

Restoring courage to Jewish hearts: Frank Rosenblatt's mission in Siberia in 1919

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The article discusses a mission of Dr Frank Rosenblatt, a representative of the Joint Distribution Committee of American Funds for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers to Siberia and the Russian Far East in 1919. This committee, then a young and little known philanthropic organisation, later changed its name to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC), and became world famous. After World War I, the JDC got involved in aiding German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war of Jewish origin in Siberian camps, and Jewish war victims and refugees from European Russia. Siberia was then under the rule of a Russian White leader, Admiral Kolchak, who was backed by Great Britain, France, Japan and the US. In the course of his mission, Rosenblatt was concerned with protecting the Jews in Siberia from the antisemitic attitudes of the Russian authorities, army, and general populace. The article concludes that the intervention of American troops provided the JDC representative with a degree of operational opportunity.

Keywords: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; "Joint"; Jewish history; philanthropy; American philanthropy; Jewish philanthropy; Jews of Russia; Jews in Siberia; Admiral Kolchak; Russian Civil War; prisoners of war; refugees; First World War; Soviet Union; American Red Cross; Zionism; antisemitism; Frank Rosenblatt

The First World War brought great suffering to civilian populations, including the Jews of the Russian Empire. Their cry for help was heard by Jews in the United States. On 27 November 1914 the Joint Distribution Committee of American Funds for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers was founded under the chairmanship of Felix Warburg, a well-known financier and philanthropist of German-Jewish origin. This committee, which later changed its name to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), or "the Joint," initially distributed funds collected by its members – aid committees of Orthodox, Reform and Socialist Jews. In the course of the war, the Committee provided aid totalling almost US\$15 million.¹ The lion's share was distributed in Poland and Russia. The Joint's activity during the war greatly increased the self-esteem of American Jewry and its status in the wider Jewish world.

Soon after the 1917 October Revolution, the transfer of funds into Soviet Russia became impossible. Therefore, the Joint proceeded to aid Jews in the areas then outside Soviet control, i.e. Siberia and the Far East (then under the rule of the White leader, Admiral Kolchak), and parts of Ukraine and Belorussia occupied by the newly independent Poland.² It was hard, demanding and sometimes perilous work. Two JDC

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emissaries, Jewish Theological Seminary professor Israel Friedlaender and reform rabbi and social worker Bernard Cantor, were killed by the Reds during their mission in western Ukraine in July 1920.³ However, in June 1920 the JDC signed its first agreement with the Soviet government and until 1938 it was heavily involved in providing aid to the Jews inside the USSR.⁴

This study concentrates on the JDC's activities in Siberia and the Russian Far East in 1919, specifically, on the mission of the Committee's representative Dr Frank Rosenblatt to provide aid to Jewish war sufferers in the region. Amongst the question it will consider and seek to answer is the matter of whether or not the initial goals of the mission were correctly defined? Did these goals correspond with wider American policy in Siberia? In this regard, what was the role of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) and the accompanying American Red Cross Unit in the success or failure of the mission? How did the local Siberian Jewish communities respond to the plight of the war sufferers? Did they cooperate with the JDC representative in providing aid? Naturally, it will ultimately consider whether Rosenblatt's mission was successful.

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Dr Frank Rosenblatt stepped ashore at the Russian Far Eastern port of Vladivostok in April 1919. He arrived with money and clothes for German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war of Jewish origin in Siberian camps, and for Jewish war victims and refugees from European Russia.⁵ In the course of his mission, Rosenblatt was also concerned with protecting the Jews in Siberia from the antisemitic policies and attitudes of the Russian authorities, as well as the general populace. The JDC appointed Frank (Efraim) Rosenblatt because of his Russian-Jewish background, his impressive American education and his notable record in social service and public activity. Born in 1882 in Labin (Labun'), Volyhnia, he studied at a *yeshiva* and a Russian high school.⁶ In his youth he was influenced by Zionism, but then became an active Bundist. Fearing arrest by the Tsarist police, he fled Russia and by the beginning of September 1903 he'd reached New York.⁷ In 1910, he graduated from Columbia University with a PhD in philosophy and economics. Rosenblatt worked at the National Monetary Commission, at the United States Tariff Board and at the New York State Department of Labour. He was active in the American non-Zionist labour movement, and was a co-editor of the leftist journal *Tsukunft* (The Future) and later the *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*.

