

(1)

AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
Excerpts from a Tarvel Diary: 1--In England
By Lewis Browne

London, June 15, 1926.

Of course, I cannot write of conditions here without a measure of prejudice, for I was born in this tight little isle, and I am still a subject of King George the Fifth--and Queen Mary the other four-fifths. But having been away from England for many years, my prejudice is not so great that my testimony can be rulled out as utterly biased. I think I am not misled when I say that England is on the whole the most civilized country in the world. She may not be as advanced mechanically and materially as America, but certainly she is further advanced spiritually. There is in her a certain calmness and sanity which, like the Oxford lawn and the Yorkshire pudding, is hers and hers almost alone. There exists in England a degree of immunity to mob anxiety and of freedom from crowd thinking unsurpassed anywhere in the world. Less than a month ago this whole country was strangled by a general strike of almost unprecedented proportions. The life of every individual in the land was affected, and in a single night all the best laid plans of rich and poor were smashed to smithereens. And yet today nothing seems to remain of the whole affair save a little wisdom and a crop of rollicking yarns about Oxford students who would a-bus-driving go. There seems to be no bitterness or rancor anywhere, and England goes muddling along as serenely as ever.

That's civilization.

Naturally the Jews profit by this. The mob is and has always been the most implacable foe of Israel, and wherever mob-thinking ebbs low, Israel rises high. It would be an exaggeration to say that there is absolutely no anti-Semitism here. I imagine it would be an exaggeration to say that of any land in the whole world. The Jew, no matter how well he may have worn his clothes at Eton or how nobly he

may have rowed for Cambridge, is still looked on as in some way not merely different but also queer. Yet he will rarely if ever be shocked into ugly consciousness of his supposed queerness. He will never be subjected to stupid indignities such as being refused admission into certain prejudiced clubs or being barred from certain squeamish hotels. He will be allowed to reside in the most exclusive suburbs, will be invited to the best houses, will be picked for the swankiest polo teams, and will be asked to subscribe to the most fashionable charities. And if he observes the conventions and doesn't drink his tea out of the saucer, he will never be made to feel that he is anything but a true-blue Englishman who happens to be of the "Mosaic Persuasion."

Yet a subtle anti-Semitism does exist here nevertheless. Among the lower classes it is not even subtle, and the old epithet, "sheeny," is far from rarely heard in Shoreditch and Whitechapel. In Mayfair, however, the prejudice is better concealed, and there one hears such epithets as "Oriental," or "Levantine" or at worst, "German," uttered with just the faintest lifting of the brows. In part such prejudice is easily explained. It must be exceedingly difficult for these "Christianos viejos" to keep from resenting the rise of the Jews. For centuries they have been the undisputed lords of town and county, of hill and dale; and now they are momentarily being crowded out into poverty and vassalage by these eager-eyed, large-nostrilled, rather superfluously intense strangers. It must be fearfully trying to have to be gracious and polite under such circumstances.....

Nothing is more obvious than the steady rise of the Jews in England. I do not mean the rise merely of certain individual Jews, but of the Jews as a group. The elevation of a Rufus Isaacs or a Herbert Samuels is far from unprecedented in this country. After all, a Disraeli was made primeminister already two generations ago. But

the mass was never before so wealthy or so powerful. English Jewry may roughly be divided into four groups: the East-European immigrants; the poorer Dutch Jews whose ancestors settled around Houndsditch and Middlesex Street two hundred and fifty years ago, and who have not yet been able to move away; the German Jews whose ancestors settled here after the Napoleonic Wars, and who have since become tremendously wealthy; and the so-called Spanish Jews, who are really the wealthy and fashionably assimilated of the Dutch Jews. And all these four groups have risen appreciably in power within the last decade or two. In part the war was responsible for this. In any general upheaval and scramble in which the Jew is given a fair chance, he is almost certain to emerge the victor. Intellectually and emotionally he is--to use the psychologist's term--"conditioned" for sudden and swift struggles. He can see his opportunity, plunge in, lay hold of the prize, and get away, almost before his less highly sensitized neighbor has so much as realized that anything has happened. I suppose that is why the Jews here in England emerged from the Great War wealthier and more influential than ever before. Their gain was of course not nearly so great as that of the Jews in America during the same period; but remembering that it was made in one of the most belabored of the combatant nations, it was considerable. And one cannot doubt that that is the chief reason why those charming people on Belgrave Square sometimes whisper about "Levantine bounders," and why those unaspirated costermongers in Hoxton swear at the "bloody sheenies."

Of all four groups in English Jewry, the East European immigrants have certainly made the most spectacular, if not also the most significant rise. Forty-five years ago this group was almost non-existent. Fifteen years ago in London it was almost entirely confined

(3)

to the Eastend, with harried outposts in the poorer streets of Soho and Finsbury. But today it is to be found throughout the town, so that the savory odor of kosher "salt-beef" meets one at every turn. I wish Thyra Samter Winslow were here to describe the cycle of London as she splendidly described that of Manhattan. Here it begins in the squalor of the east-end, where the Cockneys drop their h's and the Jews thriftily pick them up--together with stray p's and Q's. . . . Then it goes north to Stoke Newington or Stamford Hill, where brand new plumbing has been fitted into genteel old homes, and where most of the one-time Nonconformist chapels have been turned into synagogues. (When I was a child my parents lived in Stamford Hill, and if I remember rightly, ours was almost the only Jewish family in the neighborhood).

Today I imagine all the Christians left in the section could be accommodated at a three-handed game of bridge. . . . From Stamford Hill the line of march turns northwest to Hampstead, where the homes are very new and suburban and every other family boasts a motor-car. Here the Jewish population is already very largely of the second generation, and the more obvious foreignnesses have been severely left behind. Here the grandson of old Lezer Kurzovsky is known as Launcelot Curzon, and the grand-daughter of Rivka Halperin is called Rhoda Haldane. And the kosher butcher announces himself a "purveyor of Continental delicacies."

And finally the line turns back to the south to reach its splendid end in Mayfair. Not many descendants of the East-Europeans have yet pushed that far in their advance over London; but some few have, and many more will soon follow. Soon, very soon, they will all be living here, these Curzons and Haldanes and Basingstokes and Brownes. They will take the best houses on Park Lane and Chesham Place; they will employ silk-breeched footmen and French governesses and Oxford tutors by the score. And eagerly, fiercely, they will push forward and upward

until at last Buckingham Palace itself will have its kosher kitchen!

And why not? After all, these fellows have it in them. They are "conditioned" for this struggle which keeps a silly old world scrambling for ducats, and with no discriminatory laws to hinder them, they cannot but emerge the victors. . . . One wishes that they were the victors already. One wishes that they were already done with this game and tired of its tawdry rewards. For perhaps then they would be able to see what they might have seen all along had they not been in such a hurry-- that the whole game is not worth playing. . . .

July 1, 1926: AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
Excerpts from a Travel Diary: In Petticoat Lane, London
by
Lewis Browne

By and large, Jewish life here in England is rather like that in America. It has its distinctiveness, of course, but these are not tremendous. Its tempo is rather slower, and its temper rather sweeter. Those sharp, harsh exigencies which prod and push the group in America, seem less evident here. But otherwise the two bodies are not greatly dissimilar. ^{Save for a} marked lack of liberal or even conservative synagogues, the institutions here are much like those across the Atlantic. There are Jewish settlement houses, newspapers, theatres, and seaside resorts. Yiddish here is spoken with a distinct Cockney accent, but it is still much the same Yiddish that one hears on Houston Street or in the Catskill Mountains. The Jewesses in Golders Green are rather less overdressed than those on West End Avenue; but they have to diet and play to the calories just as strenuously.

Only one outstanding institution in Anglo-Jewish life is, so far as I know, quite without a parallel in America. I refer to Petticoat Lane, that amazing mart which is held every Sunday morning in the heart of London's East-End. Petticoat Lane is not the name of a single thoroughfare, but the nickname for a maze of narrow alleys and filthy

(5)
6

streets which literally crawl with human beings every Christian Sabbath morn. England is a rather strict Sunday observer; on that day even the restaurants are closed. Everywhere else one hears the chiming of church bells, and everywhere else one sees the men and women and children, all stiff in their Sunday best, trooping to church with their prayer-books in their hands. But in Petticoat Lane one hears no church bells and one sees no prayer-books. Rather one hears the hoarse cries of vendors, and sees the gleam of shining silver shillings as they pass from pocket to till.

