But across the United States Jews were avenging their own honour.<sup>71</sup>

When the delegates met in London, therefore, they already had a great deal of experience and effort behind them, without having made great headway against Jewish commercial vice. Israel Zangwill caused a disturbance by insisting that the conference should never have been called and criticising the orthodox rabbinate for abetting the pimps by officiating at their marriages and burials.<sup>72</sup> The practical discussions turned on the virtues of participating in interdenominational work, which nearly everyone agreed was necessary, and on the wisdom of expanding the sectarian work. Dr Maretski and Paul Laskar advocated a formal union of all Jewish anti-vice committees to be bound together by a powerful central headquarters. Pappenheim and Baron Gunzberg pointed out that such a union would not be able to function in Russia, Rumania, and Galicia, and the proposal was voted down by twenty-seven to eighteen.<sup>73</sup>

As a compromise, however, the Jewish Association was made a 'Central Bureau', with the functions of collecting and recording all information on Jewish white slavery and convening further conferences when necessary. Where possible new central committees would be formed or older groups would act in this capacity. More branches were proposed for seaports and frontier towns. There were thirty recommendations in all, dealing with various practical ways of stopping prostitution and the traffic. All of this added up to a redoubled commitment to the cause and the whole affair was given a ring of credibility and authenticity by promises from officials of the leading organisations—Sylvain Levi of the AIU, Laskar of the *Hilfsverein*, and Dr Sonnenfeld of ICA—to do more to help.

The years 1911-14 were marked by the busiest developments to date and by the partial fulfillment of the conference goals of filling in the missing links, establishing better co-ordination and expanding interdenominational work. ICA emigration committees in Russia joined the work. Dr Franz Mezey, a

<sup>71</sup> *Jewish Tribune*, 4 November 1910, 11 February 1911, 13 December 1912. *Vigilance*, November 1910, September 1913. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26, 28, 31 October, 1 November 1910.

<sup>72</sup> Zangwill is not fully cited in *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 52ff. See also, *Warheit*, 16, 17 April 1910. *Jewish Exponent* 15 April 1910.

<sup>73</sup> Maretski, *Reden*, p. 304. *Jewish International Conference* (1910), pp. 69ff.



Hungarian delegate to the 1910 conference and an AIU official, obtained Alliance support for a Budapest committee; before being interrupted by the war it offered the full panoply of rescue, intelligence, and travellers' aid work carried out in an interdenominational setting with the help of Jewish women.<sup>74</sup> Jewish women were also active in a Lodz Society for the Protection of Women founded just before the outbreak of war, in a Cracow Union of Jewish Women and in a revitalised Warsaw Jewish Society for the Protection of Girls. This last effort had been launched in 1904 by prominent assimilated Jews like Dr Hendrik Nussbaum and Stanislaus Posner, following two decades in which they had combined forces with Polish charities to obtain help for Jewish prostitutes. Without the support of the orthodox community, however, the Warsaw Society quickly fell on hard times and before being reorganised was forced to limit the intake at its shelter.<sup>75</sup>

Even the French finally initiated their own organisation, a Jewish Section of the European-wide Christian group, the Association for the Protection of Young Girls. The Jewish Section was promoted mainly by Madame Eugene Simon, a leading reform Jew whom Constance Rothschild referred to as a 'big ugly woman with a rasping voice'. Among Madame Simon's interests were Sunday sabbath services for Jews and the original Paris refuge for endangered Jewish women. Once the work was organised by Samuel Cohen of the 'Central Bureau', she proved very able indeed, and under an impressive masthead topped by Baroness de Rothschild, the Jewish Section worked closely with the Russian-Jewish immigrant community in Paris and expanded into the French ports.<sup>76</sup> In place after place Jewish women of means and ability, like their

<sup>74</sup> *JA Report* (1911), p. 29; (1913), p. 35.

<sup>75</sup> On Warsaw, *Israelita*, 5 August 1910, *JA Reports* (1912), p. 33; (1913), pp. 37-8. Also, 'Poland' File, AIU. On Lodz, comments of Ludwika Siegelberg at *World Congress of Jewish Women* (1923), p. 76. On Cracow, note 39 above. For all, 14 October 1915; ICA vol. 1.

<sup>76</sup> 21 November 1901, Battersea Diary. Mme Eugene Simon letters in 18 September 1911, 1 February, ICA. M. Helbronner in 27 June 1914, ICA vol. 2. *Association Pour la Protection de la Jeune Fille (Section Israelite)*. Assemblée Generale de 29 January 1912. *JA* (1911), pp. 27-8. For the work at the refuge, Mme Eugene Simon to President, AIU, 14 June 1906, 17 June 1907, 9 October 1908, 11 July 1910, 16 January 1912, File XI D57, AIU. The last letter tells of two young girls there who were victims of the traffic.

Christian counterparts, were being drawn into the philanthropic rage of the day, the protection of women. Only in Warsaw do women of lesser social status seem to have been involved. Bertha Pappenheim reported that the Warsaw Jewish Society 'consists of many not very refined women and it must not be easy' for the Poles to deal with them.<sup>77</sup> An interesting observation that exposes the nature of the movement, elitist in membership yet deferential to the world of officialdom, and in this case to the refined Polish ladies of the Catholic Society whose good will was valued because they were on better terms with the police.

In this struggle the Jews had their fate in their own hands only in a few places, in Britain where they could write the legislation of 1912, and in the United States where they accomplished much after the London Conference. Not that Henry Dannenbaum got very far with his grandiose plans. Once he forged links with Samuel London, always suspect as a former pimps' ally, other Jewish institutions would have nothing to do with him. In 1911 the American Jewish Committee refused to co-operate with Dannenbaum and Rabbi Judah Magnes turned down his offer of money and information to be provided if the New York Kehillah established a vigilance committee. Dannenbaum and London did not accomplish as much as they had hoped, though the Justice Department told Lodge 7 that at least a dozen convictions were due to their efforts.<sup>78</sup>

It took the storm over the Herman Rosenthal murder in July 1912, described above, finally to motivate Magnes and his Kehillah to launch a vigilance committee, euphemistically called the Bureau of Social Morals. In Abe Shoenfeld Magnes found the ideal vigilante. Defending Jewish honour was part of his family tradition and at the time he was gaining valuable experience as an investigator for a Rockefeller-financed survey of New York prostitution. With an excellent intelligence network and a staff of eight agents and counsels, Shoenfeld went on a rampage against Jewish crime. In the Tenderloin he would borrow axes from a firehouse on Eighth Avenue and

<sup>77</sup> Pappenheim to Sophie Mamelok, 10 May 1912, in Edinger, *Pappenheim*, pp. 46-8.

<sup>78</sup> *American Hebrew*, 26 January, 2 February 1912. *Address Delivered by Henry J. Dannenbaum Before the Joint Lodges of New Orleans ...*, January 10, 1912. Silber, *B'nai B'rith*, p. 54. H. J. Dannenbaum to Cyrus L. Sulzberger, 30 January 1912, 148225, Box 7724, R. G. 60, Class 30, USJD. Abe Shoenfeld Interview, p. 220.

chop dives to pieces, leaving word, 'go downtown and tell them Abe Shoenfeld was here'.<sup>79</sup>

In the first year of operations his team compiled quite a record, closing scores of gambling joints, 103 disorderly houses, and even sixteen opium and cocaine parlours. A vicious gang of extortionists who specialised in poisoning horses was broken up and the names of scores of Jewish thieves and pickpockets were turned over to the police.<sup>80</sup> Naturally the effort depended upon police and mayoral co-operation, which was obtained, and it was accomplished in close liaison with the Committee of Fourteen, the group established in 1905 to fight Raines Law Hotels. In 1911 that institution broadened its goals to include the repression of all commercial vice and it sought more Jewish members. Frederick Whitin, its secretary, reasoned, 'As our problem deals so largely with the Jews, we should have a better Jewish representation.'<sup>81</sup> Henry Moscovitz, the social worker, was attracted and his wife-to-be, the very able Belle Israels, was already chairing its task-force against immorality in dance halls. Shoenfeld was so successful that he was even borrowed for a short time by Adolf Kraus of Chicago. By 1917 when the Kehillah disbanded its vigilante activities Jewish commercial vice in New York was not dead but most of the big operators were gone and its back was broken.

Following the 1910 Conference, with gains being registered all over the map, it was Constantinople that became target number one. Progress was difficult; yet the Jewish political effort there set the stage for Osman Bedri Bey's 1915 roundup and therefore it must be judged a success. Among concerned parties Constantinople's reputation was worse than that of Buenos Aires, where at least some work was being done. Within the span of a few years Turkey was visited by Samuel Cohen, Bertha Pappenheim, Madame Eugene Simon, and a whole flock of German officials from the B'nai B'rith and *Hilfsverein*. In addition to having to deal with the Ottoman bureaucracy, Jewish organisers faced a community riven with divisions.

<sup>79</sup> Abe Shoenfeld Interview, pp. 22, 137.

<sup>80</sup> Vice Report, 20 November 1913, JMC.

<sup>81</sup> Frederick Whitin to the Organizing Committee, 5 March 1912, Correspondence, Comm. of 14.

Following an organising mission for the German B'nai B'rith, Sigmund Bergel wrote in 1911,

In Constantinople one can find more parties, more intrigues, more mistrust, more fights than in any other city in the universe among the Jews—Sephardim vs. Ashkenazim; adherents of the Grand Rabbi and opponents; Hilfsverein and Alliance.<sup>82</sup>

By 1910 in fact local Jewish notables were trying to deal with white slavery. Chief Rabbi Nahoum was said to have 'made representations to the Turkish Minister of the Interior and has supplied him with a complete list of every member of the Pezewenk fraternity in Turkey' At the same time US Ambassador Oscar Strauss, concerned about the problem, like his successor Henry Morgenthau, contributed \$500 towards the establishment of a branch of the Jewish Association. All of this came to nothing. It was said that Dr Neifach, a local attorney long interested in the subject, had managed to bring it to Nahoum's attention, but that he had soon lost interest. The Chief Rabbi was very unpopular with the Ashkenazi community, who resented Sephardi pre-eminence, and the struggle between the groups came to head in 1910-11. Nahoum had more serious things than white slavery to worry about. As for the bureaucracy, it did nothing with the information he had supplied.<sup>83</sup>

In 1911, however, Sigmund Bergel journeyed to Turkey and organised B'nai B'rith lodges in Constantinople, Salonika, Alexandria, and Smyrna. Anti-white-slavery work was meant to be central to these brotherhoods. Life was breathed into the venture in 1912 when Claude Montefiore travelled to Berlin and agreed with Bergel that their two organisations should co-subsidise the Constantinople work.<sup>84</sup> This coincided with the

<sup>82</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, April 1911.

<sup>83</sup> *Emmanuel*, 30 September 1910. *Jewish Tribune*, 30 September 1910. *New York Tageblatt*, 27 December 1911. On the communal divisions. Isaiah Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 148, 163, 293-4. Also, Friedman, 'The Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, the German Foreign Ministry and the controversy with the Zionists, 1901-18', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXIV* (1979), pp. 291-320.

<sup>84</sup> Wagener, *Deutsche Nationalkomitee*, p. 48. *Bulletin de la Grande Loge de District XI et de la Loge de Constantinople*, No. 678, IOBB (February 1913-December 1921), esp. pp. 23-6, 36-7, 45. *B'nai B'rith News*, April, May 1911. JAGM, 1812 (I have lost the date of the Montefiore discussion of his Berlin meeting. It is in pp. 159-60 of the Minute Book), JWB. 27 June 1914, ICA.



biggest B'nai B'rith initiative yet. In April 1912 the international executive committee met in Berlin under Adolf Kraus and announced a world-wide all-out effort against white slavery. The committee to direct the campaign included, among others, Maretsky as Chairman, Paul Nathan of the *Hilfsverein*, Sigmund Bergel, Adolf Kraus, and delegates from Turkey led by Joseph Niego, the first president of the District Lodge 11, Orient.<sup>85</sup>

Nothing came of these grandiose world-wide plans. By December the German Lodge had backed off on the grounds that the Order had neither the means nor the workers 'to undertake this vast mission single-handed; that in this question the Order can only work in conjunction with other societies.' There were some 40,000 members at that point; but 25,000 of them were in the US lodges.<sup>86</sup> Despite the disappointment, however, the Turkish commitment was strengthened by the adherence of the *Hilfsverein*, an institution that had strong philanthropic interests in the Ottoman Empire. In 1913 it agreed to subsidise the Constantinople work; furthermore Dr Israel Auerbach, its Constantinople representative and formerly an outspoken opponent of the white-slavery work, undertook to set in motion a Turkish National Committee that was considered necessary cover for the Jewish vigilance and rescue work. With the assistance of Ambassador Henry Morgenthau this was accomplished in 1914 at a very prominently attended meeting at the American Embassy. Auerbach and Ashkenazi Rabbi Marcus were appointed delegates from the B'nai B'rith committee to the interdenominational front group.<sup>87</sup>

Auerbach was proud of this achievement and said of the Ottoman B'nai B'rith that 'The lodges are the first true fruits of the Jewish force in the east.' The brotherhood did bring together hostile elements, with the white-slavery issue undoubtedly acting as a binding agent. Chief Rabbi Nahoum and other Sephardi luminaries joined with the Ashkenazi notables. Furthermore, Nahoum was a Francophile and Joseph

<sup>85</sup> *New York Times*, 21 April 1912. *B'nai B'rith News*, June 1912. *Vigilance*, September 1912.

<sup>86</sup> *B'nai B'rith News*, December 1912. *Jewish Tribune*, 10 May 1914.

<sup>87</sup> *Bulletin de la Grand Loge de District XI*, pp. 36-45. *B'nai B'rith News*, April, September 1914. Henry Morgenthau to Secretary of State, 13 March 1914, 867.1152 (M353-39), USDS. *Vigilance Record*, April 1914. Cohen, *Enquiry Made in Constantinople*, pp. 18-19.