From 1914 to May 1916, Rosenblatt served as the general secretary of the Arbayer Ring (Workmen's Circle). Then in 1917, he became director of the fundraising campaign of the People's Relief Committee, one of the three organisations that comprised the Joint Distribution Committee, and thus become involved in Jewish philanthropy and in JDC activity in particular. By 1918 he headed the Bureau of Philanthropic Research.⁸

The historical context of the Rosenblatt mission

After the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917, Petrograd's Provisional Government formed a military legion from Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war of Czech and Slovak origin. They were to fight, alongside Russian troops against the Central Powers, for the freedom of Czechoslovakia.⁹ The legion began to move from Siberia towards Russia's western frontier. But the Bolshevik revolution in November

1917 and the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany and Austria-Hungary in March 1918 forced the Czechoslovaks to return. The Bolsheviks attempted to disarm the Czechoslovaks, but they revolted on 25 May 1918 and captured a huge amount of territory along the Trans-Siberian Railway, from Samara on the Volga river to the Pacific coast. At this point Great Britain and France saw an opportunity to save Russia from the Bolsheviks and prevent the Germans from occupying more Russian territory. They invaded the Russian Far East and north, followed by Japan and the United States. The first American troops reached Vladivostok in August 1918.

President Woodrow Wilson's decision to intervene militarily in Russia was not borne only of a desire to demonstrate solidarity with America's allies. One reason was to assist the evacuation of the Czechoslovak Legion and eventually transfer it to the Western Front. Another reason was to safeguard the vast quantities of military war supplies that the United States had sent to the Russian Far East in support of the Russian Provisional Government's war efforts on the Eastern Front. These supplies were now stockpiled along the Trans-Siberian Railway. Wilson also wanted to withstand mounting Japanese influence in the Russian Far East and ensure a stable Russian government there.¹⁰ However, some contemporaries observed that the President "did not have any clear aim of the intervention."¹¹ Even the Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia, Major-General William. S. Graves, wrote in his memoirs, "I must admit I do not know what the United States was trying to accomplish by military invasion."¹² In no way did General Graves believe that the mission in Siberia was to fight the Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, the American military intervention enabled the Joint Distribution Committee to extend its aid to Jews in Russia on the territory beyond Bolshevik control. There were several different "governments" on Siberian territory during these months. On 18 November 1918, Admiral Alexander Kolchak, backed by the Allies, became Minister of War of the Omsk Provisional Government (Directoria).¹³ Kolchak effected a *coup d'état* and declared himself the "Supreme Ruler of Russia," in fact, the commander-in-chief of the anti-Bolshevik forces in Siberia. The coup was blessed by the interventionist forces and Kolchak's government depended heavily upon Western military and diplomatic support.

Siberian Jews

According to the 1897 first all-Russian census, there were 34,477 Jews by confession in Siberia.¹⁴ The Jewish population of the Irkutsk province (*guberniia*) amounted to 8239 people, in the Tomsk province there were 7899 Jews and in the Trans-Baikal province 7550. Most Jews lived in cities, mainly those along the Trans-Siberian Railway. In 1909, Jews comprised more than 25.7% of the entire population of Kainsk (Tomsk province) and 34.1% of the population of Mariinsk. In 1913, the Tomsk community numbered 3497 Jews, in Omsk there were 3692 and in Kainsk 1090. Most of the older Jews had arrived in Siberia as prisoners or exiles, both political and criminal. Others arrived as adventurers in search for large fortunes.¹⁵ Before the First World War, Jews in Siberia numbered approximately 50,000.¹⁶ However, their presence increased greatly, probably doubling during the course of war and revolution. When Rosenblatt arrived, there were 77 locations in Siberia and the Urals with Jewish populations, ranging from seven families in Turuntievo-Tataurovo to 1000 families in Tomsk, 2000 in Irkutsk and 2500 in Harbin. This total amounted to at least 9808 families and included 250 families of *subbotniki* (Russian peasants who adhered to Judaism

and had been punished by exile to Siberia) from Zima town in the Irkutsk province.¹⁷ These statistics did not include the Jews of ten Siberian locations; Khabarovsk, Nizhnii Tagil and others, as well as a substantial number of Jews who concealed their origin.

By the beginning of the First World War, the majority of the Siberian resident Jews was financially stable, not too pious and somewhat acculturated into the local non-Jewish population. A significant proportion of them (11% in 1897) were engaged in trade. Some who had originally become successful in distilling and selling alcohol ventured into other areas. Jews comprised 26% of the merchants in the Irkutsk province in 1897, 38% in the Trans-Baikal province in 1897 and 28% of the merchants of Tomsk in 1904.¹⁸ Jewish businessmen were involved in gold-mining, the grain trade, steam navigation along the great Siberian rivers and money-lending. Some communities established charitable associations, such as Tomsk's, founded in 1885.