It is amazing! Here you are in Bishopsgate Street, where the solemn hush of an Anglo-Saxon Sunday envelops you like a chill fog; and then, with a turn to the left, you are of a sudden thrown pell-mell into a fury and a shouting that are utterly Oriental.

Were it not for the speech, and for the dour black clothes of the people you would never imagine you are any more in England. You would think you are in Cairo or Bagdad--or better still, in Berditschev at the time of the fair. Everywhere there is clamor and bargaining. Thousands of ill-clad people push and crowd through the narrow streets so that from above the whole quarter looks like a pit wherein gargantuan black snakes slither and crawl without end. From every corner you hear the raucous cries: "Come on, fellers, they're tuppence a pair. . . . Peas all'ot! 'Ere y'are--the 'ole lot fer five bob--five shillin', a dollar fer the 'ole bloomin' set o' the finest china cups an' sorsers yer ever laid yer heyes on! . . . Hice-cream, penny a lump. . . . It's genuwine brilliantine, me lads--same as the Prince o' Wiles 'as on 'is own 'air--jest a tanner a bottle! . . . The litest French novelty, sold ter genelman only--here y'are, tuppence a throw! . . . Halright, a shillin', tenp'nece, nin-p'nce, ap'nce, se'np'nce, here y'are, a tanner tikes the 'ole bloomin' set o' solid rooled-gold links an' studs! . . . Beigel, two fer a penny, fresh beigel! . . ."

And so it goes on, hour after hour, from eight until two or even three in the afternoon.

Significantly, they are not Jews who buy at these stalls and auction shops. The Jews are the sellers; only the Christians buy. Of course, on certain streets the Jews are the buyers, too. On Wentworth Street and the lower end of Stoney Lane, where the vendors of "krim-chiz" and kosher chickens have their stalls, the purchasers are all of them Jews. There you will see the pious housewives with the "sheitels" on their heads, dragging along huge baskets filled with the provender. There too you will see the old grannie whose children have dragged her off to the splendor of Golders Green, but who must come back each week to her old market even though ten thousand quarrels ensue. There you can get your freshest "beigel," and sourest pickles, and sweetest butter, and cheapest fruit. And there, too, you can buy a silk tallith or fancy prayer-book for a bar-mitzvah boy, or a feather-bed, or silver wine cups for a bride.

But most of the other streets in Petticoat Lane are patronized almost entirely by Christians. For the most part they are artisans and clerks, and their accents are as Cockney as their clothes are poor. They come from all ends of the city, from Hoxton and Walthamstow and East Ham and Peckham; and all of them are out to get things cheaply. The fact that most of the things they get are of no earthly use to them, does not seem to matter much. They buy hideous china jugs, atrocious leather purses made of paper, cough medicines, corn cures, blunt razors, hair tonics, opera glasses made of celluloid, sea shell ornaments, moustache wax, fancy pocket knives, fibre silk mufflers, cotton umbrellas with gorgeous handles that break off in a day, gold-plated watches, clocks that won't go, compasses that don't work, barometers that cannot measure, victrola records that are cracked, cheap jazz music, paper fans, plush pillows with the royal coat-of-arms in delirious colors,

(7)

and all sorts of other such utterly worthless truck made specifically for the morons of the world. They are poor, these dull-witted yokels who come week after week and spend in Petticoat Lane. They live in dirty brick houses that are spread out everywhere in rows, like hardened red scabs; they eat polluted food and wear shapeless clothes. And yet they know no better way to spend their few hard-earned pence save on trumpery "novelties" that are as unbeautiful as they are inutile.

And the Jews who sell these things seem to be no wiser. I wish it could be said that these, my brethren, who live by vending truck and vanity, are astute enough to be conscious of their crime. I fear that most of them are not. They have so long been selling such stuff, that by now they have actually come to believe in its intrinsic worth. For it must be remembered that these vendors are no fly-by-nights. They have had their stalls on the Lane for decades, and week after week they have sold the same "novelties" and shoddy clothes to the same gullible yokels from the slums. On Middlesex Street you will find Jews of old Dutch lineage--descendants of Spinoza and Menasseh Ben Israel--who for generations have been selling old clothes and gawky hats to sodden Nordics. Steel (née Staletzsky), the "Brilliantine King," was reared and died at his stall near Frying Pan Alley; and now his red-faced, yellow-haired widow carries on his glistening work. Alf, the "Purse King" has been auctioning on the Lane since before the Boer War; and the Mendozas have been selling misfit clothing ever since Victoria's Jubilee. Some of them are a little richer now than they were before the war. They have improved the fronts of their shops, fitting them with neat brass trimmings and bedecking them with gilt and vermillion lettering. Some of them have even moved out of the ramshackle rooms above their shops, and live "private" in Stamford Hill or even Hampstead. But they still sell what they always sold--things tawdry, ugly, and disgustingly cheap.

It's all wrong. Anyone can see that from beginning to end it

is all unmitigatedly bad. In a world where there is so little beauty and so little ease there should be neither time nor money for the making of the shoddy and useless. . . . But what can be done? As an old Russian Jew who fits spectacles for threepence a pair, said to me last Sunday at his stall: "Gehn Bavuhrenen a velt? If I do not sell to them this junk somebody else does. So why should I be the pious fool?"

And that's Petticoat Lane.

Paris:

July 15, 1926:

AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
Excerpts from a Travel Diary: Cherchez Le Juif
by
Lewis Browne

"Rue de la Victoire, quarant-quater," I commanded the taxi-driver as I clambered very lamely into his chariot. (The damp here encourages my old gout mercilessly.)

"Ah," he cried with a surprising look of intelligence. "c'est l'synagogue, n'est pas?" And then off he lurched with a fierce sqawk of his horn.

Once we were there I realized why he had so readily recognized the address. The narrow little street was literally choked with motor-cars, all of them bent for the huge stone church-like building that stood cramped between two grim-looking warehouses. The parade was most imposing: Rolls-Royces, Hispano-Suizas, and Minervas, all of them laden with the most fashionably-clad freight. I stood by a moment to watch the footmen jump smartly down and open the doors, and to see the lords and ladies dignifiedly emerge and dignifiedly bow to other lords and ladies. And then, looking very humble despite the monocle I had hurriedly screwed into my eye, I followed those personages as they solemnly climbed the broad steps of the synagogue and solemnly walked in. It was most imposing--a little pompous, perhaps, and to that extent absurd--but imposing, most imposing. The Friday evening parade up the steps of Temple Israel in Waterbury, Conn., or even up the steps of

Temple Emanu-El in New York, had never been so grand as this.

The services had already begun, but the people continued to enter in an uninterrupted stream. The ushers, frock-coated men wearing hats like those of admirals (but longer and with red, white, and blue rosettes on the side), and bearing long brass chains around their necks, were very solemnly showing the worshippers to their seats. The center was occupied only by men, all of them hatted and one or two wearing silk praying swaws. But one and all they seemed to me decidedly non-Jewish; indeed, they appeared quite like all the other Frenchmen of the wealthier class that I had ever seen. Many of them were fashionably bearded; some wore monocles; most had little ribbons in their lapels to tell of their decorations. (These ribbons in France seem to be as common as lodge buttons in America--and seem to carry just as little distinction.) Two were clad in the uniform of army officers, and one youthe had on the dress of a cadet. There must have been four or even five hundred men there, and yet hardly a one was immediately recognizable as a Jew. All were dark-complexioned, and all seemed "typically" French.

That was true also of the women. In accordance with the letter of rabbinic law, they were seated by themselves; but in delightful violation of the intent of that law, they were seated by themselves just where they could be most easily observed. They occupied several rows of raised pews along both side walls, and unless a man kept his nose buried deep in his prayer-book, it was almost impossible for him to avoid seeing them. And very few of the men had their noses deep in their prayer-books. . . . Quite a number of the women were quite young, and some were rather obviously graced with that indefinable chic which is the outstanding attraction in French women. (I say that last not on my own authority. I confess I know all too little about the attractions in French or any other women, more or less.) If only their well-tailored clothes had been of a gayer hue, one might have imagined these ladies had just come from the races at Auteuil, or from the bacarat

room at Aix. But their clothes were for the most part black. With that French passion for mourning--they seem to put on crepe here even when a cousin dies--most of these Jewesses were appparelled to the most fetchingly sombre weeds. And thus arrayed they sat and listened resignedly to the chanting of the chazea.