Niego worked for the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. The German and Franco-Jewish philanthropies were fighting out their own struggle for cultural hegemony in Jewish communities in the east, parallel to the general Franco-German political rivalry. The B'nai B'rith, concentrating on white slavery, managed to overcome this for a time. Organising at both the Jewish and Turkish levels, with the impressive masthead of Ottoman names in the National Committee, was a considerable political accomplishment.<sup>88</sup> Undoubtedly it registered on Osman Bedri Bey when he ran the traffickers out of town in 1915. More than that, there is evidence that the B'nai B'rith supplied him with the intelligence necessary to make the arrests.<sup>89</sup>

Taking stock of the whole international Jewish effort, what was accomplished in the first stage before the war? In purely institutional terms we have seen how most of the leading Jewish philanthropies were drawn in and contributed to the building of an extensive network of committees. As for the broader interdenominational movement, Jewish work and financing was essential to the national committees in half a dozen countries, from Argentina to Egypt. Without this participation Coote's organisation would have been much diminished, and furthermore, urban cleanups in New York and several other American cities might have been less thorough. There was periodic friction between Jewish and Christian volunteers and at the 1913 London Congress, attended by hundreds of delegates from two dozen countries, a bitter debate developed over the issue of repatriating prostitutes. Naturally Jewish delegates like Pappenheim were opposed.<sup>90</sup> On the whole, however, excepting Russia, interfaith relations were tolerable within the national committees.

Naturally if the white-slavery issue is judged a nonsense, then all the effort was a waste of time. Yet for all the excesses, exaggerations and ulterior motives of its leadership, and for all the public panics it engendered, the movement did speak to real problems—the victimisation of innocent women and the

<sup>88</sup> *Bulletin de la Grand Loge de District XI*, pp. 36-7. On Niego, *Cinquante Années de Travail Dans Les Oeuvres Juives. Allocutions et Conférences* (Istanbul, 1933). B'nai B'rith News, June 1912, April, September 1914. On the divisions, Friedman, note 83 above.

<sup>89</sup> *Hamenorah* (Istanbul), December 1927, p. 428.

<sup>90</sup> *Ost und West*, August 1913.

exploitation of prostitutes. It generated a world-wide trend towards legislation to protect the young and to limit the exploitation of prostitutes by men. Jewish activists played an integral part here, writing and promoting legislation in places as far apart as London, Cape Town, and the United States.

As far as the furtherance of Jewish goals is concerned, there was only very limited success in dislocating Jewish commercial vice. But across the world over the years Jewish committees rescued hundreds of women unwilling to enter into or continue with prostitution. Anti-white-slavery work contributed to communal solidarity in Constantinople, New York, and Buenos Aires. It was also a magnet for Jewish women interested in voluntary work; committees formed primarily to fight the traffic did other things as well, most of them of greater utility than guarding railway stations. At Cracow and Lemberg the ladies offered vocational training; at Warsaw and Lodz they organised employment agencies; in America and Germany the feminist programmes were particularly full. Out of this common interest developed the International Council of Jewish Women, the creation of Bertha Pappenheim, Madam Simon, and Sadie American.<sup>91</sup>

Did the work do anything to deny this issue to the anti-semites? After the war the argument that trafficking in Christian women was inherent in Jewish genes was resorted to even more insistently than before. In the relatively innocent years before 1914 one can understand how Montefiore, Maretsky, Pappenheim, and the others could place hope in a reasoned response. Their 'rationalist fallacy' was a product of their times. As difficult as the situation was, they had no way of knowing what was to come.

<sup>91</sup> *Proceedings. Council of Jewish Women* (1911), p. 88.

**Part Four**

**The Last Stage**



## CHAPTER NINE

1914-1939

### *The Problem Narrows*

The problem of commercial prostitution in Jewish life narrowed geographically in the generation after 1914. In the United States, Britain, and South Africa the subject disappeared as a community issue. Not only was this due to the simmering down of the pre-war white-slavery hysteria; it was mainly because young Jewish men and women, unthwarted in these open societies, had better ladders to climb. The prosperity of the war years, the growth of institutions like settlement houses, trade unions, and socialist and Zionist parties to wean their loyalties from the street, and the restrictive US immigration law of 1921 all dampened down the recruitment of cadets and prostitutes.

Not that the problem utterly disappeared. In the early 1920s a study of 300 Chicago pimps revealed that forty-seven were Jewish, mostly the members of several gambling and vice syndicates that operated on the South and West sides. In 1923 the Portland, Oregon B'nai B'rith lodge helped chase from town 'a large number of Jewish maquereaux' and the same thing could have occurred in Philadelphia. In New York it was reported in 1919 that

There are still, it is true, agents known in Yiddish as 'zushickers' who will provide prostitutes on request ... The worn-out prostitute in search of a new location pays a fee of five dollars to the *zushicker*. The madam in some city far removed from the centers of trade sends on a similar fee and asks that a woman be sent, and the *zushicker* sends one of his clients.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the most telling evidence is that the number of Jewish women recruited to prostitution in New York fell sharply in the

<sup>1</sup> Haller, 'Organized Crime in Urban Society', pp. 220-1. *Sixteenth Annual Session, District Grand Lodge No. 4, IOBB* (Salt Lake City, 1923), p. 60. *Vigilance Record*, October 1919 citing *Social Hygiene Bulletin of New York*. See also, Winick and Kinsie, *Lively Commerce*, p. 114.



decade beginning in 1914. According to Ada Menken, the percentage of Jewish women arraigned for sex offences in the city was 18 per cent in the pre-war years and 11 per cent in 1924.<sup>2</sup> The fall was simultaneous with the continued increase in the Jewish population. Old madams like Sadie Chink and Jenny the Factory were still around in the 1930s to testify before Thomas E. Dewey when he was building his career as district attorney.<sup>3</sup> But while Jewish gangsters like Lepke Buchalter, Dutch Schultz, Gurrah Shapiro, and others became household names between the wars, the connection between Jewish prostitutes and pimps was largely broken, the golden era of Jewish vice was over and the community could take any minor revelations in its stride. At the 1927 Jewish international conference Belle Israels Moscovitz claimed, 'The "Committee of Fourteen" Reports show that New York is the cleanest city in the world and the same might be said for other cities in the Union.'<sup>4</sup> In Britain the Jewish Association dealt with fewer prostitutes and more cases involving unwed mothers, deserted wives, and the visiting of respectable working girls in need of guidance.

While the First World War helped the working girls of New York, London, and Chicago, it was an unmitigated disaster for the seven million Jews in the east caught among the Russian, German, Austrian, and Romanian armies, and for others who suffered economic calamity in the Ottoman Empire. The dimensions of this disaster tend to be forgotten because of the much greater ones yet to come. But 1914-18 was marked by a terrible ten-month Russian occupation of Galicia, the brutal and murderous expulsions of some 600,000 Jews from Poland and the Russian border regions, the destruction and dislocation of the economy as contesting armies pushed each other back and forth over the Jewish heartland, and by near-starvation conditions in Palestine. In 1916 relief workers estimated that nearly half of six million Russian and Polish Jews were without means of support.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Jewish Woman*, October 1925. See also, *Year Book. New York Section* (1919/20), pp. 61-2.

<sup>3</sup> Fried, *Jewish Gangster*, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1927), p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> *The Jews in the Eastern War Zone. American Jewish Committee* (New York, 1916). Also, Sachar, *Modern Jewish History*, pp. 296-8.

While the war naturally disrupted international white slavery, it caused unprecedented increases in Jewish prostitution in the eastern and southern war zones. Much has been written about how war liberates people from sexual restraints and stimulates eroticism, about epidemics of 'Khaki fever' among females on the home front, and about the loss of guilt over sex on the war front. Jewish prostitution had nothing to do with the sexual liberation of Jews. It was a simple matter of avoiding starvation. Ludwiga Siegelberg of the Lodz Jewish Union for the Protection of Women, which miraculously managed to run a small workshop and girls' home during the hostilities, described how

Women and girls were deprived of work and the possibility of earning money gave in to need and hunger. A large part of them were driven by need into the street and lewdness, shown in the VD hospitals opened by the German occupation officials, where among 800 women 33 per cent were Jewish girls from 13 to 18 years old. The largest part of them seized upon this shameful work in order to still the hunger of their closest relatives.<sup>6</sup>

The Germans were particularly efficient in organising prostitution for their armies. They dispatched mobile brothels to the front and from 1915 as their forces advanced in the east the red-light districts of Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilna were expanded for the use of the troops. Between the German conquest of Warsaw in August 1915 and May 1917, 24 per cent of the 2689 women who registered for prostitution were Jewish, somewhat below the 30 per cent Jewish share of the population. Of the grand total, 1054 were war victims and 584 war widows. Given misery of this extent, clandestine prostitution was virtually uncontrollable in Warsaw and elsewhere. At Vilna it was reported that military guards were posted to keep the desperate women away from the soldiers' quarters. Another measure of the situation was the explosion of the VD rate at Lemberg faced by the occupation authorities after the city was liberated in the Austro-German offensive of 1915.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *World Congress of Jewish Women* (1923), pp. 76-7.

<sup>7</sup> On this subject, H. C. Fischer and Dr E. X. Dubois, *Sexual Life During the World War* (London, 1937), esp. Ch. 12. Dr Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War* (New York ed., 1946), Ch. 5, 9. Sudhindra Lal Roy, *War and Immorality* (Kitab-Mahol., Allahabad, 1944), pp. 11-12, 23-4, 30-3, 89. For the Warsaw data,

Since many of the traffickers had fled from Buenos Aires in 1913, some inevitably were caught in Europe when the war broke out. In fact, 'some of the most notorious traffickers and brothelkeepers of Antwerp' joined in the 1914 Belgian exodus to London, where they were recognised and denounced by another refugee, a member of Antwerp's Ezra Society. But many such characters were bottled up in the war zone, men like Wolf Berkowitz, who ran a brothel in Kielce during the war; Zacharias Zytnitsky, later president of Zwi Migdal, and Abe Marchik, who in the 1920s inherited the title 'King of the traffickers', both of whom spent the war in Warsaw.<sup>8</sup> That these traffickers acted as agents for the Germans is highly likely; they formed a 'special class of war profiteers' and they accumulated funds that enabled them to become major operators in South America after the war.<sup>9</sup> For them the war provided unusual opportunities. But the connection between masses of German troops and Jewish women in the east reinforced racial stereotypes on the German side. The experience gave Nazi propagandists like Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch the opportunity later to write that German soldiers who had been in Poland would remember that Jewish parents whenever possible offered their daughters for money.<sup>10</sup> Hunger-derived prostitution was not limited to the eastern war zone. There are similar reports from Palestine, Cairo, Constantinople, and Salonika.<sup>11</sup>

By turning the world upside down economically and politically, war, peace, and revolution also partly determined the contours of our story in the post-war era. Galicia and Bukovina were ravaged, with three invasions devastating the hinterland

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Dr L. Wernic, *Walka Z Chorobami Wenerycznymi i Nierzadem* (The Fight Against Venereal Disease and Prostitution) (Warsaw, 1917), pp. 113-14. Dr A. Rzasnicki, *Prostytucja a Proletariat* (Prostitution and the Proletariat), (2nd ed., Warsaw, 1920), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> 14 October 1915, ICA vol. 1. Berkowitz in 1914/4, VPA.

<sup>9</sup> Fischer and Dubois, *Sexual Life*, p. 327.

<sup>10</sup> Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, *Jude und Weib* (Berlin, 1939), p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> JAGM, 24 June 1919, 13 June 1920. *Bulletin de la Grande Loge de District XI, 'Rapport Moral de la Loge Miamonide'* (Cairo), 1 September 1921, pp. 190-1. *World Congress of Jewish Women* (1923), Netty Gezelter on Constantinople, p. 137. Joseph Nehama to Secretary, AIU, 24 November 1932, Greece III C55, AIU.

of Czernowitz and causing the city's population to swell with refugees. On the other hand Kovno, which found itself in the new state of Lithuania, had been the scene of atrocious mass expulsions in 1915 and the destruction of Jewish economic life. These places continued to be trouble spots, with the number of Jewish prostitutes at Kovno causing real alarm for local workers like Dr Hans Lubinsky, the director of a children's settlement, who reported the problem at the Jewish international conference in 1927.<sup>12</sup>

The massive problem of political refugees and statelessness added to the dilemma. During the Russian advance into Galicia tens of thousands of Jews fled to Vienna. There in 1919 a 'desultory, terrifying increase in prostitution' was reported and a few years later some of the women involved were deported as aliens to the reconstituted Polish Republic, which had incorporated Galicia.<sup>13</sup> By 1921 there were 200,000 Jewish refugees in Europe from both the Russian Revolution and the anti-semitic outrages of the civil war that followed. Following the widespread pogroms committed in 1920 under the White generals Denikin and Wrangel in southern Russia, 90,000 Jews had fled to Constantinople, presenting Jewish relief organisations with a massive resettlement problem. Inevitably large numbers of traffickers filtered back to Constantinople with this mass and set up shop in their old Galata haunts, much to the horror of the local community who had gotten rid of them just a few years earlier. Other Russian refugees fled to Asia, where small numbers of Jewish women went into the brothels of China and Manchuria. Rabbi Hirsch of Shanghai kept the Jewish Association posted on the development.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1927), Mrs Koppelman on Czernowitz, pp. 15-20; Lubinsky, pp. 30, 50.

<sup>13</sup> 'Facts About Prostitution in Vienna', forwarded by US Consul, Vienna, N.A. 862.1151, USDS. *L of N Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children. Minutes of Third Session, 7-11 April 1924*, p. 64. This committee hereafter cited as *L of N, TC*.

<sup>14</sup> For a review of the refugee problem, Lucien Wolf, 'Report', 1 September 1927. On Constantinople's refugees, Wolf, 'La Problème des Derniers Réfugiés Russes de Constantinople', 1928, Box 420, ICA Archives. On White Slavery in Constantinople, *World Congress of Jewish Women* (1923), p. 137; *Bulletin de la Troisième Assemblée Générale des Délégués des Loges IOBB du District XI*, 24-29 December 1929 (Istanbul, 1930), p. 64. JAGM, 5 March 1925. On Shanghai, JAGM, 5 March 1925; Sidney D. Gamble and John Stewart Burgess, *Peking. A Social Survey* (New York, 1922), p. 247. For a later report, JA Council Meeting, 23 May 1935, typescript, JWB. On the problem generally, John Hope Simpson, *The Refugee Problem* (Oxford, 1939).