The text of the service was almost strictly traditional, but its rendering was altogether extraordinary. The chazan, a gigantic man with an enormous black beard and a terrible voice, chanted the Hebrew prayers much as a Catholic priest might chant his Latin canticles. There was no color in his voice, no swing in his melody: just a boom, boom, rising and falling with less care for the common decencies of music than is shown by a second-hand pile-driving machine. Behind him, on a low semi-circular dais, sat the several rabbis of this synagogue and the consistory. They were clad almost precisely like Catholic priests, wearing long tight-waisted black gowns with little white surplices at the throat, and enormous black shovel-hats. If only the Latin *Inri* had been painted in golden letters above the Ark, instead of the Hebrew *Adonai*, one would have found it hard to believe those rabbis were not really priests seated in a cathedral. There were even the long candles (electric-lighted, of course) to sustain that illusion!

I was quite bewildered by it all. I had attended many kinds of Jewish services in my life, from the debaucheries of lamentation at the Wailing Wall, in Jerusalem, to the orgies of oratory in the temples of San-Francisco; but never before had I witnessed anything quite like this. Even the frigid Friday evening vespers at Emanu-El in New York did not quite come up to it. . . . I wondered what in the world it was that brought these hundreds here each week. Surely it was not mystic passion that possessed this congregation, for this whole service seemed almost as mystical as a routine meeting of the Newark Board of Public Works.

It could not be an intensity of Jewishness, for, I knew from authentic report that these Parisian Jews suffered as little from that as from an intensity of Communism. Nor could it be an intellectual unrest like that which draws so many into the forum-temples of America. There was nothing whatsoever to satisfy the intellect here. Everything went by rote in Hebrew (save a short Biblical selection read honorously but rather monotonously in French); and not a fifth of the congregation showed signs of knowing a word of Hebrew.

No, apparently it was just convention that had brought them here--a prim, proper, well-established habit of their fathers, and their fathers' fathers. Going to synagogue on Friday evening at half-past six--especially after some relative has died--is "correct" in French Jewry--just as going to church for Sunday mass is "correct" in French Christendom. At least, so I imagine. One simply has to do it if one belongs to a certain social set. It isn't a question of mysticism, or Jewishness, or spirituality, but decorum. It's the thing to do. The very "best" Jews do it! . . .

I noticed a young Frenchman near me who seemed to typify the whole spirit of the synagogue. He was obviously a fashionable man-about-town, a good-looking boulevardier who reminded one keenly of that gay moving-picture actor named Adolph Menjou. He was dressed in deepest mourning, his suit, hat, shoes, tie, gloves, even cuff-links all being black. A broad band of crepe trimmed his stylish derby, and a border of black bound his pocket-handkerchief. Indeed, he was a perfect study of the "well-dressed man" in mourning. . . He came in a little late, and then rather abstractedly sat through the service without even making the pretence of opening a prayer-book. When the congregation rose, he rose; when it sat, he sat. Most of the time his thoughts seemed to be as far from the sacred business at hand as I am now from South Orange, N.J.

And then of a sudden something seemed to happen to him. With half-a-hundred other men he had walked forward to stand before the open Ark while the mourners' kaddish was recited--and on his return he seemed a changed man! He looked somehow pales and less ribald, as though in that moment before the Ark he had actually seen the dread shekinah of the Lord. He looked now positively spiritual! . . . But alas! it was all an illusion. Not the nature of his soul but the position of his hat had changed. He had merely straightened the derby on his head while doing obeisance before the Ark. Now that he was back in his pew he felt at ease once more, and with a dexterous flip he put that hat back at its accustomed rakish angle. And then he was once more the gay young boulevardier of Paris. In a little while he quietly withdrew, sidling out after a number of other pious Jews and Jewesses who could not wait until the service was quite ended. The last I saw of him he was discreetly tip-toeing down the aisle, cane in hand, eyes on floor, shoulders apologetically bent and seeming to say: "I know I should wait, but really--don't you think I've done enough for this week?"

And thus he disappeared out of the door. . . .

August 13, 1926 AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
Excerpts from a Travel Diary: Passing of the Great Race
by Lewis Browne

Amsterdam, July 30, 1926:

He was one of the very few worshippers present in the old Portuguese synagogue last Friday evening, a swarthy little person with a ~~graying~~ moustache and vandyke. His old silk hat glistened rather pathetically, and his old ~~brock~~ coat shone where it had been pressed too often. Yet despite the poverty of his clothing, he carried himself with striking grace and pride. I watched him as he stood by my side in the ancient candle-light temple, his thin lips moving slowly as he pronounced the Hebrew words,

his frail body bowing to the Ark as an hidalgo might to his king. And despite myself I could not help but recognize that breeding did count for something.

His ancestors came here three hundred and twenty-seven years ago. They were sugar factors from Portugal, secret Jews who for three generations had called themselves Christians and outwardly had conducted themselves as such. They had come rich in worldly goods and richer still in Iberian pride. They had brought with them their jewels and crested plate, their Negro slaves and Circassian concubines; and here they had settled down to be free at last of the terrifying Inquisition. And the petty burghers of Old Amsterdam, big blonde shop-keepers with seemingly as much bone in their heads as these proud Jews had in their spines, made them welcome. Why should they not? These Jews were no ragged fugitives begging a stone to rest their heads on; they were wealthy, some of them tremendously wealthy, and with their vast trading connections and subtle trading gifts they promised to make the Netherlands rich too. So the door was opened wide to them and favors were shown them by the Orange princes that even the Dutch burghers themselves did not enjoy.

They must have been a strange lot, those early Sephardic settlers in Amsterdam. For generations they had called themselves Christians and had been Jews; now they called themselves Jews and were in large measure Christians. Their whole synagogue ritual was instinct with the heavy solemnity of the Catholic mass; indeed, their chazanin chanted the Hebrew prayers in perfect Gregorian measures. (The only place you can still hear the old Gregorian sacred chants today is not in the Sistine Chapel in ~~Rome in Rome~~ but in the Sephardic Synagogue here in Amsterdam.) They had fled from the heresy-hunting of the inquisitors-- and straightway took to heresy-hunting among themselves. (They drove Uriel A'osta to suicide, and Baruch Spinoza to The Hague, solely because those two would not do what they themselves had all along refused

to do--conform.) They had come here to Amsterdam to be Jews, and yet when other Jews came flocking in from Germany and Poland, they did not deign even to accept them into their community. (To this day the Portuguese group is separated from the German, having its own rabbinical seminary, with three lone students, its own orphanage, its old folks' home, and its Hebrew school. To this day no mere "Hoch Deutscher," no matter how rich or learned, can enjoy the privilege of being "called up" to read the Torah in the Portuguese synagogue.) Finally, they had come here to remain rich--and succeeded only in becoming poor.

Of course, they did not become poor at once. On the contrary, for centuries they grew wealthier every year. They sent fleets east and west to bring to Europe the riches of the far lands. They traded in spices and slaves and diamonds and grain, making the little port on the Amstel the commercial center of the world. They became knights of the realm, and even princes. For a while they seemed to threaten to own the whole land.

And then they grew tired. That mad intensity, that frenzied passion for conquest which is the Jew's first quality and last vice, began to burn low in them. Perhaps it was because they had already played enough at getting rich and were bored with the game. Perhaps it was also because they had inbred so long that their loins could no longer be girded for conquest. Whatever the reason, they gradually began to decay and lose power. They refused to work, considering it below the dignity of descendants of hidalgos. They began to live instead off the interest on their patrimonies and, when that became insufficient, began to eat into the actual patrimonies themselves. And thus slowly, generation after generation, their fortunes dwindled away until now--now, alas, they are among the poor of the land.

"H, but we are not all poor," the swarthy little old man in the shiny frock-coat assured me the next day in his home. He had invited me to Sabbath dinner in his humble old house just off the Jodenbreetstraat, where Rembrandt once lived. He sat in a great worm-eaten old chair, a little skull cap on his head, a fascinating amethyst seal ring on his finger. "No, we are not all poor," he repeated in his delightfully accented English. "Since forty years or more some of us have begun to work again. We are in banks, or in the liberal professions; or else we are professors in the universities, or else advocates or doctors. Some of us--" he hesitated a moment, as though a little embarrassed by the confession he was about to make--"some of us are even cleavers in the diamond works. But not many," he hurriedly added.

"And you yourself?" I could not help asking.

"I?" He coughed consumptively a moment, and then went on: "No, I belong to the old school and I do not work. Nor did I marry out of my group, as is now the custom among us. My brothers both married German Jewesses, and so have all four of my nephews. But I did not. No, I have felt always that it is not proper for us Portuguese to intermarry with Ashkenazim, for after all we have a tradition that is our own and should be preserved. Of course, I am not so prejudiced as was my father. I do not believe that we are better than these other Jews. Not exactly. Indeed, I think some of them are very nice people and--how do you call it?--er, very genteel. I have many very good acquaintances among them. But yet--" he shrugged his narrow shoulders and puckered up his fine little mouth in a half-apologetic smile--"yet there is a difference. After all, we are--" he hurriedly took out his handkerchief to smother a sharp, wracking cough--"we are Sephardim."

American Hebrew:

September 3, 1926: AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE

Excerpts from a Tarvel Diary: My Brethren in Ukrainian Poland
by Lewis Browne

Kovel Poland, August 15th, 1926:

A main street-Ulica Warszawska--long crooked, and as uneven as the dry bed of a mountain torrent, with huge black puddles through which ragged rickety children drag terrified cats by their tails. On both sides sprawl dilapidated one-story shacks and shops, some of badly-pointed brick, more of warped wood, and many of white-washed stone. Here in a dark cavern a short-sighted tailor tries to thread a needle while his seven squalling brats and slovenly fat wife struggle over a pot of stewed carrots. There in a basement a half-starved cobbler with a mutilated hand patches ancient boots, while his white-faced son in a corner pores over a Hebrew textbook on geometry. Here in a shabbily grander shop a fat little man in a skull cap sells crimson shawls to barefoot peasant women, while his daughter with bobbed hair, rouged lips, and glass-bead earrings, reads Elinor Blyn in Polish. There on a corner three long-bearded, long-coated men haggle over a loan of a hundred zlotis (ten dollars) at eighty percent interest. . . . Noise. . . loud cries in Yiddish and peasant Polish. . . people running to and fro, buying, selling, selling, buying. . . the sound of boys singing their Hebrew prayers in some subterranean cheder, and of a gramophone in a bar-room blaring "Yes, We Have No Bananas." . . . A cow wanders disconsolately from its pasture; wet hens prink around in search of seeds among the cobble-stones; an ancient Studebaker taxi without fenders swings madly from side to side of the road, rattling like a thousand camions; broken-down droskies' stand idle in the gutters. . . .

And that is Kovel, metropolis of its county, queen city of this corner of Ukrainian Poland. Call it a village, and its citizens are offended "Steitsch," they cry, "we have here fifteen thousand Jews, and

perhaps half as many Goyim--and twenty-five separate congregations!" And now that I have wandered about a little in Poland I know that they are not indulging in extravagant "boosting." In this particular corner of the universe Kovel is indeed a sizable city. It has a public bath-house, two high-schools--one supported by the government and hostile to Jews, the other supported by Jews and teaching in Hebrew, two wonder-working Rabbis, three manicurists, one county jail, three thousand beggars, four ex-Americans (from the Bronx), twenty-seven newspaper kiosks, a concrete bridge, and a Singer Sewing Machine agency. A Tzveiter Varshav, "a second Warsaw," they enviously call it in the outlying hamlets.

But even though Kovel by comparison with Horodice or Swaryn is a veritable metropolis, by comparison with an American town of the same population--say, Torrington, Conn., or even Gopher Prairie, Minn.--it is a sad and insufferable hole. It is by American standards--dirty, ugly, and indescribably poor. The place literally swarms with unhappy folk who once lived in tolerable comfort and dignity, but who now are reduced literally to destitution. And when one knows that a whole family can keep body and soul together for as little as fifty dollars a year here, one begins to realize just how destitute these starving folk are. I was shocked in Warsaw when I learnt that the students in the Lubavitcher Yeshivah were given only one zloty--eleven cents--where-with to buy a day's food; but one zloty a day in Kovel is reckoned almost a generous stipend. I am not exaggerating when I say that there are grown men and women, crippled men and sick women, who are subsisting in foul cellars, outhouses and kennel-like dugouts here on as little as five cents, even three cents, a day!

The miracle of it is that life does not cease here altogether. I cannot for the life of me understand how these people can continue clinging to existence, how they can possibly keep up this endless struggle, day in and day out, for the barest, foulest, lowliest necessities of

life. The epidemic of suicides which spread so virulently in Polish Jewry last year, is now at an end; and even when it was at its highest it affected only the suddenly bankrupted merchants, not these long starved derelicts. These hapless people who have suffered and starved for four, five, six years, still hang on, hang on desperately. And in their insensate hanging on, one seems to discover the true secret of Israel's whole history: our Will to Live is beyond breaking!

But the miracle is not so much that life is preserved as that it is preserved with a wondrous spiritual intensity. People don't merely vegetate; they read and learn and think and dream. I am utterly amazed at the awareness of these people to what is going on in the world. Stand on any street-corner here, or in any little grocery or barber shop, and you will hear heated and strangely well-informed discussion of Pilsudski's policy, Trotzki's flight, Zmagwill's death, Coolidge's silence, or Lord Birkenhead's verbosity. They know here all about Dr. Stephen Wise and Jesus, Jabotinsky and the Order Sons of Zion, and President Calles and the Holy Roman Empire. In every shop one finds Yiddish and Hebrew newspapers, and thanks to the Jewish telegraphic Agency yesterday's scandal in Paris, Pekin, or Perth Amboy, is meat for debate in the Kovel barber-shops today. To me this is little short of marvellous. A generation ago such a state of enlightenment was utterly unimaginable here. The learned sat and pored over the Talmud, while the ignorant dumbly pastured the cows. The only school was the degenerate Cheder where little boys learnt in mouth meaningless prayers, and the only culture was a pedantic knowledge of an ancient and outworn Law. Today I find hundreds of children going to Hebrew schools and gymnasiums, there to study mathematics, history, geography, and Polish as well as Hebrew literature. Girls study side by side with boys, and the old educational discrimination against the feminine sex is fast disappearing. The youths wear European clothes, not the long kaftans and skull caps of the Pale.

The girls wear short skirts, bob their hair, and insist upon the right to choose their husbands for themselves. The dietary laws are still observed, and very few Jewish shops are frankly open on the Sabbath day; but otherwise the old Orthodox discipline has largely fallen into desuetude. The young walk about and even eat bare-headed; they do not pray regularly every day or even ever Sabbath. On Friday eve I found the local Yiddish theatre crowded with young and middle-aged people; the Polish tobaccoist told me he did a thriving trade with Jews on Saturday.

The old order has changed, changed so radically and completely that the old can only stand ~~against~~ and bewilderedly wonder what has happened to their world. They cannot believe it was merely the war that caused this terrifying revolution. The war, horrible and catastrophic as it was for them, yet does not seem to these old Jews a sufficient explanation. Rather they blame it all on Zionism. That which the ill-informed in America imagine to be a movement back to medieval Judaism, is to the ill-informed in Poland a movement away from all Judaism. To the greybeards Weizmann is the personification of all evil, and Zionism is the most unspeakable of heresies. When an old Jew here wants to hurl his worst epithet at a rebellious son, he cries: "You--you 'ionist!'"