Unfortunately, as borders were redrawn even people who stayed put could suddenly find themselves second-class citizens, or worse, no citizens at all. While the peace treaties created borders that approximated ethnic divisions, inevitably millions of persons were left on the wrong sides of the new frontiers. For example, Poland incorporated 11 million non-Polish people, including 6 million White Russians and Ukrainians and 3 million Jews; backward and xenophobic Romania was bloated by 4.5 million minority peoples of at least 8 nationalities, including 550,000 additional Jews from Bukovina, Transylvania, and Bessarabia. To provide for the full legal and civil equality of all these peoples, the victorious allies had the new successor states sign Minority Treaties in 1919, guarantees that the Polish and Romanian delegations to the peace conference fought bitterly and never intended to enforce. Within months the worst occurred in Romania. It 'denationalized' some 200,000 of its new Jews, those who lacked proof of ten years of previous continuous residence.<sup>15</sup> Lucien Wolf, the Anglo-Jewish scholar and public figure who had helped obtain the Minority Treaties in the first place, led an investigation that showed conclusively that by making legitimate employment virtually impossible, statelessness caused prostitution. In Romania stateless Russian-Jewish women who had either fled their homes or been incorporated with the taking of Bessarabia were known to drift into the traffic.<sup>16</sup>

Denationalisation, the creation of 'apartide' Jews, Armenians, or White Russians, was the very negation of the Minority Treaties.<sup>17</sup> Short of that, however, there were violations of the agreements, anti-semitic policies and laws, which Lucien Wolf also pointed to as instrumental in causing white slavery. In 1926 Samuel Cohen told the League of Nations, which had taken on both the white-slavery and minority problems without the power to solve either, that 'The Minority Treaties have not everywhere been fully carried out' and that the resulting economic disabilities led to prostitution.<sup>18</sup> This was a very diplo-

<sup>15</sup> Sachar, *Modern Jewish History*, p. 362.

<sup>16</sup> Wolf letter to *The Times*, 16 May 1927. *Jewish International Conference* (1927), pp. 76-7.

<sup>17</sup> On the long-term implications of this step, Richard L. Rubinstein, *The Cunning of History* (New York, 1975), Ch. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *L of N, TC. Minutes of the Sixth Session 25-30 April 1927*, p. 123.



matic reference to Poland and Romania, the engines and exporters of Jewish commercial vice between the wars.

The failure of Poland and Romania to fulfill their international obligations was the external expression of the policy in which they abetted the progressive pauperisation of their Jewish minorities between the wars. In the 1920s both states took over the tobacco, salt, match, and transportation industries in which Jews were prominent, and then fired all the Jewish employees. Civil-service posts and government contracts were forbidden. Loss of Jewish purchasing power had a chain effect and dragged down Jewish artisans. Even before the Polish economy bottomed out in the world depression, there was an epidemic of Jewish suicides and people were fainting in the streets from hunger.<sup>19</sup>

In the circumstances, Czernowitz remained a centre of white slavery. Its traffickers exported to Argentina, Mexico, France, Egypt, and Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> At the same time the Polish-Jewish underworld, now concentrated from three states into one, remained healthy, maintaining links with South America as well as keeping a hand in commercial vice within reconstituted Poland. As far as prostitution is concerned, data for the industrial centre of Lodz shows that from 1921 to 1936 between 20 and 21 per cent of the prostitutes registered with the morals police were Jewish, well short of the 33 per cent Jewish proportion of the city's population. Alfred Döblin, the German writer, reported that some of the orthodox among them would take flight when rabbis approached in the streets. However, the clandestine sector here was so large that these figures reveal only a small part of the picture. In 1922 all brothels had been outlawed by the 'neoabolitionist' Polish Health Minister. The number of brothels closed by the police in Lodz grew steadily over the years and reached the total of 101 in 1936. The increase correlates with the progressive immiseration of the Jews.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Sachar, *Modern Jewish History*, pp. 355-64. Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, pp. 99-108. Jacob Lestschinsky, *Crisis, Catastrophe and Survival* (1948).

<sup>20</sup> *L of N. Report of the Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Women and Children. Part Two* (Geneva, 1927), pp. 152-3. One of the cases described here without names is confirmed as that of the Mirrel brothers, Ministry of the Interior, file 200, AAN.

<sup>21</sup> For the data, Komenda Główna Policji Państwowej (Headquarters, Chief of State Police) study by Joseph Sitkowski, p. 4, file 152, AAN. Alfred Döblin, *Reise in Polen* (Berlin, 1926), p. 340.

At Lemberg Rosa Meltzer, member of the Polish Parliament and President of the Lemberg Jewish Society for the Protection of Girls and Women, reported in 1927 that prostitution had 'increased enormously in the last 10 years', due to difficulties of Jews in the labour market. There were very few opportunities as nurses, nannies, laundresses, or domestic servants, even fewer it seems than before the war. Meltzer continued, 'the only way to avoid extreme penury and hunger is often the brothels of South America, etc. or to become prostitutes at home.' At Warsaw things were little better. While the evidence is conflicting as to whether Jewish prostitution increased or not after the war, we do know that in 1925 over 40 per cent of the registered prostitutes there were either Jewish or Russian.<sup>22</sup>

As for the commercial side of things, because all brothels were illegal there are few statistics to go by; but it appears that the Jewish share in the clandestine houses and in domestic procuring was not dominant. For the one year that confessional statistics were published, 1928, 17 of 48 convicted domestic procurers in Poland were Jewish.<sup>23</sup> Over the years such characters, including operators big and small, young and old, were tracked and apprehended by the very efficient Fourth Brigade of the Polish Police and its pioneering women's branch. Inevitably in this part of the world another generation of alphonse had been hatched, men like Leib Shoshman, who lured Leah Sheiner from Sosnowitz to the capital in 1930 with a proposal of marriage. Once in Warsaw she was installed in a brothel, but when Shoshman was arrested for burglary Leah took advantage of his absence to go to the police. A few days later she was found in an alley, having been beaten unconscious by Shoshman's friends. There were also remnants of the older generation. Froym Bultz, who had been a principal in Shilem Letzki's pre-war gang, turned up in the 1920s living off servant girls. It was very easy, since he had the foresight to get involved as an official in their trade union.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Rosa Meltzer in *Jewish International Conference* (1927), pp. 28-30. *L of N Report. Part Two*, p. 135. According to one source, the percentage of Jewish prostitutes in Warsaw fell after the war; see W. Zalewski, *Prostytucja Powojenna w Warszawie* (Prostitution in Post-war Warsaw) (1927), pp. 35-6.

<sup>23</sup> *L of N, TC. Summary of Annual Reports for 1928*, Geneva, 15 January 1930, Poland.

<sup>24</sup> *Moment*, 12 October 1930. Bernard Goldshtyn. *Zwanzig Jahr in Varshaer Bund* (Yiddish Twenty Years in the Warsaw Bund) (New York, 1960), pp. 48-9. Schnitzer, *Pogrom*, p. 54.

While the czarist police had disappeared, there was still a minor political dimension to the story. With wonderful historic irony, the Polish Communist Party was following in the footsteps of the old regime, employing some of Warsaw's Jewish underworld to harass their political rivals in the Bund. Froym Bultz picked up a little extra money in this fashion and so did several other thugs, including the son of 'Ryvka the Cow' Lindenbaum. Mother and son ran a thriving brothel for years, recruiting prostitutes from the VD hospital and from among the numerous unemployed, until their enterprise was broken up by the women's police in 1932.<sup>25</sup>

Given the progressive economic collapse of Polish Jewry, juvenile prostitution also appeared, though to what extent it is impossible to say. Ryvka the Cow's brothel first came to the attention of the authorities because she harboured underage girls. There was the sixteen-year-old Lasky girl procuring children as young as twelve. And how many Malka Shermans were there? Orphaned in Pinsk, Malka was sold to Chail Zylberberg's brothel there at the age of ten. She was used as a servant and messenger to other brothels and got to know Israel Mascek, who ran a house in Warsaw. Deciding to go in with him, she ran off to the capital, only to be thrown out by Mascek when they quarrelled over her wages. She denounced him to the police and he was convicted. Malka was eleven years old and it was the depression year 1933, not a good time to be a young orphan in Poland.<sup>26</sup>

Under the cloak of secrecy and the impact of mass unemployment, enterprising individuals were able to put together considerable vice empires in Warsaw. In 1932 one Joel Mordke Kaduk caught the attention of the police because he was spending so lavishly around town on his girlfriends. Soon in possession of the local title 'king of the procurers', Kaduk received a four-year prison sentence for having run a chain of

<sup>25</sup> Goldshtyn, *Bund*, pp. 46-9, 121-2. Also on the Lindenbaums, *Ostatnie Wiadomosci* (Latest News), 29 December 1932, cutting in Ministry of the Interior file 244, AAN.

<sup>26</sup> Halina Siemienska, *Stan Walki Z Nierzadem* (Struggle Against Fornication) (Warsaw, 1933), p. 17, in Ministry of the Interior, file 241. On Sherman, Chodzko to C.I.D., 24 March 1934 and other documents in Ministry of the Interior, file 244, AAN.

fourteen secret brothels over the previous dozen years. In 1933 Malka and Shloime Furman and another couple were arrested for running a bogus employment agency in central Warsaw. Their clients were found in fifteen separate brothels. To add a family dimension to this incident, it was Malka's mother, also a prostitute, who denounced her to the police from abroad after a family quarrel.<sup>27</sup>

The big-time operators like the Furmans, who despatched women to Mexico, and Kaduk all had numerous contacts abroad. It was this international side of the traffic that the Jews continued to dominate, with its basic mode of operations hardly changed from before the war. We have mentioned that in 1931 the Polish authorities knew of some 590 persons, mostly Jewish, apparently involved with the Argentine traffic. These procurers from overseas outposts frequented Poland for fresh goods and in 1928 the authorities in Warsaw managed to obtain a particularly clear picture of one segment of the Zwi Migdal on mission abroad.<sup>28</sup> Napoleon Dickenfalden had died in 1927 leaving Abe Marchik, at least according to the Polish police, 'king of the traffickers' on the Argentine route. Marchik was fifty-one years old when he appeared in Warsaw in 1928 and was very well known to the authorities there. In 1912 he had divorced his first wife and married Matla Frenkelstein at Warsaw. This was an excellent choice since not only Matla but also her two sisters Lea and Anna who were prostitutes, and her brother Jacob were willing to work for Marchik. The whole party set out for Buenos Aires, but left in the panic of 1913 and spent the war back in Warsaw. In 1919 they returned to Argentina and bought brothels in the capital and in the provinces. Then in 1928 Marchik and his wife turned up at a suburban Warsaw villa, 'the Delight', run by a local character named Fuchs. Ostensibly they had made the long journey to visit Abe's ailing mother. In fact the well-placed underworld contacts of policewoman Sophia Regulska, a demon

<sup>27</sup> Police National Committee to S. Paleolog (Chief of Womens' Police, Fourth Brigade), 28 October 1932; 26 April 1934. *Nowiny Codzienne* (Daily News), 5 December 1933, cutting in Ministry of the Interior, file 244, AAN. *Heynt* (Yiddish), 5 December 1933.

<sup>28</sup> Reconstructed from extensive police documentation in Ministry of the Interior, files 200, 241, and Ministry of Social Welfare, file 176, AAN.



of an officer, reported that Marchik had brought \$80,000 with him on a major resupply mission.

The Marchiks held a gathering for local agents and made known their needs. The couple had travelled with Ignace Endler, a Zwi Migdal accomplice, and he now started lining up local men to accompany the transport to Danzig and arranging for false passports. Before the police trap could shut, however, Endler left suddenly for Argentina with some of the new recruits. A few weeks later Chaim Brudasz arrived on the scene, yet another member of Marchik's entourage, a servant at one of his brothels. Brudasz was also known to the Warsaw police because just the year before his wife Esther had managed to extricate herself from that brothel by writing to her parents in Warsaw, who then contacted the authorities. Brudasz was also meant to accompany a transport back to Buenos Aires, but the police arrested him and his boss before they could depart. As one has come to expect, Marchik actually escaped after he was given bail. Investigations turned up a complicated web of procurers who were financed by him, including Maurice and Lazar Asher. As we shall observe in a little while, it was police discovery of how brutally Maurice Asher had treated the prostitute Brony Spigler in 1926 that marked the beginning of the unravelling of the Zwi Migdal Society at the Buenos Aires end.

Judging from the Marchik episode and many others, a few things had changed since the war. There was a greater range of Latin American destinations, especially after the Zwi Migdal trial of 1930. Polish gangs like the Furmans shipped more women to Brazil, and even Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, and Columbia. The Free City of Danzig was now within easy reach and while there was no direct shipping link from that Baltic port to South America, it offered another advantage. With traffickers and prostitutes commonly using false passports, they knew that the Polish officials, who were the only ones likely to recognise the deception, did not look at passports on the way into Danzig or on the train across the Polish Corridor to Germany.<sup>29</sup> Paris, which received an influx of 70,000 east European Jews between the wars, was much more frequently a way station on the route to South America or a hunting ground. The Jewish defence forces organised accordingly.

<sup>29</sup> *L of N Report. Part Two*, pp. 136-40.



Finally, the setting of strict immigration quotas in the United States, combined with the deteriorating social, economic, and political conditions for the mass of Polish Jewry, created a heightened desperation that traffickers took advantage of. Some crafty individuals made a business of forging documents in order to enable people to get into the United States; others smuggled people over the border into Germany, at least before 1933. The lengths that individuals would go to is pathetically borne out by an incident in which a group of four men in their thirties showed up at the American Consulate in Warsaw with heads shaven and dressed in juvenile knickerbockers and collars. If they could prove they were under the age of 21, they would be eligible for entry to the US as dependents.<sup>30</sup>

Inevitably an element of white slavery entered into the border smuggling and forged passport rackets. Smugglers occasionally delivered women to French brothels or beyond.<sup>31</sup> In 1927 Morris Baskin, a Brooklyn resident who had been born in Poland hit upon a novel idea.<sup>32</sup> There were immigrants in New York whose fiancées were stuck in Poland. He would offer to travel there with letters of reference instructing the girls to marry Baskin as a proxy, but under the real boyfriends' names. With a marriage certificate showing a husband with US citizenship, the girls could then obtain entry too. This required very well-coordinated planning. Baskin lined up a rabbi in the Warsaw suburb of Wawer to register the fake marriages for \$50 a service. At the American Embassy he corrupted the Vice Consul, Harry Hall, and obtained from him whatever documents he desired, including visas for married couples willing to pay \$600.

By the time the Polish police broke the case Baskin had fled to New York, where on the testimony of the ruined Harry Hall

<sup>30</sup> Incident described in Summary of Morris Baskin case, Part 6, 1 July 1930-2 December 1931, in RG 59, 150.069 'Baskin', USDS.

<sup>31</sup> For the involvement of smuggling gangs in white slavery, the Feldbaum-Brill case in files 197 and 244, Ministry of the Interior and file 188, Ministry of Social Welfare; Also, Dr J. Ninck, *Der Heutige Frauen und Kinderhandel* (Basel, 1930), p. 9. On another suspect, Schmucl Kremski, file 244, AAN.

<sup>32</sup> There is a massive documentation on Baskin: FO 372/2662/2244, PRO. RG59, 150.069, 'Baskin', USDS. National Police Headquarters (1929-39), 349—file 97; Foreign Ministry file 1927, AAN. The following is distilled from this documentation. Also, *New York Times*, 30 May 1930.

he was convicted in 1930 of violating the immigration laws and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The registers at the Wawer Jewish community showed that in 1929 alone fifteen false marriages had been recorded. That not all the brides were delivered to their fiancées is certain. One alleged husband in New York had never even heard of Baskin. It was assumed that he recouped his expenses in some of these cases by selling his penniless young 'wives' into prostitution in America. Perhaps the saddest part of the whole strange business involves Yankel Zabuski and his wife and child, who were ready to emigrate to the United States in 1939. Ten years earlier he had been involved with Baskin when the Zabuskis had sold their documents to another emigrating couple. Whether they were permitted to enter the United States on the eve of the war is not recorded.

Polish prostitutes had always appreciated the opportunity to go west, and given the harsh realities of life this did not change. As a major supplier, very possibly Kaduk, told an undercover League of Nations investigator in the 1920s about two women whom he had sent on to Paris and ultimately Argentina, 'In Buenos Aires they'll be able to make a nice few dollars. In Warsaw they were starving to death. One of them has a sister in Buenos Aires. That will make it nice for her.' Another procurer who split his time between Buenos Aires and Paris told the investigator about one victim, 'when she couldn't get back she listened to reason rather than starve.'<sup>33</sup>

That it was not always so nice and that many did not make the best of it is demonstrated by a very solid body of evidence about rescues. In 1923 alone the Buenos Aires Jewish Association rescued fifteen women from brothelkeepers and traffickers and that was probably an average year.<sup>34</sup> In part this was due to a higher state of vigilance and to the harsher conditions obtaining under the Zwi Migdal. But some of the rescue cases suggest another explanation as well, a heightened willingness by women in general to take chances in order to leave Europe. After all, emigration to the United States had been virtually shut off and there were not many places left to go. In a sample of twenty-five typical prostitutes on the books of the Buenos

<sup>33</sup> *L of N Report, Part Two*, pp. 18, 16.

<sup>34</sup> 10 May 1924, ICA vol. 2.

Aires Jewish Association in 1934, twenty denied practising prostitution before their arrival.<sup>35</sup> They travelled to South America as novices, or with few prospects were recruited locally. In 1930 Selig Ganopol, secretary of the Association, tried to convince one of these newly arrived women, clearly not an experienced prostitute, to leave the brothel she had just entered. She refused his help, but a month later applied to the court for intervention. In the meantime, the unfortunate woman was spirited away and it took a hunt through two provincial towns before she was found and released by Ganopol. Here was someone who took a chance in order to leave Europe but found the rigours of life in a Zwi Migdal brothel too much to bear.<sup>36</sup>

Then there was Perla Pezeborska. In 1926 her parents in Poland received a letter from Aunt Helena in Buenos Aires offering to help the young woman of twenty-two to find a job in Argentina. The family accepted because of their desperate economic state and she arrived only to discover that Aunt Helena did not mind that Uncle Arnaldo kept trying to seduce her. He was Arnaldo Noiman of the Zwi Migdal and when he failed to bring her around he locked her up. Miss Pezeborska remembered that at the immigrants' hostel in Warsaw she had been told of the Jewish Association. She wrote them this note, threw it from a window and luckily it was carried to the offices of *Diario Israelita*: 'I have been kidnapped and taken to a house in Calle Lavalle, belonging to Noiman. Please interest yourself in my fate as quickly as possible, because I am in danger of disappearing.'<sup>37</sup> Not a year went by without the uncovering of several cases of this sort: mothers sending for daughters, daughters for mothers, sisters for sisters, uncles for nieces all with the expectation the immigrants would participate in the family business. Clearly the Buenos Aires underworld assumed it had a bottled up supply of individuals who would do any-

<sup>35</sup> *L of N. Measures of Rehabilitation*, p. 124.

<sup>36</sup> Related by an employee of the Polish Consulate in Buenos Aires, attending a meeting of the Polish National Committee, in Minutes of the PNC, 21 November 1930, Ministry of Social Welfare file 191, AAN.

<sup>37</sup> *Buenos Aires Herald*, 7 October 1926. *Gaceta*, p. 9. Alsogoray, *Trilogia*, p. 148. In 1933 the Argentine police were looking for Noiman, who was in jail in Warsaw: C.I.D. Piotrkow to Polish National Committee, 20 February 1933, Ministry of the Interior file 244, AAN.

thing to leave Poland. Some of those who refused to enter brothels were helped by the Buenos Aires Jewish Association to settle into respectable life in Argentina. Others were repatriated to Poland.<sup>38</sup>

### *Reorganising*

Lamenting the disruption of the work, Arthur Moro wrote, 'We were making splendid progress in Europe when the war came.'<sup>39</sup> In the aftermath, Jews interested in fighting commercial vice were presented with a new range of problems that more than outweighed the one new advantage, the assumption by the League of Nations of the fight against 'the traffic in women and children', as white slavery was now officially called. In 1921 the League established an Advisory Committee on the Traffic and began to seek ways of extending the pre-war conventions. Arthur Balfour, Britain's urbane Foreign Secretary, told the League's Assembly at that time that

this kind of traffic is the most abominable stain upon civilisation which it is possible to conceive. We all know that during the war the material conditions under which the world lived made that traffic impossible. The war is over, and if all the reports reaching us be true, the traffic is again raising its abominable head.<sup>40</sup>

Thus the League inherited the work of the late W. A. Coote with an emotional flourish that left nothing to the Victorian pioneers. The national committees increased in number and sent delegates to the League of Nations Committee on the Traffic. In turn the voluntary organisations remained the cornerstones of the national committees and the Jewish Association was one of five such international philanthropic institutions to be given membership of the Committee at Geneva.

This left Samuel Cohen, who represented Jewish interests at the League, as a general without any army. Reconstructing the extensive network of 1914 would be difficult and expensive. Money and voluntary workers had never been easy to come by

<sup>38</sup> This can be seen in the Polish national reports and the JA reports published annually by the League of Nations Advisory Committee.

<sup>39</sup> 14 October 1915, ICA, vol. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Cited in *Vigilance Record*, October 1921.

and now international Jewish philanthropy was preoccupied with the relief effort to the battered and displaced Jews of eastern Europe. Furthermore, anti-semitism was entering a new and more dangerous stage. During four days of meetings in June 1922 Cohen convinced the League not to publish the names of known traffickers, arguing that it might involve the Committee in libel suits. In fact Cohen feared 'that such publication must include very many Jewish names, and so give a handle for anti-semitic exaggeration'. Within the friendly confines of Geneva Cohen easily handled some embarrassing questions by the Italian delegate about Jewish involvement and moved successfully that the League resolve that the national committees be interdenominational.<sup>41</sup> The blossoming of fascist movements in Europe, however, was bound to give pause to potential Jewish participants in this voluntary activity, and it even made the veterans very jumpy.

For example, when the League published the first part of a lengthy survey of white slavery in 1927 there was a furious response from some of the Jews. The idea for this famous survey came from the American delegate to the Geneva committee, Grace Abbot; and in 1924, with \$75,000 from the Rockefeller Fund a special committee of enquiry was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr Abraham Flexner, the widely respected American physician whose pre-war study of European prostitution had recommended him. Flexner's acceptance of the chair was a great relief to the Jewish Association; but before the enquiry could begin, he stepped down because of bad health and was replaced by Colonel William Snow, another American physician with extensive public-health experience. Snow supervised an international committee that included Isadore Maus, a prominent Belgian Jew and an able staff of investigators, many loaned by the American Social Hygiene Council. Headed by Bascom Johnson, these agents spent two years compiling material throughout the Western Hemisphere, some of it gleaned from the traffickers themselves. Five thousand informers were tapped. Knowing that these sources were inherently unreliable and that the subject itself was terribly

<sup>41</sup> 12 May 1923, ICA vol. 2. JAGM, 25 October 1922, JWB. *L of N, TC. Minutes of First Session 28 June-1 July 1922.*



elusive, the committee decided to use nothing without corroboration.<sup>42</sup>

Even a widely criticised story involving a Polish victim allegedly put through a ritual marriage in Germany by a rabbi's wife, which Cohen agreed was 'absurd', was said in the Second Part of the Report, issued later in 1927, to have had some basis in fact.<sup>43</sup> The problem was not systematic distortion, but selection. While proper names were not used, Yiddish slang and nicknames crowded the text and places like Warsaw and Czernowitz were made to dominate the traffic. Therefore taken as a whole it was a misleading representation of the world problem. Coincidentally, soon after publication the 1927 Jewish international conference on the traffic convened in London. What had happened, delegates wanted to know? Bertha Pappenheim was particularly outraged: 'Generally speaking it is unsectarian, but as soon as Jews are mentioned, the quality ceases.' In 1924 the Jewish Association had decided there would 'be no attempt to shield the wrongdoers' and in order to help the investigators, Cohen had sent a questionnaire to Jewish committees everywhere. Now he reaped the whirlwind. As he explained to the conference,

Owing to the existence of our committees and the excellent work they have been doing, the information which they gave to the investigators ... was perhaps fuller than any of the information which they received from other sources ... it is not unlikely that our information was somewhat out of proportion to that given by others.<sup>44</sup>

Cohen suggested that the outcome might be potentially useful because it could lead to more recruits for the voluntary work. Pappenheim still fumed, and a few months later Montefiore replied to her, insisting 'that the Jews, have, on the whole, not come off very badly in the Report', and suggesting her own inconsistency in constantly criticising those who doubted the Jewish share in the evil, while herself doubting the

<sup>42</sup> JAGM, 4 June 1923. 10 May 1924, ICA vol. 2. *Times*, 6 December 1927. *L of N Report. Part One*, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *L of N Report. Part One*, p. 34; *Part Two*, p. 83. Cohen at *Jewish International Conference* (1927), p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1927), pp. 97, 90-1, 10 May 1924, ICA vol. 2.

accuracy of the League of Nations investigation.<sup>45</sup> It was the balance that was wrong, however, and Pappenheim was right in perceiving the episode as a self-inflicted public relations disaster.

In the face of these impediments—the rise of anti-semitism, shortage of money, the more pressing problems of post-war resettlement and reconstruction—the reorganising effort in the 1920s met with some success. The 1927 Conference attracted 130 delegates from eighteen nations, including fifty persons from outside Britain. Even the *Agudat Israel*, the international organisation representing orthodox Jews, sent a delegate. Samuel Cohen had hoped to strengthen the movement so that at Geneva ‘he could speak with authority on behalf of other countries, as well as of the Association’.<sup>46</sup> He also hoped to establish a new central fund in London for expanded work. But nothing new came out of the conference except a long list of recommendations similar to those of 1910, illustrating the failure to make progress on issues like *stillah chuppah*, full rabbinical support, and so forth.

On the other hand, the protective network was being extended. An address book belonging to the Buenos Aires branch between the wars lists correspondents in over seventy cities around the world, some of them the secretaries of anti-white-slavery committees, many the members of other kinds of communal or relief institutions helping with this work.<sup>47</sup> Many of the major organisations continued to render assistance. Samuel Cohen reported in 1923 that Edouard Oungre, ICA’s president

had very kindly placed at the disposal of the Association their workers and committees in different countries. He felt that the connection between emigration work and the traffic was so important, that the two Associations must keep in touch with one another all the time. He gave the names and addresses of workers and committees in Bucharest, Constantinople, Warsaw, Kishinev, and the French ports of Havre, Cherbourg, Marseille and Bordeaux ...<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Montefiore to Pappenheim, August 1927 in *Sisyphus-Arbeit II*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>46</sup> JAGM, 4 March 1925.

<sup>47</sup> At the JWB.

<sup>48</sup> JAGM, 4 June 1923.