September 17, 1926: AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
Excerpts from a Travel Diary: A Picture of Communist Life
by Lewis Browne

Moscow, August 20th, 1926:

It has been my good lot in life to wander through so many lands, that travel by now has begun to lose much of the charm of adventure. Indeed, crossing a frontier in Europe has come to mean little more to me than crossing a state boundary in America. But when at last I drew near the Russian frontier some seven days ago. I confess that my heart did beat a little faster, and my hands did tremble just the slightest bit. I had heard so many wild tales about this land I was about to enter. I had had such difficulties procuring a visa. I saw there at the frontier

so many Polish soldiers and policemen armed to the teeth, I was so thoroughly scrutinized and my baggage was so thoroughly searched, that I could not help but be thrilled. I cannot now definitely remember just what I expected to encounter on the other side of that dark stretch of foliage marking the frontier but a few throat-slittings and an arrest or two was the very least.

But my delicious trepidation was soon dispelled. Once on Russian soil I found myself as hum-drumly safe as I might be on West End Avenue. There were of course a hundred formalities to go through, and much time had to be spent procuring police permits to move and to stay still; but since these have been attended to, I have been left entirely to my own devices. Not once in these seven days have I been interfered with in any way, and much to my disappointment I have, so far as I know, been neither followed nor spied upon. I have blundered about Moscow by myself, visited factories, synagogues, communist clubs, kosher restaurants, theaters, Yiddish schools, and Greek Orthodox churches; I have talked with Communists, Non-Partisans, Zionists, Theosophists, Vegetarians, Yiddishists, and even would-be Capitalists. And to date nothing has happened to me. They tell me there does exist a secret service here called the Gepeu which attends to the over-inquisitive and the indiscreet; but thus far it is no more than a legend to me. Perhaps if I keep on at the present rate, this Gepeu affair will materialize into something less innocuous than a myth--which will be no more than I deserve and desire. After all, what's the use of coming all the way to Bolshevik Russia if you can't be at least arrested once?

There are a thousand things to write of here; no, ten thousand. Life here is secure, and savage hazards are unknown; but nevertheless life is not ordinary. On the contrary, my feeling is that spiritually this country is as unlike the rest of the world, as order is unlike chaos. I am not saying that the order established here is perfect; that it is the order for the world. But I must insist that it is an order,

and by no means so awry and impossible a one as we in the west have been led to believe. I am far from convinced that communism is a success here; but certainly it is proving less of a vicious failure than was the imperialistic capitalism that preceded it. Indeed, in certain important respects it is proving far less of a failure even than the nationalistic capitalism which obtains in the lands surrounding Russia. Take, for instance, the question of national minorities. For weeks now I have been travelling in lands where that question seethes and boils like the lava in Vesuvius. In Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Esthonia, Finland, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Jugo-Slavia, one hears nothing but squabbles and bickerings between the innumerable minority nationalities in them which are all struggling with panic to preserve their individual dialects and art-forms and politicians. In Russia, however, such strife is utterly unknown. There is no attempt here to Russify the thirty-six or thirty-seven separate national groups which are to be found between Odessa and Vladivostok. The tartars remain Tartar, having their own Tartar republic, using their own Tartar speech, and developing their own Tartar culture. Similarly with the Armenians on Russian soil, with the Kalmucks, Georgians, Ukrainians, Turkmen, Samarkandians, and--yes, and the Jews.

I cannot yet say from personal observation just what is actually happening to the Jews of Russia, for thus far I have been observing conditions only in Moscow. I am writing this article on the train--as luxuriant a one as ever I rode in America--which is bearing me to Kief and the other great Jewish centers in Russia; and in another fortnight I hope to be in a better position to say just what is actually becoming of the Jews here. At present I know only what the Communist Party, that is, the governing class of Russia, hopes will become of the Jews. That party expressly declares that it hopes the Jews will remain Jews--that they will preserve their own Yiddish speech, and will develop their own Yiddish culture. It even hopes that in time enough Jews will settle together in the Crimea or some other section so that an autonomous Jewish Republic

can be created for them!

That, it seems to me, is an extremely significant programme, and one which the Jews throughout the world should clearly understand. In certain respects it is magnificently broad--not merely tolerant, but actually comradely. It does not treat the Jews as an inferior group, as a hapless horde to be pitied and patronized. On the contrary, it accepts them as the utter and complete equals of all the other peoples in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. It officially recognizes their Yiddish speech, and a letter addressed in Yiddish script will be properly delivered anywhere in the land. Wherever the Jews form the majority in a town, the local soviet, the law courts, and all official bureaus are conducted in Yiddish. In such localities even the policeman who arrests you or tells you the way to the oldest ikon in town, will speak to you in Yiddish, unless you prefer Russian or Ukrainian. There are at present some five hundred Yiddish schools in the land, teaching about a hundred thousand Jewish pupils; and next year these numbers are to be increased by at least twenty-five percent. There are technical schools, teachers' normal schools, and even university departments, all conducted in Yiddish. Occasionally the addresses broadcast to the world from the main government radio station in Moscow are actually spoken in Yiddish!

But there is another side to this whole matter, and one not nearly so attractive. When the communists speak of the Jewish nationality they seem to refer only to a Yiddish-speaking nationality. With them the distinctiveness of the Jew is primarily linguistic, secondarily biological, and not even lastly religious. Religion doesn't in any degree count with them! On the contrary, they hate and despise it with all their being, and strive their utmost to destroy its power in the world. They think it a vicious plague fostered by the capitalist class for the express purpose of keeping the revolutionary spirit of the working man bedridden. They make no distinctions between Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam: all established religions are evil in their eyes.

an offence in a communist that he will immediately be expelled from his party for committing the crime!

That is why there are many Jews, especially of the older generation, who look on this new liberation as but a new oppression. Hebrew is tolerated, and one of the best theatres in Moscow, the Habimah, uses the speech. But it is expressly forbidden to have Hebrew schools for children, and all religious instruction to persons under 18 must be given privately and individually. Synagogues are tolerated, but like all other private enterprises, they must take out licenses and must pay rent to the government. Rabbis are not imprisoned-unless, of course, they try to start little counter-revolutions--but have to suffer the same discriminations as do the private merchants and all other "exploiters." They have to pay three or four times as much rent as workingmen, get the last choice in dwelling-places, are allowed no workers' privileges at the box-offices of the theatres and concert halls, and are provided the poorest opportunities for educating their sons and daughters. In other words, everything short of coercion is used in the effort to stamp out religion and religious life. Within two generations it is hoped that there will not be a single synagogue left in this whole wide land. . . .

That is why I regard the Jewish development here in Russia as among the most interesting in the world. Something utterly new is being tried here, something fraught perhaps with unimaginable consequences. In the West we have tried to be Jews entirely by religion, and not at all by race; here in Russia they are trying to be Jews utterly by race, and not at all by religion. That we have failed in our attempt in the West, is to them here almost painfully obvious; that they will fail in their attempt in Russia, is to us even more painfully certain. But at least in one respect they have the better of us in the argument: we have already been trying for a century, and they have but begun. And what is more, they have begun seriously, with an imperturbable, an almost

inhuman logic. They may be doctrinaires here, but they're not dilettantes. They know what they want and how best to get it; and they press on with an unflagging zeal until at last they have attained their end. Shocking as it may sound to them, these communists are very like the early Christians. They have the same fine fervor and blind faith and admirable self-sacrificing spirit. And just as the early Christians had to stamp out paganism before they could make Christianity the faith of the world, so must these communists stamp out religionism before they can make Communism the faith of Russia. Perhaps they're right, too. But I wonder if they'll succeed. After all, Judaism survived the early Christians; can it be destroyed even by the Communists?

October 8, 1926: AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
Excerpts from a Travel Diary: "Pink" Jews of Red Russia
by LEWIS BROWNE

Odessa, September 15:

Russia is a dangerous country for visitors, a dreadfully dangerous country; but not in the way most people imagine. So far as life and limb are concerned, it is quite the safest land in Eastern Europe. I have walked the streets of its cities at midnight, have travelled in peasant wagons through thick forests and over deserted steppes, have dozed in rural stations and slept at wayside inns--and never once have I been robbed or molested. I have talked freely to natchalniki and reporters, have grumbled at inconveniences, and sworn generously at red tape--yet without exception the police and other officials have been impeccably polite. I have been ill here with acute lumbago, and have stood in need of considerable treatment--but I have not lacked the most expert and painstaking attention.