Even HIAS, which had entered European emigration work on the continent in a major way, helped at Danzig, Romania, and Poland in the early post-war days, before special committees were formed at those places.<sup>49</sup>

Most importantly, in 1927 when the major emigrant-aid societies—HIAS, ICA, the Ezra Society, Montefiore Union, Emigdirect—joined together to form HICEM, this important new umbrella group decided to assume part of the protective work and subsidise the Jewish Association in support of the rest.<sup>50</sup> It was agreed that members of the Jewish Association branches would enter HICEM committees; the latter would handle the actual emigration of unescorted women while the former would continue with 'moral protection and the direct fight against white slavery'. This worked to good effect in Paris, where the white-slavery problem among Jews from the east was now similar to what it had been in pre-war London and Vienna.<sup>51</sup> The division of labour also worked to good effect in Brazil and Uruguay, two places where Samuel Cohen himself had little success getting things started. At Rio the work was organised by Rabbi Arthur Raffalovitch, who was sent out from Liverpool to serve ICA colonists, and then went to work for the Jewish Association and HICEM. Before the war Raffalovitch had been instrumental in launching the anti-white-slavery work at Liverpool.<sup>52</sup>

In the meantime, Samuel Cohen had undertaken protracted tours across Europe in 1923 and 1926 to reorganise and link together the sectarian committees. Cohen's first stop in 1923 was Berlin. Pioneers like Tuch, Maretski, and Bergel had died. But Paul Nathan and Bertha Pappenheim helped to reconvene a Joint Committee of the *Hilfsverein*, B'nai B'rith and *Jüdische Frauenbund* and to reactivate the agents in all the principal

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 March 1922. *L of N, TC. Minutes of Second Session 22-27 March 1923*, p. 53. Chodzko to Samuel Cohen, 4 January 1934, Ministry of the Interior, file 244, AAN.

<sup>50</sup> *Protokoll der Ersten Konferenz der an die HIAS—ICA—Emigdirect Angeschlossenen Organisationen*, Berlin, 18-19 January 1928. *Four Years of Jewish Migration. Report of Activities of the Association for Emigration HIAS—ICA—Emigdirect, 1927-30* (Paris, 1931), 22, 28.

<sup>51</sup> *JA Report* (1933), 33. ICA, *Rapport de la Direction Générale au Conseil d'Administration pour l'Année 1928*, 286-7.

<sup>52</sup> *JA Reports* (1928); (1936), p. 44. *Four Years of Jewish Migration*, pp. 30-2. *Protokoll*. On Raffalovitch, 10 May 1924, ICA vol. 2.

towns and ports.<sup>53</sup> With the rush of migrants through Hamburg and Bremen down to a trickle, however, the overriding rationale for the work had been lost. At the Sixth International Congress in 1924 Dr Jung, then secretary of the German National Committee, admitted that there was so little to do that the work had been broadened to tracing missing girls for parents and helping others who wanted to work abroad.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, as anti-semitism made deeper inroads into German life in the 1920s, the work itself became more and more painful. Following Dr Jung the secretaryship of the German National Committee was taken over by Dr Kundt, a government councillor who had none of the restraint of his predecessors and simply gave in to the prevailing racialist view of things. In 1926 Kundt decided to tour the Silesian border region, where it was known that Poles were being smuggled into Germany. Kundt wanted to know, and mark the menacing terminology, why it was proving impossible 'to keep all the undesirable elements from the East out of the country'.<sup>55</sup>

Kundt's report was nothing less than an anti-semitic libel. He made it seem that only Jews were being smuggled into Germany; he exaggerated tremendously both the numbers of *Ostjuden* involved and the role of white slavery in the smuggling and finally he accused Jewish welfare institutions in Breslau, near the border, of abetting the smugglers. Jewish opinion was outraged. Far from wanting to encourage the entry of *Ostjuden*, some Jewish organisations were trying to stop it. Even the Prussian Minister of the Interior denied Kundt's charges and regretted that they had been included in the annual report of the DNC, a state-subsidised institution. Rabbi Felix Goldmann of Leipzig criticised the Jewish delegates to the 1927 International Congress for the Suppression of the Traffic for not criticising the report strenuously enough and the Zionist *Jüdische Rundschau* demanded that the Jews leave the DNC, a step which they did not take. A few days before that Seventh Congress in London, the Jews had held their own international

<sup>53</sup> 12 May 1923, ICA vol. 2. JAGM, 4 June 1923.

<sup>54</sup> *Report of the Sixth International Congress for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children*, Linz 1924, pp. 28-30.

<sup>55</sup> Report of the German National Committee (1926), p. 4, translation in NVA, Box 123.

gathering. Speaking for the German Union of Rabbis, Goldmann said, 'We rabbis are of the opinion that it is dangerous to talk so much about the traffic and to be incessantly proclaiming our sins to the world ... It is ... anti-semitism which is at the bottom of the traffic.'<sup>56</sup>

German anti-semitism had reached a level that made it almost impossible to carry on the work in the interdenominational spirit. If there was increasing tension within the DNC, outside it National Socialist propaganda was plumbing new depths of perversity. It has been clear for some time that the sexual element in German anti-semitism became more pronounced after the war.<sup>57</sup> Possibly because of the war experience itself, with the absence of the father and his humiliation through defeat, the regressive ego defences of projecting sexual aggression on to the outsider became more widespread. Tales of Jewish sexual depredations, from rape to seduction to propagation of VD, filled the anti-semitic press and literature. Through the 1920s white slavery played its natural role here, ironically just as cases involving Jewish traffickers were becoming virtually unknown in Germany.

Alfred Rosenberg, chief Nazi 'ideologist' picked up the controversy over Dr Kundt for one of his works on Weimar society. But that is merely scratching the surface. Rosenberg and others related Jewish white slavery to the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion, now entering its most popular phase. In the context of the world conspiracy Jewish commercial vice, along with modern art, cabaret, and sexual freedom became part of the plot for 'the demoralisation of non-Jews'.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> On the controversy, *Jüdische Rundschau*, 23 August, 22 November 1927. *Jüdische Arbeits-und-Wander Fürsorge*, September-December 1927. *Blätter des Jüdischen Frauenbundes*, October 1927. *Central Verein Zeitung*, 25 November 1927. *Jewish International Conference* (1927), p. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Levy, *Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Germany* (New Haven, 1975), p. 264. Peter Loewenberg, 'The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort', *American Historical Review* 76 (1971), 1457-1501. Pulzer, *Political Anti-Semitism*, Ch. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Sumpf. Querschnitte des 'Geistes' = Lebens der November-Demokratie* (Munich, 1933), pp. 191-2, 185. Rosenberg, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion und die Jüdische Weltpolitik* (Munich 1933), Ch. 13. Also, Schwartz, *Bostunisch. Jude und Weib*, pp. 35ff.



The *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi Party paper, gleefully reported on the Zwi Migdal trial of 1930, merely altering one essential fact and writing that 'their victims for the most part were taken from Germany'. *Juden-Bordelle*, peddled in the Berlin streets in 1892, was republished in 1930. During the political controversy over whether to accept the Young Plan in 1929, with its rescheduling of reparations payments, the Nazi press wrote of how Jewish international finance had decided to set up a 'slave market' to export German youth in partial payment. Julius Streicher's notorious *Der Stürmer*, portraying judaised satans looming over Aryan womanhood while citing chapter and verse on white slavery from the *Jewish Chronicle*, added a pornographic dimension to what was an ominous body of literature. When the Nazis turned out an anti-semitic encyclopaedia in 1931, the entry on 'Mädchenhandel' ran to no less than forty-four pages.<sup>59</sup> While all this may have been preaching to the converted, the atmosphere was being poisoned and Rabbi Goldmann's advice to keep a low profile made sense, especially since the work in Germany was of low priority. Despite all this, the ladies' groups continued to work in harmony. Bertha Pappenheim expanded to sixty her railway station outposts, all staffed by volunteers with armbands reading 'Help for women by women', and all working in co-operation with the Protestant and Catholic ladies' railway missions. Always partly symbolic, this effort in the Germany of the 1920s was devoid of concrete meaning and is interesting only because it managed to survive for a time after 1933 under the Nazis.<sup>60</sup>

Official anti-semitism made organising difficult in Lithuania, where a foreign-office official told Frederick Sempkins, Coote's successor at the NVA, that 'Jews will not give away their own people even when they have committed unpleasant offences.'<sup>61</sup> It followed that when Dr Lubinsky tried to do just that, he failed to obtain proper co-operation from the police. The same

<sup>59</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter*, 14 May 1930. *Central Verein Zeitung*, 18 October 1929, 3 January, 16 March 1930. *Der Stürmer*, July, September 1927. *Sigilla Veri*, Vierter Band (1931), pp. 185-239.

<sup>60</sup> Kaplan, *Jewish Feminist Movement*, pp. 132-4. *Report of the Eighth International Congress for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children*, Warsaw, 1930, p. 162.

<sup>61</sup> 'Kaunas' (Kovno), Memorandum by Frederick Sempkins n.d. 1933, file C032, Box 115, NVA. *Jewish International Conference* (1927), p. 30.

was true in Romania, where the ladies of the Jewish Societies for the Protection of Girls and Women in Bucharest and Czer-nowitz struggled along without sufficient funds or government assistance.<sup>62</sup>

The protection of girls and women continued to be a very popular rallying call for Jewish women in eastern Europe and any headway was due to them. The 1927 Jewish International Conference and two World Congresses of Jewish Women, held at Vienna and Hamburg in 1923 and 1929, all stimulated interest in the subject. Bertha Pappenheim played a special part in promoting the work among Jewish women in Riga, Latvia.<sup>63</sup> By 1921 the womens' associations that existed in every major Hungarian community formed the Council of Jewish Women under the presidency of Ethel Baracs. Political realities here made any sort of controversial work almost impossible. After all, at the very time that the women were uniting, it was the tail end of the White Terror that followed the overthrow of Bela Kun's communist regime and Jews were still being shot and dumped in the Danube. Later in 1926, following a visit by Samuel Cohen, the Hungarian women became involved in protective work, opening a home for morally endangered women and running hygiene courses.<sup>64</sup>

Poland is the centre of the inter-war story, and especially here middle-class Jewish women proved their energy and resilience in the field of voluntary work. Samuel Cohen visited Poland in 1923 and managed to help rekindle the Societies in Warsaw and Lodz. Cohen reported back that he 'had succeeded in obtaining the cooperation of all sections of the community, including the Rabbis, who had spoken at the meetings and promised their cooperation.' In fact a conference of Jewish organisations convened by the Warsaw rabbis was held the year before to discuss combating the traffic.<sup>65</sup> The rabbinate was very willing to discuss the subject, but slow to do anything about what was universally agreed to be a prime immediate cause of the traffic, ritual marriage.

<sup>62</sup> *L of N, TC. Minutes of the Sixth Session 25-30 April 1927*, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> Professor P. Snikers to Frederick Sempkins, 27 April 1933, file CO33, NVA. *L of N, TC. Minutes of the Seventh Session, 12-17 March 1928*, Annex 5, p. 105.

<sup>64</sup> *World Congress of Jewish Women (1923)*, pp. 52-3. *Kurze Schilderung der Tätigkeit des 'Minosz'. Landesorganisation Jüdischer Frauenvereine von Ungarn (1928)*, M38, HU.

<sup>65</sup> JAGM, 4 June 1923, 25 October 1922.

Within a few years of the Cohen visit, Jewish Societies for the Protection of Girls were also brought back to life in Cracow and Lemberg, and were initiated in Vilna and Bialystock. As Cohen noted later, 'women of influence and good standing have come forward to carry on the protective and preventive work recognised by the Jewish international conferences.'<sup>66</sup> Typically the women's agenda was broad, even if their resources were small. As we have observed for the pre-war period, they did much else in addition to guarding railway stations. More and more time was taken up with the task of trying to locate the husbands of deserted wives. The Lodz Society reported in 1927 that in only two of 183 cases had they been successful. But a year later Mrs Hilda Klotz said that over the previous fifteen years that same society had assisted 30,000 women. The range of services administered by the Lodz Jewish ladies ran from travellers' aid to arranging trousseaux, to running vocational courses and a home for morally endangered women.<sup>67</sup>

Some degree of progress was possible in Poland because the government took the prostitution question seriously. The Poles had been influenced by Josephine Butler's original new-abolitionist crusade. To be against state regulation at the turn of the century was to be against the Russian occupiers. In 1900 a number of influential Poles formed a secret Abolitionist Society in Warsaw. Among the founders were Dr Leon Wernic, who later headed the republic's Ministry of Health, and Stanislaus Posner, a Jew who became a senator and Polish delegate to the League of Nations Committee on the Traffic.<sup>68</sup> 'Neo-abolitionism' triumphed in 1919 when the licensed brothel, if not registration, was abolished; and the new government responded to the problem of migratory prostitution more strenuously than any other in the world. This was due to the beliefs of the neo-abolitionists who had achieved public office, to the hundreds of Polish women known to have gone into

<sup>66</sup> *JA Report* (1925), p. 33; (1936), p. 115. On the Bialystock Society, its membership and aims, Ministry of Social Welfare, file 195, AAN.

<sup>67</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1927), p. 28. *Blätter des Jüdischen Frauenbunds*, November 1928.

<sup>68</sup> Chodzko, *Handel Kobietami*; Paleologue, *The Women Police of Poland*, pp. 8-10.

French brothels soon after the war as the Polish economy turned down, to the wish to appear progressive, and, finally, to the desire to make emigration as safe as possible so that the Jews would not be deterred from leaving the country.