Nevertheless I repeat that Russia is a dreadfully dangerous country

for visitors. Not for all visitors, of course; no, only for my type, the type that is usually called "pink" back home. There are quite a number of us "pink 'uns" in Russia these days. We have come from many lands and follow varied occupations: artists, "liberal" politicians, broad-minded bankers, millionaires' sons, social workers, authors, and most of all journalists. And we wander about from city to city and stare with mingled amazement, delight, horror, and chagrin, at this bewildering creation which is Red Russia. Frankly, most of us don't know what to make of it all. We are too disconcerted, too shocked to be able to take it all in and decide what it is worth. For Red Russia is not at all what we expected it to be--not even remotely.

One must understand that we "pink" folk have stood out in the various lands whence we came as the champions of Soviet Russia. Being rebels, of one shade or another, we were naturally inclined to sympathize with the Russian revolutionaries, and insisted loud and long that they be given a fair chance. Besides, we were Socialists--or at least, we thought we were. We wept--in a metaphorical way, of course--for the exploited workingman, and spoke with evangelical fervor of the Socialist State to come, that blessed state when all men would be free and at last equal, and John Haynes Holmes would be bishop of New York. And when men of little faith cried out that such a state could never be realized, we of too great faith retorted: "But look at Russia!" It was not a convincing retort; at least, I never found it so. Somehow the skeptics always managed to turn it on us, proving on the basis of the New York Herald reports that Russia, even when cursorily looked at, was the completest proof that Socialism couldn't work. Indeed, so often was that retort turned to our disadvantage that at last we could stand it no longer, and had to come and look for ourselves. We came separately and in delegations, most of us with clear pictures in our minds of what we

would see and decide--and now we're all lost.

I suppose the major cause of our demoralization is the knowledge that Russia is really serious about Socialism. This idea of freeing the workingman is not empty messianism here, not pleasant chit-chat for fashionable rabbis or presidents of women's clubs. It is a reality, a very tangible and disconcertingly obvious reality. The thing has been accomplished here, over-accomplished perhaps. In Russia the robotchi, the workingman, is not merely the equal of other men; he is their superior. He does very actually run the government, the factories, the schools, the museum, the law courts, the hospitals--everything. Where he is running them to may still be a debatable question; but that he is running them is certain. He is the lord and master here, and every privilege is his. The outcast here is the "nepman," the individual who has taken advantage of the NEP (New Economic Policy), and is conducting a shop or small factory for private gain. The parish here is the man who wears a European suit instead of a muzhik blouse--a tolstoifka--and who carries a bank-book instead of a union card. Such an individual has to pay twice as much for his theatre tickets, three times as much for his bath, four times as much for his marriage license, and ten to twenty times as much for his rent. He is openly discriminated against in the law-courts, and his children are practically barred from the universities. He is here the underdog, and is kicked by every honxboot in sight. For here in Russia, they have at last achieved the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!

And just that is why we "pinks" are flabbergasted. We see here one unexpected culmination of our sweet old fantasies--and we are frightened. This is more than we bargained for, much more. And so most of us get together with the Jews in Russia and complain. "You've gone too far," we cry to the Communists.

Perhaps my most unexpected discovery here is that the Jews of

Russia are the bitterest grumblers against the Bolshevik regime. Practically all of my conversation here is confined to Jews, partly because they are my major interest on this journey, and partly also because I cannot talk to the other Russians. (Yiddish is the only one of the twenty-odd official Russian languages that I can understand.) I have talked to all sorts of Jews, and under all sorts of conditions. I have ~~con~~ conversed with them in vast offices in the Kremlin, and in foul tenements in Kief; I have sat with them over glasses of steaming tea in Ukrainian colonies, White Russian inns, Muscovite hotels, and Odessan workingmen's clubs. Most of all, and most intimately, I have conversed with them at the mud-baths at the Kuralnyk Liman, for there I have had not merely Jewishness but also rheumatism in common with them. And without exaggeration I can say that eighty percent of all the Jews I have talked to are opposed to Communism!

The story that Bolshevism is a Jewish creation, like gefilte fish or matzoth, is utterly and completely a legend. It is true that several Jews, notably Trotzky and Zinoviev, were among the leaders in the establishment of the Communist regime; but the rank and file of the Jewish revolutionaries were from the beginning bitterly antagonistic to it. It is significant that in the great Petrograd demonstration which preceded the October Revolution and Lenin's triumph, the only groups which dared to carry banners proclaiming allegiance to Kerensky were the Don Cossacks and the Jewish Bundists. The Jewish masses in Russia were confessed radicals, but with limitations. They wanted the first revolution, that which occurred in February, 1917, and ended the vile Czaristic regime; but that was all they wanted. When the second revolution came, they were openly in opposition to it, and even to this day they have not fallen in line. For the truth is, the Jews as a group are not and have never been more than "pink."

The reason for that is obvious: The Jews are not workingmen. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat bodes little good for them because as a group they are not and have never been part of the proletariat. They are part of the petty bourgeoisie, poor shopkeepers and half-starved artisans. To be a full-blooded proletarian it is not enough to be poor; one must also be a non-exploiting producer. Therefore the village tailor with his pinched little bearded face and half-blind eyes is not one of the elect, for usually he employs an apprentice, some miserable little unwashed boy who threads the tailor's needles and runs his errands and cuffs his brats for him. And only that wretched apprentice is considered truly qualified to have a hand in the Dictatorship. Indeed, until recently even such poor artisans who did not employ apprentices were still considered outside the pale of the proletariat. They were their own masters, owning their own tools and work shops, and making their own private profit; therefore they were considered unworthy even of voting!

Much lower than the status of the artisan, however, is the status of the merchant and trader. And at least half, if not more, of the two and three-quarter million Jews in Russia, still belong to this merchant class. The vast majority of them are indescribably poor, possessing no more than a tiny dry-goods shop or vegetable stand; but nevertheless they are counted "nepmen" and taxed accordingly. And how taxed! First they have to pay for a patent to do business; then so much percent on their gross takings during the preceding six months; next, so much percent on the net earnings; then so much percent on the increase in the net earnings during those six months previous to them; and so on and so forth until those poor fellows are left with barely enough to drag away to some Jewish agricultural colony in the Crimea. . . .

That is why the Jews complain so bitterly against the Bolsheviki

system. They complain openly and loudly, not in the public meetings as yet, but constantly in private conversations. In America I was informed that it would be a waste of time to come here, for I should never be able to make the people in Russia tell me what they truly think. But the information, like most other American information concerning Russia, was utterly false. My chief problem here has been to make people stop telling me what they truly think. I don't want to be so devastatingly disillusioned. I don't want to become an anti-Communist. It is too dangerous for my soul. For I am a moderate Socialist, and I want to remain one; but if extreme Socialism can bear such fruit, I fear I shall be driven to something approaching anti-Socialism. I am a "pink" and want to remain one; but if the "reds" are such a violent red, I tremble lest I be terrified into a pallid "white."

And that is why I say Russia is a dangerous country. . . .

November 5, 1926: AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
Excerpts from a Travel Diary: Jewish Life Under Communism.
by LEWIS BROWNE

Constantinople, October 1, 1926:

I want to write today about what is certainly the most important development in Jewish life under Communism. I mean, of course, the great colonization project. I did not write about this while I was in Russia largely because I feared the Soviet censor might take exception to my findings. (I still do not know whether the articles I did send out of Russia ever reached England or America. Thus far I have not been able to receive a word of acknowledgment.) But now that I have crossed the Black Sea and am far from Communist control. I feel I can safely unburden myself.

To begin with, let me most emphatically state that in my opinion the one solution of the economic problem of the Jews in Red Russia lies at present in their rapid and widespread settlement on the soil.

The solution of their spiritual problem lies, of course, in an utterly different direction. The spiritual problem of the Jew in Russia is precisely the spiritual problem of the Jew everywhere else and therefore cannot be solved by agricultural settlement or dissolved by commercial unsettlement. That problem is essentially psychological, not physical, and therefore can be solved only by some psychological reorientation. But so far as the purely economic question is concerned, at present Crimea is the only answer.