Subsidising the Polish National Committee and working in harmony with voluntary organisations, the government organised railway missions all through the country and even arranged for groups of female emigrants to be escorted to their destinations by special 'conductors'. Emigration was carefully scrutinised, so that women could leave the country alone only by giving certain guarantees; and women going to Argentina and Brazil required affidavits testifying to the honesty of the relatives or employers who would be receiving them.<sup>69</sup> The PNC itself was an influential body, whose members included Dr Withold Chodzko, Minister of Health from 1918 to 1923, and Dr Joseph Macko of the Interior Ministry. How did the Jewish ladies get on with this group? Chodzko decided at the beginning that all religious groups should be represented, 'otherwise it would be commented on abroad'.<sup>70</sup> In addition to Posner, Julia Silbermintz of the Warsaw Jewish Society entered the Committee. There followed years of bickering, a fine example of the limits of good faith in the Poland of that day. Should Jewish women be present at the Warsaw train stations? Should Julia Silbermintz be permitted to enter the lofty presidium of the PNC? It took Cohen's intervention with Chodzko in 1926 to get 'the difficult situation between the members of the Jewish Committee ... and those of the PNC' settled, on this occasion to the satisfaction of the Jews.<sup>71</sup>

Should delegates be accepted from the newer Jewish provincial committees? Should mixed hostels be used for all the females sent by the railway missions? Macko had strong feelings on this last issue, because, as he told the PNC, 'Jews do not take prostitution as seriously and they might send agents to the hostels to recruit.'<sup>72</sup> What should be done about ritual marriages? This was the most controversial issue of all. Everyone

<sup>69</sup> *L of N. Report, Part Two*, p. 140. Paleologue, *Women Police of Poland*, pp. 11ff. *L of N, TC. Minutes of the Fifth Session 22-25 March 1926*, pp. 9-12, 72.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes of the PNC, 14 December 1923, Ministry of Social Welfare, file 189. AAN.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel Cohen to Chodzko, 23 December 1926 in Ministry of Social Welfare, file 197, and Minutes through files 189, 190, 191, AAN.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the PNC, 2 March 1926, file 190, Ministry of Social Welfare, AAN.



agreed that the *stillah chuppah* was still being used to good effect by white-slave traffickers, and earlier we met up with Mordka Cichtiger of Petrikau, who in the 1920s was said to have trapped at least a dozen wives in this fashion. The problem was debated in the PNC, which even distributed 'Women Beware', a film on the pitfalls of ritual marriage, through the Trade Union of Jewish Secondary School Teachers.<sup>73</sup> The Poles held that the solution was to change Jewish public opinion so that rabbis as required would accompany married couples to state officials who would register the marriage. They also suggested that Jews should abolish the ritual legality of unions not performed by rabbis.

These steps appeared logical enough, but as Mrs Teplicka of Lodz told the 1927 Jewish International Conference, 'it will take another 25 years to stamp this custom out'; and as Rabbi Meyer Hildesheimer of Berlin added, 'We may pass resolutions here, but we shall not be able to put them into effect.'<sup>74</sup> The religious law was the law. Thus the same issue was bitterly debated among the Jews too; but in fact there was a simple solution to the *stillah chuppah* dilemma available to the Polish government, one which would have resolved the major aspect of the question, unregistered marriages carried out by rabbis. This step they refused to take for political reasons. As the Warsaw Jewish Society pointed out in 1930,

The best method of solving this problem would be to unite the function of State official with that of Rabbi. In this manner the Rabbi would possess both the right to perform marriage and to maintain civil registers, in which he would enter the marriage at the end of the religious ceremony. It should be noted that this is the procedure in the case of marriages between Christians. Christian ministers being at the same time civil officials have the right to draw up official marriage certificates as well as religious certificates.<sup>75</sup>

Again the limits of meaningful dialogue, the limits of Jewish integration of inter-war Poland. Still, Jews and Christians did

<sup>73</sup> 16 March 1926, PNC to Trade Union of Jewish Secondary School Teachers, Ministry of the Interior, file 241, AAN.

<sup>74</sup> *Jewish International Conference* (1927), pp. 22-8, 51.

<sup>75</sup> Cited in *Vigilance Record*, January 1930.



work together on this problem and at the Eighth International Congress, held in Warsaw in 1930, Samuel Cohen gave high praise to the Polish government for working in close co-operation with the Jewish Societies in cases where 'Jewish girls desire to come from Poland to South America'.<sup>76</sup> And that those Societies showed real industry and touched the lives of people was demonstrated over and over again. In addition to their other activities, in 1929 the Warsaw, Lodz, Vilna, and Bialystock Societies sent 121 enquiries to other Jewish Societies abroad, several involving real white-slavery episodes. In the following year a woman forced into a Buenos Aires brothel wrote to her parents, 'I have heard that somewhere there is a Jewish Society which seeks to save unhappy women like me...' Their approach to the Warsaw Society led to the daughter's release and her husband's imprisonment.<sup>77</sup> The traffickers did not quit until 1939 and their opponents shadowed them until the end.

#### *The Breakup of the Zwi Migdal Society*

The Zwi Migdal and its associated circle, the Ashkenazim, reached a pinnacle of power, influence, and wealth in the Buenos Aires of the 1920s. Never before had so many Jewish traffickers been concentrated in one city. As their activities were shut down in one place after another, they swarmed to Buenos Aires like flies. Who should turn up there in the 1920s? Remember Mortke Goldberg of New York's 'Vice Trust'; Solomon Spiegelglas and other members of Johannesburg's defunct 'Immorality Trust'; Jacob Schrednicki, Simon Kumcher, and other accomplices from Joe Silver's disbanded Stamford Road Gang.<sup>78</sup> The Buenos Aires underworld was therefore renewed with fresh faces from outposts put out of business and with young blood from Poland. Its influence however, lay with the old timers, the settled people from before

<sup>76</sup> *Eighth International Congress*, 164-5. For a very negative view of this Congress, Pappenheim in *Blätter des Jüdischen Frauenbundes*, December 1930.

<sup>77</sup> *L of N, TC. Minutes of the Ninth Session 9 April 1930*, 103, 101; *Minutes of the Tenth Session 21-27 April 1931*, p. 78.

<sup>78</sup> About Mortke Goldberg there is some controversy. He is reported to have died in 1918 in Arizona, in Howard Woolston, *Prostitution in the United States* (New York, 1921), p. 92. But sources cited above, Ch. Five, place him in Argentina.

the war who had not left in 1913, or who had returned at the first opportunity. They had built up the political contacts and the great wealth.

Of the sixteen members of Zwi Migdal's formal directorate first established in 1926, the dates of entry into Argentina of half the members are known.<sup>79</sup> All eight entered for the first time before the war: Zacharias Zytnitski, president; Felipe Schon, vice-president; Max Salzman, secretary; Simon Brutkevich, treasurer; Abe Marchik; Jacob Zabladovich; Solly Berman; and Marcus Posnansky. Salzman and Posnanski were among the signers of the 1906 founding charter, and other founders too like Noé Trauman and Abe Springfeder were still around for the 1930 police raid. Another measure of the stability of the core comes from that raid. The police went after 424 men and women, although a few had died and others were out of the country. The majority of the culprits had been forewarned and managed to escape. But of the 112 arrested the average age was over forty-five. And where known, twelve had arrived before 1900, sixty-one between 1900 and 1914, and only thirty-four since 1914.

Over time these people had carved out an almost unassailable position for themselves. Take their relationship with the authorities. Mauricio Caro, Zwi Migdal treasurer in 1930 and fixer with the police, was respected enough to be called 'Don Mauricio'. When Esther Quacks denounced him in 1927 for living off her earnings, it was she who had to flee the country in fear of her life. When the roof caved in three years later, the police let Caro escape to Brazil. Simon Rubinstein, head of the Ashkenazim, could be seen driving around the city in the car of a parliamentary deputy, in fact the head of the radical bloc. Extensive bribery yielded influence from the top of government to the bottom. Lucrative vice empires were carved out in this climate. Police investigations revealed in 1930 that ten traffickers, including Caro and Rubinstein, controlled seventeen brothels with 202 prostitutes in many cities across Argentina.<sup>80</sup> And as we mentioned earlier, the entire Zwi Migdal was

<sup>79</sup> The following data are derived from the full list in *Gaceta. Bra*, 'La Mutual', uses the total 434, which was the membership in 1921.

<sup>80</sup> Alsogaray, *Trilogia*, pp. 44, 63-85, 126, 217-21.

estimated to control 3000 women in 1000 brothels. Some of the women had done very well from prostitution and were living in comfortable retirement on the rent of one or more brothels. They included Sara Dzigan, Napoleon Dickenfaden's sixty-two-year-old widow, Elena Brusky, Herman's widow, Tauba Pasternak, and Sara Dessell.<sup>81</sup>

Inevitably there was investment in other crime, like gambling, smuggling, and abortion. Inevitably too some of the easy wealth found its way into the respectable economy and was invested in shops, boutiques, beauty parlours, restaurants. By the 1920s not only Rubinstein but Simon Brutkevich too was in the silk-stocking business.<sup>82</sup> In fact, Rubinstein advertised his firm 'El Japon', based as it was on smuggling, in *Semanario Hebrío*, the least aggressive Jewish paper on the subject of the unclean ones. These kinds of enterprises could also serve the brothel economy. But we have seen that Yiddish writers like Mordchai Alpersohn and Berel Greenberg give the firm impression that other funds were being invested in manufacturing industry, making it very difficult indeed for the Jewish community to carry out to the letter their ban against the procurers.

As the Zwi Migdal secured its position *vis-à-vis* the authorities and even the respectable Jewish community, it also rationalised the vice market and tightened its grip on its employees. There was less freelance Jewish competition of the sort we observed wandering in and out of Buenos Aires before the war, partly because it became more difficult to get into the country. Just as in the case of Chinese prostitution in California, an early era of relative free trade and circumscribed exploitation gave way to a much harsher regime. New laws required that immigrants pass literacy and medical tests, and that they produce a certificate proving themselves free of a criminal record for the previous ten years. Furthermore, no women under the age of twenty-two could enter the country alone unless met by a responsible person. Samuel Cohen said 'it was quite possible that the traffic would be entirely stopped.'<sup>83</sup> Inevitably, however, this merely strengthened the hands of those with the wealth and expertise to bribe

<sup>81</sup> *Gaceta*, p. 14-16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. *Yiddische Tsaitung*, 11 May 1930.

<sup>83</sup> JAGM, 25 April 1919, 7 July 1924.

and forge their way around the law. Speaking of how the immigration authorities had given a friend of his a tough time, one procurer told a League of Nations investigator, 'They are getting stricter ... each day. Its really very hard to get in now... The immigration officers won't let anybody in who they think is in the business. Only for the [Zwi Migdal] he would never have been able to make it.' The authorities helped keep the competition out and they deported freelances who had managed to get in.<sup>84</sup>

Not only independent procurers, but the prostitutes too found themselves at more of a disadvantage. If under the age of twenty-two they were beholden to their pimps for entry into the country. Furthermore, in 1923 Buenos Aires passed an ordinance limiting brothels to one inmate each, with only one house allowed per city block. The regulation could have been ruinous to the bosses, had they not expanded the clandestine sector and into the provinces, and increased the intensity of work, especially by encouraging oral sex, which was said to enable one girl to handle 300 customers a week. Some of the prostitutes took the opportunity to retire.<sup>85</sup> Those who stayed at work had less protection. Furthermore, through its own disciplinary committee and with the help of the police, Zwi Migdal was now able to enforce its rule, both in disputes between pimps, or between pimp and prostitute.<sup>86</sup> Many women learned this the hard way. Lola Gochind had arrived in Buenos Aires with Felipe Lopachin in 1920 and become his woman. Ten years later when she tried to separate from him, Simon Brutkevich dropped by and explained that the Society could not tolerate her independent brothel. They exchanged insults, and a few days later the police raided Gochind's place, throwing the porter down on the bed and claiming she was the second prostitute on the premises, thereby making it illegal.<sup>87</sup>

Zwi Migdal went so far as to fulfill the law of Leviticus, sanctioning a brother's claim to his brother's widow, when it suited them. Rachel Izarstein married Max Zisman in Warsaw

<sup>84</sup> *L of N, Report, Part Two*, p. 15.

<sup>85</sup> *L of N, Report, Part Two*, p. 18; *Report Part One*, p. 16; On Helena Wittenberg retiring, *Gaceta*, p. 11. See also below, epilogue.

<sup>86</sup> Brá, 'La Mutual', p. 85.

<sup>87</sup> *Gaceta*, p. 8.

in 1922, when she was nineteen years old. Altering the age on her passport, he brought her to Buenos Aires and allegedly forced her to practise prostitution. The interesting part of the story begins with Max lapsing into insanity and then dying. Izarstein was forced to pay for his treatment and then for a \$2,800 monument. But that was just the beginning, because brother Nathan Zisman then claimed her for himself. He threatened to close her brothel and kill her, threats that continued until she finally gave up the business and passed back her registration book to the dispensary.<sup>88</sup>

While Zwi Migdal, and to a lesser extent, the Ashkenazim, were strengthening their positions, they still did not come any nearer to a monopoly of Argentine commercial vice than they had before the war. In the inter-war period the French and the Italians kept up their end of the business. In 1924 Rabbi Halphon commented that there were fewer Jewish brothel-keepers than before. When the new Argentine revolutionary government started deporting traffickers after 1930, one batch of twenty-two typically consisted of ten Jews, eight Frenchmen, and four Italians.<sup>89</sup> That the Jews were better organised is not to say they were a majority. And that is certainly true of the prostitutes. Selig Ganopol, secretary of *Ezras Noschim*, as the Buenos Aires Jewish Association was called between the wars, estimated that between 20 and 25 per cent of the prostitutes in Buenos Aires were Jewish in this period, while the figure was said to be about 18 per cent for provincial cities. This tallies with registration figures at the Buenos Aires dispensary, which also show a French share that had climbed to 31 per cent, and a native Argentine share that by 1923 had surpassed the Jewish numbers.<sup>90</sup> One thing that had not changed, however, was the hierarchy of whoredom; as the Jewish Association reported of Argentina for the years up to 1934, 'The women victims concerned created a tremendous problem, as they were exploited

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* There is a slightly different version in Bra, 'La Mutal', pp. 83-4.

<sup>89</sup> 'Persons Engaged in White Slave Traffic', 19 July 1932, Consul General to Secretary of State, 835.1152, USDS. JAGM, 7 July 1924.

<sup>90</sup> Estimates mentioned in Sheintuch, *Sefer Dov Sadan*, p. 317. Data in *L of N, Report, Part Two*, Table B, p. 19. Only 87 overseas Jews were registered in Buenos Aires in 1922; but more than before may have gone to the provinces and to Brazil, 10 May 1924, ICA vol. 2.



by men and women from their own countries, and they were almost entirely recruited for the cheaper houses of prostitution.<sup>91</sup>

Rabbi Halphon and Selig Ganopol tackled the vigilance and rescue work of *Ezras Noschim* with real enthusiasm. They received special and unique permission to board incoming steamers in 1923, and even managed to have their lives threatened by some traffickers.<sup>92</sup> Still, how could real inroads be made against such well-connected opponents? Halphon had some hopes in 1924; he looked to the new wave of immigration and felt that 'There was a spirit amongst the Jews who came into the country in recent years, which might bring about such improvement.' This was not an idle speculation. The Zwi Migdal was overcome for three reasons: new immigrant intellectuals helped rally the community decisively for the last push; simultaneously some of the police became so fed up with atrocious cases of female wreckage from Zwi Migdal that they undertook the definitive enquiry and arrests; and finally, when the Appeals Court failed to sustain the convictions, a new chauvinistic government with less tolerance for organised vice reacted to public opinion by expelling many of the traffickers.

The renewed community struggle was first focused on the theatre.<sup>93</sup> The popular writer Leib Malach arrived in Buenos Aires in 1921 and Jacob Botoshansky, Yiddish critic and writer, followed a few years later. Each bitterly resented the domination that the unclean ones exercised at the Yiddish theatre over actors, audience, and repertory. Since that eventful debut of *Miriam* in 1908, nothing similar had been produced. Asch's *God of Vengeance* and Moshe Richter's *Viseh Sklaven* were strictly *verboten*. Furthermore, Botoshansky was shocked to discover that anti-semitic epitaphs about all 'Russous', or Jews, being traffickers, were written on walls and shouted in the streets.

<sup>91</sup> JA. Reply to Questionnaire on Measures of Rehabilitation. L of N, TC, 27 November 1934, p. 7. copy in Box 111, NVA.

<sup>92</sup> JAGM, 7 July 1924.

<sup>93</sup> The following is based on *Yiddische Tsaitung*, 24, 31 November 1925; Sheintuch, *Sefer Dov Sadan*; Weisbrot, *Jews of Argentina*, p. 104; Jacob Botoshansky in *Yiddischer Kenfer* (New York), 19 January 1962; Lieb Malach, *Ibergus* (Buenos Aires, 1926). *Semenario Hebrío*, 16 April, 23 July, 6 August 1926.

Probably in late 1925 during an airing of the issue in the *Yidische Tsaitung*, Malach penned *Ibergus*. The story is set in Rio, which in fact had more registered Jewish prostitutes at that moment than did Buenos Aires. But it concerned social relations in the Argentine capital: the dilemma of a prostitute who wants to reform but feels herself permanently stigmatised, the working of the ban, the false religiosity of the impure ones, and their domination of the theatre. Botoshansky approached Adolpho Mide, impresario at the Teatro Isralita, and suggested that the piece was 'destined to be an epoch-making drama' and should be produced at once. Apparently after *Ibergus* had gone into production Mide got cold feet and cancelled it. Botoshansky was so infuriated that he threatened to start a press campaign which would reveal that the Argentine Yiddish theatre was afraid of criticising nobody but white-slave traffickers. Mide threatened to shoot Botoshansky, who in reply, carried out his campaign in *Di Presse*, the socialist journal which he was then editing. Feelings ran very high indeed and the entire Yiddish press was drawn into the controversy. In July *Di Presse* hired the biggest theatre available for Botoshansky's own production of *Ibergus* and a new acting troupe performed the drama before more than 2,000 people. Finally, the paper insisted that the two regular Yiddish theatres display signs reading 'unclean ones forbidden'. This was done for a year, in what was a famous if not quite permanent victory for the forces of decency.

Things were never quite the same after this and while the signs eventually came down, Halphon and his supporters in London took heart. In 1926 they reconstituted the *Ezras Noschim*, forming an executive with delegates from the *Chevra Kaddisha*, the leading synagogue and other immigrant-aid organisations. They hired another agent for the port work and more importantly went on to the political offensive.<sup>94</sup> In 1927 Ganopol filed a legal brief, supported by many community institutions, denouncing the Zwi Migdal. This forced the court to investigate, but it was too soon and the affair ended within a few weeks with a complete whitewash. Zacharias Zytnitsky, the

<sup>94</sup> Mirelman, 'Jews in Argentina', p. 362. *L of N, TC Minutes of the Seventh Session, 12-17 March 1928*, 106.

president, was interviewed and indignantly told the investigator,

We ask ourselves how is it possible in 40 years of existence, 21 with legal personality, that a society would be able to work with impunity in the margin of the law ... Do these gentlemen believe that everything here is corrupt ... ?<sup>95</sup>

At least at this stage pressure from *Ezras Noschim* and from the Union of Jewish Residents from Poland, which guarded its membership 'with 1,000 eyes', convinced the Polish Ambassador to demand successfully that the original title 'Warsaw Society' be altered.<sup>96</sup>

Not all Argentine officials were as corrupt as those who carried out the 1927 'investigations'. While the Jewish community was gearing up, federal Police Commissioner Julio Alsogaray, a man of courage and integrity, was quietly gathering evidence on the operations of the pimps. In a sense their heavy-handed methods created so many victims that they were responsible for their own undoing. Between 1926 and 1929 Alsogaray and honest colleagues uncovered no less than six cases and each one enabled them to fit together more pieces of the puzzle. First it was Bonny Spigler, brought from Paris and exploited by Mauricio Asher, whom we have met in connection with Abe Marchik. The woman was found very ill locked in a brothel. Then it was Perla Pezeborska, the young woman who threw the note from the window. Alsogaray broke another case of a husband forcing his wife into a brothel after a tipoff from Cohen and Rabbi Halphon. One of the worst of the lot involved Ita Kaiser from Warsaw, who was twenty when rescued in 1928. Victor Smietan had travelled there and they had become lovers. He then returned to base and arranged for Kaiser to follow him with an accomplice, Marie Zimmerman, and with a passport describing her as twenty-eight. When she finally arrived at Smietan's house, he used violence to get her to practise prostitution. It was by begging clients to inform the

<sup>95</sup> Brá, 'La Mutual', pp. 78-82.

<sup>96</sup> *Gaceta*, p. 7. *Yiddische Tsaitung*, 4 March, 21 May 1930. *JA Report* (1928), pp. 18-20.

police that she was finally rescued. Smietan received a prison sentence of twelve years.<sup>97</sup>

Alsogoray had been collecting more and more documentation and he wanted to act. Finally at the end of 1929 the critical denunciation from Rachel Lieberman fell into his lap.<sup>98</sup> Having entered a local brothel in 1924, Lieberman decided to leave the game in 1928. She had accumulated enough money to open an antique shop and within a year she was doing well in this business too. Then Solomon Korn came on the scene and they became lovers. What Lieberman did not know was that Korn was a member of Zwi Migdal, delegated apparently to get her back into their employ. This raises the question whether women were being permitted to retire. The couple married and within a short time Korn had taken Lieberman's money, 90,000 pesos, and was using threats to get her back into prostitution. She begged Simon Brutkevich to intercede to help her get her money back and when this failed, she went to the authorities, ignoring all threats and blandishments from the Society, which feared a general rebellion of its prostitutes should she succeed legally against Korn. Lieberman's complaint came before examining Judge Roderigo Ocampo, who functioned like a prosecutor in Argentine law. When Ocampo discovered that Korn's other prostitutes were too afraid to talk, he ordered a general investigation.

The role of the Jewish community was to encourage Ocampo and provide him with as much intelligence as possible. This they did admirably. Sensing that the decisive moment had finally arrived, the entire community rallied behind the *Ezras Noschim*. Ganopol enrolled fifty-two Jewish cultural institutions along with five philanthropic organisations. Ocampo was assured that Argentina's 300,000 Jews were sick of the unclean ones, and when he ordered the Zwi Migdal headquarters raided and documents seized, Selig Ganopol was invited to join the special police brought in for the mission. Finally on May 21 Ocampo learned that the pimps were planning a meeting to

<sup>97</sup> Alsogoray, *Trilogia*, pp. 143-54; *Gaceta*, pp. 9-10. Some of the minor details differ between these two sources. *Semenario Hebrío*, 26 February 1928.

<sup>98</sup> Alsogoray, *Trilogia*, pp. 155ff. Brá, 'La Mutual', pp. 83-4. *L of N, TC. Minutes of the Tenth Session 21-27 April 1931*, pp. 76-7, a long summary by Cohen.



decide what to do. He ordered the mass arrests for the next day, but the members were tipped off and over the following week the police dragnet came up with only 112 of the suspects. They included Brutkevich and Ema the Millionaire, who threatened the police when they took her away.<sup>99</sup>

Samuel Cohen arrived from London a few weeks later to coordinate Jewish participation in the ongoing investigation. There was plenty to tell. What would be the outcome? Ocampo was incorruptible, but he was only the judge of first instance. In June 1930 Mrs Lighton Robinson, who had first gone to Buenos Aires in 1913 to do travellers' aid work for the NVA, wrote,

The judge is vigorously pursuing the business. But everyone, especially the Jewish community, is very pessimistic. They feel that nothing will eventuate. They mention the police are in the pay of the traffickers, especially Santiago, the Chief of the Investigation Department: he is a particularly bad lot and a great rogue ...<sup>100</sup>

The Jewish community had other reasons for pessimism. Already Argentine fascism was beginning to make its appearance and the sensational vice raids produced the inevitable anti-semitic press reports. Furthermore, Judge Ocampo himself was talking about the need to regulate immigration more carefully, and one of Rabbi Halphon's greatest concerns had been to ensure that the doors remain open for European Jewry. It looked like the defeat of Zwi Migdal, if it came, would be so late as to provide only a Pyrrhic victory.<sup>101</sup>

At the end of September Judge Ocampo ordered 108 defendants held under preventive imprisonment so that they could be tried in a federal court on the charge of 'illicit association'. He criticised in scathing detail their criminality and brutality. Then in January 1931 the legal system proved that there was

<sup>99</sup> Comments of Elena Aslan in *Gaceta*, p. 7. *Yiddische Tsaitung*, 4, 19 March, 27 April, 21-29 May, 1 June 1930. Cohen account in L of N.

<sup>100</sup> Mrs Lighton Robinson to Frederick Sempkins, 24 June 1930, file CO1<sup>5</sup>, NVA.

<sup>101</sup> *Yiddische Tsaitung*, 27 May 1930. Jacob Beller, *Jews in Latin America* (New York, 1969), pp. 183-4. Weisbrod, *Jews of Argentina*, pp. 66-7. On Halphon's work for free immigration, 'Manifeste Adressé aux Israélites de la République Argentine', presented to Halphon by most of the Ashkenazi community, December 1929, in file CO1<sup>4</sup>, NVA.



good reason for pessimism. The Appeals Court set free all defendants but three, finding it to the defendants' credit; astonishingly, that none of their women would testify.<sup>102</sup>

Jewish commercial vice in Argentina, however, never recovered from the ordeal. Hundreds of procurers had fled the country and they were not permitted to return. Those who headed for Uruguay, which was tightening up its immigration laws, were either deported or refused permission to land. Furthermore, on 6 September 1930 General José Uriburu seized power in a conservative coup that was accompanied by chauvinist sentiment. The social climate became less permissive about vice and more hostile to criminal aliens. Over the next four years scores of pimps were deported in small batches. The new regime also began abolishing licensed brothels across the country. The army major in charge of Rosario went so far as to shave the heads of all pimps found in the city in 1932. The change from the previous regime could not have been greater. Plans to build fancy provincial brothels, discovered on the premises of Simon Brutkevich and Mauricio Caro, were quite worthless now.<sup>103</sup>

### *Epilogue*

In June 1933, with the Nazis in power, the Ninth International Congress was held as scheduled in Berlin. Despite the fact that Jewish delegates could not attend, Dr Kundt refused to have the affair cancelled. There was even a final congress at Paris in 1937. At that one Isadore Maus of the Belgian delegation asked Dr Jung of Germany about the treatment of German-Jewish girls. Jung replied, 'In cases of destitution or homelessness the authorities intervene with their so-called welfare organisations. They assist the Jews as being guests of the German people.' The translator, a Mr Jacobs, shouted at Jung and stormed out of the hall.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Brá, 'La Mutual', pp. 90-1.

<sup>103</sup> Weisbrod, *Jews of Argentina*, p. 66. *Buenos Aires Herald*, 31 January 1931. *JA Report* (1933), p. 34. *New York Times*, 15, 17, 20 May, 22 October 1932, 20 September 1934. N. Bronson Williams, clerk Rosario, report 19 May 1932, 835.115/1, USDS.

<sup>104</sup> Dr Kundt to Frederick Semplins, 22 April 1933, Box 121. Dr Jung to the International Bureau, 16 December 1937, file CGII, Box 123, NVA.

By then the international movement against the traffic in women and children, and the Jewish effort with it, had been overwhelmed by the gathering world crisis and was virtually moribund. Once in power the Nazis continued to exploit the white-slavery issue. In their so-called Erfurt International, part of the 'World Service', a propaganda effort that linked together anti-semites from more than a score of countries, there was even a commission on 'cultural bolshevism, white slavery and ritual murder'.<sup>105</sup> As anti-semitism spread, the Jewish Association reported in 1936 that there was very little co-operation anywhere between Jewish social workers and the national committees, and that most Jewish societies were crippled by lack of funds.<sup>106</sup>

On the other hand, there was really very little for the overall movement to do. With the migration of populations much diminished, immigration restrictions virtually everywhere considerably tightened and unbalanced sex ratios substantially corrected, by the 1930s there was much less peripatetic prostitution. The decrease was due in part also to the success of the League of Nations Advisory Committee itself in convincing France, Hungary, and a few other nations to ban the registration of foreign prostitutes in their tolerated houses, or to abolish their brothels.

As for Jewish commercial vice, we have observed how in parts of the world like the United States, Britain, and South Africa, where normal free access to economic and social advancement was possible, the phenomenon was self-correcting. The cadet or alphonse as a social type disappeared after the First World War in these places. The evil persisted elsewhere in part because of the dislocations and misery caused by the war. But where the refugee population was reduced through resettlement, as at Constantinople, white slavery was overcome. In 1930 the B'nai B'rith chapter there finally

<sup>105</sup> See its *Welt Dienst*, 15 October 1934; also 15 July 1936. On this group, p.c. 3 file 79, Wiener Library, London. Louis Bondy, *Rackateers of Hatred* (London, 1946), p. 84. It was the World Service that published *Sigilla Veri*, the encyclopaedia. Other post-1933 works on the subject included Schwartz-Bostunitsch, *Jude und Weib*. Herwig Hartner, *Das Jüdische Gaurntum* (Munich, 1939), pp. 66-9, actually reviewed by Rudolf Glanz in *Yivo Bletter* (September-October), 1940, pp. 72-3.