I state that so baldly because there seems to be great controversy in American Jewry over this matter. I know that these words will not end that controversy; but I dearly wish they could. For as I see it from this distance, the whole pother is largely groundless. There is no real conflict between this Russian colonization project and Zionism. The two movements are not even remotely in the same class. This Russian scheme seeks to solve merely a local problem; Zionism is aimed at an international, a world problem. The one is intended merely to retrieve a single branch of Jewry; the other, to reinvigorate the whole tree. So where is the competition? As well say that the Chile-Peru Arbitration Committee is in competition with the World Court.

I shall not bother to cite statistics concerning the settlement of the Jews on Russian soil within the last six years. I have exceedingly little faith in statistics. For, being a Jew, I know that though figures do not lie, liars frequently figure. And in Russia, as everywhere else, there are not a few liars. I am not stooping to slander when I say that. Most of the Soviet statisticians are not consciously liars--at least I have not discovered them to be so. But they are enthusiasts--and that amounts to almost the same thing. They are inclined to get just the least bit cramped over unfavorable totals, and expansive over favorable ones. . . . No, I shall not cite statistics, for these you can easily discover for yourselves in the propagandist literature of the various "drive" organizations in America. I shall merely report what

I have seen with my own eyes.

First, I have seen Jewish colonists in Russia. I have seen many of them, talked with them, eaten with them, and haggled with them over the price of a ride to the next village in their springless peasant wagons. (Simply because a Jew has turned muzhik, doesn't mean he has lost his talent for driving hard bargains!) Without exception these colonists were former small traders and artisans who were ruined by the War and half-buried by the Revolution. Most of those to whom I spoke came from the small villages of White Russia and the Ukraine, from those indescribably forlorn holes whence the very rodents have fled in despair. They came only a few months, or at most a few years, ago, and they are still struggling desperately to make the soil give them a livelihood. That few if any of them have yet succeeded is only natural.

These Jewish poyerim are barely learning the first rudiments of agriculture; and, it must be admitted, not all of them are learning any too quickly. Many of them are finding it exceedingly hard to break away from old habits. They want to open little shops on the side; but, knowing that their land will be taken from them by the government if they are caught, they are spending a good deal of their time inventing ways of conducting such shops secretly. Perhaps that demoralizing tendency will pass away in time. Perhaps the drag of the soil, the lure of the Great Mother, will "get" the Jew as the years roll by, so that finally he will be from choice and not necessity a peasant. Perhaps. . . .

That was what struck me most while I wandered about among the Jewish colonists in Russia: the constant perhapsing. Every hope expressed by those settlers was qualified by efsher. I had a feeling that many of them felt insecure in their new life, doubtful about its desirability and dubious about its permanence. It struck me so forcibly because I had none of that feeling when I was among the Jewish colonists in

Palestine last year.

There, in Eretz Israel, there seemed to be no doubts or dubieties at all. Those young chulutzim were sure of themselves. They faced infinitely greater hardships and obstacles than the Jewish Poyerim in Russia. Their lands were not nearly so rich or extensive; water was more difficult to procure; the climate was more taxing; diseases were more rife; native opposition was more obvious; prosperity seemed infinitely further away. And yet never once did I hear them murmur that devitalizing word efsher. There seemed to be no "perhaps" about it in Palestine. Those young men and women had come there as to their rightful home--and they meant to stay.

The contrast may be due to the age of the colonists. The Russian settlers as a general run are much older than the Palestinians. They are not youths and maidens flushed with dreams and ideals, but for the most part "family men" bowed down with family obligations. They've come to the soil not to create a new life but merely to "make a living." They say so frankly. They have no illusions about their work. They don't talk in glowing phrases about the sweetness of the soil or the grandeur of the simple life. They think the soil smells horridly, and they still believe the simple life is fit only for muzhiks. But what can they do? There is no place for them in their old villages. They can't possibly make a living as private traders, for the Communist regime won't let them. And they can't find work in the government or the co-operative stores.

Economically Russia is still far from stable. She may be better off than Poland with its absurdly over-decorated army, or Roumania with its amusingly over-dressed old queen; but that is not saying very much. Compared with the great nations of the West, Russia is still in rather desperate straits. Unemployment is rife everywhere, and, though nobody seems to be literally starving to death (the government sees to that),

251

nobody is overfed, either (the government sees to that, too).

That is why so many thousands of Jews (eleven thousand families by the latest estimate) have gone down to the soil. There is nothing else for them to do. They must get down and dig, or else starve to death--and, as they themselves say, starben von hunger glist sich nit (one does not relish starving to death).

But there is another and happier side to the picture. Not all of the settlers are of the older generation. The younger is also represented, and this younger generation is taking to the soil with better grace. They are not quite comparable to the chalutzim of Palestine because very few of them are unattached. There are in Russia very few communist colonies of young men and women like those to be found in Galilee; and those few are actually made up of Zionists getting ready to go to Galilee. Practically all of the new Russian Jewish settlements are based on the old family system.

The boys and girls work for, and with, their own fathers and mothers, tilling what is practically--though not technically--their families' private land, and reaping all possible profits therefrom. For that reason one finds even among the youth in the Russian colonies very little of that ebullient enthusiasm characteristic in the Palestinian kvutzos. The parents are always around to dampen the ardor and frown at the shouting. As I heard one old Jewish farmer put it grumpily: "What is there to shout and sing and dance about? Enough that we have been brought low and made to work like horses. Shall we yet be merry over it?"

But despite the mutterings of the elders, the boys and girls in the Jewish colonies do manage to get enthusiastic. They do it chiefly when they get together at their Komsomol meetings. It is exceedingly difficult now to become a member of the Communist Party; but anybody between the ages of 16 and 21 can join the Young Communists, the Komsomols.

And many if not most of the sons and daughters of the Jewish colonists do join this organization. They are attracted to it for several reasons. First of all, it is the chief social club for the "younger set." It provides many of the village entertainments, conducts classes, carries on hot and headlong propaganda, and generally "runs" things among the young men and women of the village. And secondly, it is the preparatory school for the communist Party. To be prominent in the local Komsomol is one of the surest ways of squeezing through to the Kompartei when one is of age. In other words, to join the Komsomols means popularity in the present and power in the future. So quite naturally the young Jews and Jewesses join up fast and with delicious fervor. The parents often object, for to become a Komsomol means to abjure all religion and swear only by Communism and its Holy Prophet Lenin. But who listens to parents nowadays?

That is why the Jewish colonization project in Russia cannot yet be judged fairly. It will take at least a generation for it to begin to show valid results. What those results will be, no one can say yet; but surely they cannot be worse than the results of ten generations of petty trading. I do not think the scheme an ideal one. If it develops as the Russian government plans, it will end in producing a monstrous Yiddish Republic, an unlovely nationality of Yiddish-speaking Communist muszhiks cut off from the main body of Jewry and tracing all its historic origins back only to the Red October of 1917. Or if it develops as many of the older Jewish colonists secretly hope, it will provide a temporary refuge for them until the government changes its oppressive attitude towards private trade. In either case, the ultimate fruits will not be paradisaical.

But perhaps one should not pause to think of the future. The

present--sharp, cruel, murderous--is on us. There are hundreds of thousands of Jews in Russia today who must be saved now--and colonization seems to be the only way. It is not a question of ultimate fruit but immediate bread. Of course, if Palestine could provide that immediate bread it would be another matter. But in Russia the newspapers declare that Palestine can provide only stones. Every day the newspapers report that new thousands of Chalutzim are starving in Eretz Israel and begging for permission to come back to the Ukraine. So there can be no hope, obviously enough, in that direction. At least, the Russian Jews of the older generation can see none. And judging from what they hear of twenty-five million dollar drives in the United States, they imagine the American Jews can see none either. So there is no choice left. One simply must dig in der erd and dig right here in Russia.

November 26, 1926: AROUND THE WORLD WITH A PORTABLE
 "Judaism Must Soon Disappear from Russia--and Christianity, Too"
 By LEWIS BROWNE

November 1, 1926, Pistany, Czecho-Slovakia:

The story is told in the Talmud of how four intrepid rabbis once dared to peer into Paradise--that is, the philosophy of pagan Greece--and of how as a result three of them were afflicted with evil for the rest of their lives. Evidently rabbis are not permitted to rank themselves with fools (and prophets) and step in where angels fear to tread. It would seem that not even ex-rabbis can have that privilege. For here am I, condemned to wallow for weeks in hot Pistany mud, all because I dared to enter the Paradise not of philosophic Greece but of revolutionary Russia. Rheumatism has taken hold of me and so bent my body that I am constantly in a position to recite the Alenu adoration. And for that, so I am told, I have Russia to thank. The conditions there, especially in the smaller towns and villages I visited, were too primitive and strenuous for a frame already tired and sore. By the time I managed to get

as far south as Odessa I broke down; and now I am forced to halt for weeks at this quite attractive kur-ort so that I can get mended again. Thus, apparently, does the Almighty, who has no respect for persons and no patience with parsons, repay me for daring to go where I didn't belong.

But nevertheless I'm not at all sorry I went. My visit to Russia this summer was certainly one of the most significant experiences of my life. It did more to clarify my ideas on social and economic problems than all my reading on those subjects in half-a-dozen years. And it taught me more about the making and breaking of religion than I learnt in seven years in a theological seminary. I'm all in favor of the recognition of Russia if only because it would make it possible for thousands of American students to travel in that land and become educated. At the moment Russia impresses me as the most illuminating New School for Social Research to be found in all the world.

The idea of going to Russia first came to me definitely about ten months ago. I was working then on that rather over-done map which forms the end-papers of "This Believing World," that map showing the religions dominant in the different parts of the earth. And I remember that just as I had finished printing the words "Greek Orthodox" across the face of Russia, I halted and asked myself aloud: "But is it Greek Orthodox any more?" For the life of me I could not decide. I telephoned one of my Communist friends, but he too seemed in doubt. I went down to the library and consulted the periodicals; I glanced through half-a-dozen books on Russia; I even wrote a letter to a Russian information bureau in Washington. But still I could not obtain a satisfying answer. On all sides I was informed that something had happened to the Church in Russia; but just what, no one seemed to know. So I was compelled to go over and find out for myself.

Well, I went and I found out; and now I am ready to answer my own question. I was not wrong: Greek Orthodoxy is still the prevailing religion in Russia. But a sorrier prevalence it would be difficult to imagine. All her lands have been taken from the Church; all her costliest jewels, her most precious paintings, her oldest manuscripts, have been confiscated; and several of her most historic sanctuaries have been summarily turned into museums. Every vestige of power has been taken from the clergy, and their quondam privileges have been replaced by severe disabilities. The government allows the priests and prelates to continue in their work only because it knows the time is not yet ripe for them to be safely ousted. The believers, especially in the rural districts, are still too numerous. For all that the government is most aggressively anti-religious, publishing and distributing anti-religious tracts by the million, teaching anti-religion in the schools and preaching it in the unions, accepting only confirmed anti-religionists as members of the Communist Party, still the vast majority of the population in Russia remains religious. In every village you can still hear the church bells ringing, and on every highway you can still see the ikons standing unabashed. In Moscow one day I sat outside one of the large churches in the Kitai Gorod and watched how many persons crossed themselves or tipped their hats as they passed by. The average was one in eleven--which proportion, considering that Moscow is the seat of the government and is crowded with Communist officials and students, seemed to me significantly high. In Kief, where I tried the same experiment, the proportion was one in ten; but considering that four out of the irreverent nine were obviously Jews, the proportion was really one in six. In a small market town about thirty miles south of Gomel the ratio was one to four. . . .

I do not, however, attach much importance to such rough calculations.

I attach importance only to the general impression one gets in Russia, and that is that the Greek Orthodox Church, though left of prestige and quite stripped of governmental power, is still a genuine force in the land. The young are rapidly being won away, but the old still hold on to their ancient faith. They still give their sweaty kopecks to the bearded priests in return for holy tapers and mumbled prayers. They still throng the churches on Sunday and kiss wayside ikons the rest of the week. They still call themselves Christians.

Of course, the Communists know this full well. That is why their campaign against the Church is not more swift and savage. But they are staking all on the future. They believe that the new generation, "unspoilt" by religious training but on the contrary reared in fiercely anti-religious schools, will sweep the Church away within two decades. And that belief seems well-founded. Unless there is a counter-revolution in Russia within the next few years, the Greek Orthodox Church is utterly doomed. If the Communists remain in power, masses will soon be as rare in Russia as voodoo ceremonies are now in Harlem.

And what may happen to the Church must also happen to the Synagogue, I imagine.

Indeed, there is every reason to believe that in the "religious liquidation" the Synagogue will fade out of Russian life much faster than the Church. Already one has the feeling that Judaism in Russia is breathing its last desperate gasps. The anti-religious laws make it utterly impossible for Hebrew schools to exist, and these old crowded chedarim, where the children of the Jews were taught to sway over holy books and yell prayers or Talmudic phrases at the top of their little lungs, are now altogether unknown. That there are no yeshivos, no rabbinical academies, left in the land, for there are no students left.

In Moscow I came across a little group of youths secretly studying

the Talmud of evenings under the guidance of an old and bewildered Chassidic rabbi; but none of them had more than an amateur's interest in the subject. They were all students at the university and expected to become engineers or doctors or teachers in the higher schools. They pored over the Talmud solely because, as one of them phrased it to me, "it can't hurt to know the wisdom of the past as well as the present." They no more dreamed of becoming rabbis than American youths dream of becoming armourers or hansom-cab manufacturers.

The famous yeshivah in Odessa, where Dr. Klausner and Dr. Tschernovitz were once teachers, has been converted into a library, and may soon be closed down altogether because it is suspected to have become a rendezvous for secret Zionists. (All Zionist activity is illegal and severely repressed in Ukraina.) The finest synagogues have been confiscated and made over into Yiddish workingmen's clubs. (It was a bit startling to see the two tablets of stone over the great Brodsky Synagogue in Odessa, the only reform synagogue that ever existed in Eastern Europe--covered by a huge red star bearing the portrait of Lenin!) In many of the smaller towns the Houses of Learning have been converted into debating halls for the young Communists. In one town I visited even the mikveh, the ritual bath, had been communized by the government!

But one must not imagine that this virulence with which the Synagogue is being attacked is due to Anti-Semitism. Officially there is absolutely no trace of Anti-Semitism in red Russia. Unofficially, of course, there is enough of it to destroy all Russian Jewry; even within the Communist Party itself it is rife. (There is more than a little reason to believe that much of the enmity shown by Stalin and his colleagues to Trotzky, Zinoviev, Radek, Piatakoff, and the other leaders of the defeated "Opposition"--most of whom are Jews--is rooted in that old, old

prejudice .) But officially, at least, Anti-Semitism does not exist. Officially there is only anti-Judaism, and curiously enough, the Jews themselves are responsible for it. Indeed, so excessively have some Jewish Communists persecuted the Synagogue that on occasion the non-Jewish Communists have actually been moved to protest. Kalenin, who is virtually president of the Soviet Union, himself declared in an official statement last June that he frequently had to call young Jewish Communists to book for the violence of their assault on the Synagogue!

So the future seems obvious, apparently, Judaism must soon disappear from Russia--and Christianity too. That eventuality, is most confidently looked forward to by all the Communists, and plans are already being made for a school curriculum which will not have to include anti-religious instruction. But, despite all indications, I am not nearly so confident. Religion is a maddeningly persistent factor in life. It may be persecuted and suppressed for generations on end--but in the end it will still be there. It may change its name, its form, its fancies--but it will still exist. I say this not as a believer but as a historian. You can't suppress faith; you can merely force it to take new shapes. In Russia, therefore, religion will undoubtedly emerge in a new guise in the near future. Jesus will be probably replaced by Lenin, and the Bible by Das Kapital; priests will give way to Natchalniks, and rabbis to Communist teachers. And thus Russia will still be held within the boundaries of "this believing world." She will still have a faith, a dogma, even a ritual. She will still be in the narrowest sense of the word "religious." When the historian of the future sets out to make a map of the world's religions, he may not be able to write across the face of Russia the words "Greek Orthodox." But neither will he be able to write there the word "None." Absurd as it may sound to us now, quite possibly he will have to write simply "Communism!"