<sup>106</sup> *JA Report* (1936), p. 31.

reported 'the total elimination of the brothels and of the traffickers'.<sup>107</sup>

It is quite possible that the self-limiting mechanism would have come into play in Argentina too, had not Polish Jewry, economically crippled, kept Buenos Aires and environs replenished with prostitutes and pimps through the 1920s. The fact that the Zwi Migdal Society averaged over forty-five years of age by 1930 shows that despite the new arrivals, it was not revitalising itself at anything like the pre-war rate. Even without the raids and deportations, the unclean ones probably would have drifted into quiet old age and their children into anonymous respectability, as in fact some of them turned out doing through force of circumstances. Who should turn up in 1948 and plead with the authorities for burial in the old cemetery with their relatives? The former president, Zacharias Zytnitsky, and an old accomplice. They were turned down.<sup>108</sup> In the event the government, with the help of the Jewish community, had accelerated their dissolution.

In fact it is likely that the number of Jewish prostitutes in Buenos Aires itself started falling even before the 1930 assault. As Samuel Cohen later reported to the league of Nations, the 1923 ordinance limiting prostitution in Buenos Aires was a real turning point. Some women were thrown on their own resources and actually could not cope without a pimp. Others took the opportunity to retire. Describing the experience of the *Ezras Noschim* at that time, Cohen continued,

There are records of numbers of such cases of women who were repatriated to their homes and friends, and others who were found employment with families ... Many cases too came to our notice of women who had managed to get out of the brothels in which they were inmates. They have either married some native person or gone to live with a man (unmarried) but had actually and entirely given up their immoral lives and were looked upon as respectable people.<sup>109</sup>

This is entirely consistent with the habit of many prostitutes to practise the oldest profession for three or four years and then

<sup>107</sup> *L of N, TC Minutes*, 1931, p. 78.

<sup>108</sup> Brá, 'La Mutual', pp. 86-7.

<sup>109</sup> *Measures of Rehabilitation*, p. 7.

give it up. Rachel Lieberman was such a woman; but for reasons that remain obscure the Zwi Migdal Society tried to reclaim her. After 1930 those who dropped out or became ill could not easily be replaced; and when the *Ezras Noschim* conducted a careful survey of Argentine brothels in 1935, it turned out that very few Jewesses were among the inmates, and that most of those discovered were over thirty-five years of age.<sup>110</sup>

Some of the traffickers, Mauricio Caro included, settled in Brazil, others drifted to various parts of Latin America, back to Poland, and even to Spain and Portugal. In 1934 the Polish police broke up one gang, led by Joseph and Menasce Royal, which trafficked women from clandestine Warsaw brothels through Bilbao in Spain to Caracas. One of their victims, Josefa Napierska, went to the Spanish police after she realised that Joe Royal was not going to marry her, and Royal was ultimately caught and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in Warsaw.<sup>111</sup> In the same year Szty Zylbermandel of Lodz became one of the last Polish women to be sold by her husband to a Buenos Aires brothel. She escaped and was in a suicidal frame of mind when the Lodz Jewish Society arranged for her to be repatriated.<sup>112</sup> As we have mentioned, virtually up to the eve of the war Argentine traffickers visited Poland. But their numbers were small and the once substantial and well-organised Jewish traffic was clearly in its last throes. And its home bases, those concentrations of Jewish commercial vice that had originated years before when traditional social controls weakened, and that persisted during the long failure to achieve equality, would soon be obliterated forever.

While the origins of the problem of white slavery in Jewish life are more indistinct than we would wish, the end of the story can be dated all too decisively, September 1939. What gave that problem its special significance and unity was its unprecedented nature, the social parallels among and actual

<sup>110</sup> *JA Report* (1936), p. 34.

<sup>111</sup> *JA Report* (1933), p. 34. On Royal, documents in Ministry of the Interior, file 244, AAN; Also, *L of N, TC Summary of Annual Reports for 1933/4. 19 March 1935*, 'R.J.G' case.

<sup>112</sup> *Kurjer Codziennego* (Daily Courier), 16 April 1934, cutting in Ministry of the Interior, file 244, AAN.

communication between those on five continents caught up in prostitution, and the fateful political context in which a Jewish countermovement wrestled to help 'victims' while denying the issue to anti-semites. Where possible, that voluntary effort continued until the war. As late as 1937, by which time the Smigly-Rydz government had yielded both to local fascist gangs and to international realities, and introduced official anti-semitic measures, the Lodz Society was still forwarding intelligence to the Polish National Committee about visiting Argentine traffickers.<sup>113</sup>

An historical phenomenon can be unprecedented only once, the political context is altogether different and neither the vicious nor their adversaries survive. Obviously any subsequent lapses of this kind among Jews, whether by displaced persons or Tel Aviv residents, form no part of our story and in themselves are of no greater significance than similar developments in Vietnam or Paris.

Still, certain questions remain. Given the fact that Jewish white slavery provided opportunities for otherwise thwarted people, and that anti-semitism would have triumphed anyway, perhaps the energies of the activists could have been directed to a more constructive goal. Yet as we have described over and over again, white slavery was not always a victimless crime. Nor can Cohen, Pappenheim, American, Moro, Tuch, Maretski, Montefiore, and the others be expected to have foretold history. They knew of the brothel victims and they had to face the vicious propaganda. Given these circumstances defending the Jewish name in their fashion was a worthy pursuit.

<sup>113</sup> Lodz Society to PNC, 5 April 1937, Ministry of Social Welfare, file 195, AAN. On the political climate, Edward D. Wynot, "'A Necessary Cruelty': The Emergence of Official Anti-Semitism in Poland 1936-39," *American Historical Review* 76 (1971), pp. 1035-58.





## Bibliography

With the published sources readily available in the notes, I describe below the materials on which the study substantially rests, namely the periodicals and newspapers, and the archival collections. Where collections house important printed sources, that is indicated. A word should also be said about the one major collection not inspected. The United Nations at Geneva, adhering rigorously to its sixty-year closure rule, will not permit early access to materials on the 1927 League of Nations white-slavery investigation. Most probably the documents there would not have altered the basic contours of the final chapter.

### *Newspapers and Periodicals*

*American Hebrew*, New York

*Anti-Semitisches Jahrbuch*, Berlin

*Der Abolitionist*, Berlin

*Archiv für Kriminalanthropologie*, Berlin

*Archives Israelites*, Paris

*Berliner Tageblatt*

*Blätter des Jüdischen Frauenbundes*, Berlin

*B'nai B'rith News*, Chicago

*Buenos Aires Herald*

*Le Bulletin Continental*, British, Continental and General Federation for the Abolition of Government Regulation of Vice, Paris

*Bulletin Abolitioniste*, as above

*Central Verein Zeitung*, Centralvereins Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens, Berlin

*Chicago Tribune*

*Deutsch-Soziale Blätter*, Leipzig

*Im Deutschen Reich*, Centralvereins Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens, Berlin

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*Freies Blatt*, Vienna

*Der Freund* (Yiddish), Warsaw

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- General Anzeiger*, Berlin  
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*Jewish Woman*, New York  
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*Kreuzzeitung (Neue Preussische Zeitung)*, Berlin  
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*New York Times*  
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*Philadelphia Public Ledger*  
*The Philanthropist*, New York  
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*St Louis Globe Democrat*

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*Staatsburger Zeitung*, Berlin  
*Standard and Diggers' News*, Johannesburg  
*Der Stürmer*, Berlin  
*The Times of London*  
*Traite des Blancs*, Paris  
*Vierteljahresbericht für die Mitglieder der Österreichischen Israelitische Humanitätsverein*, B'nai B'rith, Vienna  
*Vigilance*, New York  
*Vigilance Record* (National Vigilance Association), London  
*Völkischer Beobachter*, Munich  
*Warheit* (Yiddish), New York  
*Die Welt*, Vienna  
*Welt Dienst*, 'Erfurt International'  
*Der Yiddische Emigrant*, St. Petersburg  
*Yiddische Emigratzia*, Berlin  
*Yiddische Tsaitung*, Buenos Aires  
*Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*, Berlin  
*Zeitschrift für Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege*, Berlin

### *Archival Collections*

#### 1. LONDON

##### British Museum:

Constance Battersea Diaries, A.M. 47938-43.

##### Fawcett Library, City of London Polytechnic:

National Vigilance Association Collection. Includes records of the London-based NVA as well as abundant files on international white slavery.

Travellers' Aid Society Minute Book

Josephine Butler Correspondence

Rich collection of periodicals dealing with feminist questions.

##### India Office Library:

Public and Judicial Files, Series L/P&J/6

Government of India Proceedings

Bombay Judicial Proceedings

Bengal Government Proceedings

MSS Eur. A77

##### Jewish Colonization Association:

Séances du Conseil d'Administration, 1897-1933, of great value for the Jewish Association reports therein.

Archive Boxes 455-6, Alfred Cohen.

## Jewish Welfare Board:

Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women Collection. Various series of minute books, especially Gentleman's Subcommittee, Executive Committee, General Committee, Council, Formation of the Association, Sara Pyke House. Also, address book of Ezras Noschim, Buenos Aires (n.d.).

## London Library:

Montefiore Collection. Printed works collected by Claude Montefiore, this body of material is unique for the complete run of *Reports of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women*. There are also the published reports of Jewish and inter-denominational anti-white-slavery institutions from Russia, Austria, France, and Germany.

## Mocatta Library, University College:

Anglo-Jewish Association, Council Minutes, Executive Committee Minutes

## Public Record Office:

Foreign Office Papers, FO 368, 369, 371, 372  
Metropolitan Police Papers, MePol 2  
Home Office Papers, HO 45, HO 144

## 2. PARIS

## Archives Nationales:

Ministère de l'Intérieur, Series F<sup>7</sup> 14853-62, 'Traite des Femmes', with permission.  
Series BB<sup>18</sup>, 'Traite des Femmes'

## Alliance Israélite Universelle:

Archive, Turkey IC; Greece IIIC; England IH, IIB; Egypt IB5; Poland, C4; France XI D57.

## Prefecture de Police:

DB 411. 'Pourvoyeurs, Courtiers des Maisons de Tolerance, Paris', 1902

## 3. MARSEILLES

## Archives de la Region de Provence—Cote D'Azur

Series M<sup>6</sup>, 'Traite des Femmes'

## 4. VIENNA

## Polizeiarchiv:

Staatspolizeiliche Agenden, Mädchenhandel, 1880-1925. The most fully preserved police archive on the subject.



5. HAMBURG

Staatsarchiv:

Anwanderungsamt I, II, F14, Band 7, 'Massnahmen Gegen  
Mädchenhandel'  
Akte Politische Polizei

6. POTSDAM, GDR

Zentrales Staatsarchiv:

A.A. Akten, Band 9, Polizei 36 Adh III

7. MERSEBURG, GDR

Zentrales Staatsarchiv:

Ministerium des Innern II. Abteilung. Massnahmen Gegen  
Zuhalterei

8. WARSAW

State Archives:

Ministry of Social Welfare, files on white slavery  
Ministry of the Interior  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

City of Warsaw Archives:

Korotyński Collection, cuttings on white slavery

9. JERUSALEM

Central Archives For the History of the Jewish People:

Judah Magnes Collection, Abe Shoenfeld Vice Report, P3/1765;  
Stories, P3/1779-1793.

Rabbiner Dr Rosenak, 'Bericht über meine Reise nach Galizien',  
August 1903, typescript, G6/137.

Pamphlets on Hungary, M 38.

10. NEW YORK

Leo Baeck Institute:

Bertha Pappenheim Collection

Ernst Tuch Collection. A small collection of pamphlets.

Columbia University:

Lillian Wald Collection, Box 91, 'Prostitution'.

E. R. A. Seligman Collection, Boxes 23-4. Material on the  
Committee of Fifteen.

New York City Municipal Archives:

Cases of Mendel Schneiderman, Louis Greenberg, Arthur Miller, David Dunn, Louis Buchler, uncatalogued in storage.

New York Public Library:

Committee of Fourteen Collection. Minutes, correspondence, field reports. A very useful archive, though uncatalogued and likely to remain that way for some time. Box numbers mentioned in notes were pencilled on cartons by the author.

Committee of Fifteen Collection. Correspondence and house-by-house survey of vice.

William E. Wiener Oral History Library, American Jewish Committee:

Interview transcripts of Abraham Shoenfeld, Hanan Ayalti, Abraham Shulman, Elizabeth Newman.

11. WASHINGTON

National Archives, and Federal Records Center, Suitland, Md  
US Department of State, white-slavery files in Record Group 59, (including Morris Baskin case with permission). Minor Files 1906-10.

US Department of Justice, white-slavery files in Record Group 60, 1910-39 (including Dannenbaum files with permission).

US Immigration and Naturalization Service, files on white slavery both in the archive and at the department.

12. SAN FRANCISCO

California Historical Society:

Notebooks and diaries of John Robinson, US Inspector of Immigration.

13. WALTHAM Massachusetts

American Jewish Historical Society:

Baron de Hirsch Fund Papers.

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Bristow describes the communities and institutions they established in Argentina, Constantinople, India, and elsewhere.

Central to Bristow's study is the response of Jewish communities, institutions, and leaders to the problem. For this was more than a moral problem or a question of rescuing unwilling victims and professional prostitutes from exploitation: in these years a Jewish pimp was also a political fact. The Jewish response was, in fact, widespread, ranging from the formation of protective committees to social work and communal ostracism.

Finally, Bristow illustrates how the aberration ended only with the destruction of European Jewry.

EDWARD J. BRISTOW, author of *Vice and Vigilance*, received his doctorate from Yale University.

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