In January 1919, the Jews of Siberia organised themselves into modern democratic communities along ethnic (national) rather than religious lines, according to historian Simon Dubnov's ideas of Jewish autonomism, following the example of the rest of Russian Jewry a year earlier.¹⁹ They elected an umbrella organisation – the National Council of Jews of Siberia and the Urals (Natsional'nyi Soviet Evreev Sibiri i Urala – NCJSU) – dominated by the Zionists and chaired by Moisei (Moshe) Abramovich Novomeysky, the son of a wealthy merchant family from Barguzin, a town near Lake Baikal. Novomeysky was later to become famous for founding the Palestine Potash Company (Dead Sea Works, Mif'alei Yam HaMelakh) to exploit the rich chemical resources of the Dead Sea.²⁰

The refugee problem

The first Jewish war victims in Siberia were largely those who had been deported from combat zones by the Russian military authorities in 1914–15.²¹ Some of them managed to settle by employing their own resources or with the help of the all-Russian Jewish Committee to Aid War Victims (EKOPO).²² However, others required assistance. Those fleeing the turbulence of the revolution and the Bolsheviks constituted a second wave of refugees. Some were headed to their relatives in the United States or elsewhere.²³

In 1917, Jacob H. Schiff advised the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) to send a representative to the Far East, in order to explore and improve the situation of Russian-Jewish refugees migrating to Japan, via Vladivostok, Harbin and Korea. Samuel Mason was selected, a member of the HIAS Board of Directors and the chairman of the HIAS Committee for Foreign Operations.²⁴ He remained in Japan from 1 January to 7 July 1918, including a five-week trip (8 April to 14 May) to Harbin, Nikolsk-Ussuriisk and Vladivostok.²⁵ Upon his arrival on Russian territory, Mason interviewed different people and concluded that the refugees experienced most of their troubles in Harbin and Vladivostok. Thus, the press release based on the Mason Report, says,

At Harbin there are thousands of refugees [many of them [these three words from the Mason Report are omitted in the press release] sleeping in court yards, in sheds, and even among the Chinese. Jews are always to be found among others sleeping at the railroad stations.²⁶

As to Vladivostok, – Mason continued ... their [Jewish refugees'] condition is most deplorable; they are actually picking up crumbs of bread wherever they can find them ...

Their number is very large. In the course of my investigation I came across several hundred at the railroad station at five o'clock one morning. Their pitiful pleas and the recital of their horrible plight nearly broke my heart, particularly so since I felt that I was powerless to do anything.²⁷

Mason's first visit focused on improving the condition of the Yokohama shelter and providing for the refugees gathered there in anticipation of their emigration to the US.²⁸ As for those who still were on the mainland, he could only start a registration process and draw the attention of the American Jewish philanthropic organisation to their desperate condition. He opened the Central Information Bureau for Jewish War Sufferers in the Far East in Yokohama, with branches in Harbin and Vladivostok.²⁹ When Mason departed Yokohama, there remained some 400 refugees in Harbin and Vladivostok with whom the HIAS was in touch. Having disbursed some US\$40,000, he returned to New York. An advance of US\$80,000 that the JDC granted to HIAS (for loans to American residents who desired to bring their wives and children from the Far East but lacked the funds to do so) played a significant role in the success of Mason's mission.³⁰

Upon his return, Mason endeavoured to convince American Jewish leaders that the Bolsheviks were preparing to massacre the Jews in Russia and that thousands of Jews were constantly leaving for Siberia in order to escape to the United States. In a letter dated 25 November 1918 to Jacob H. Schiff, Mason related his interview with Colonel Kourbatoff, who allegedly said that³¹

The Jews in Russia residing in territories occupied by the Bolsheviki Government are in grave danger of massacres being planned by various elements under the Bolsheviki regime ... He [Kourbatoff] ventured to say that he fears the destruction of 75% of the Jewish population in Russia within the coming six months. Every Jew, he said who is now taken out of Russia, is practically saved from death ... If the Jewish refugees now in Siberia will be properly cared for by organized Jewish philanthropy, it will serve as a ray of hope for those who have the opportunity of escaping from Western Russia into Siberia.³²

Thus, Mason justified the purpose of the agency he worked for (i.e. HIAS). He heartily supported American and allied military intervention in Russia to prevent massacres of Jews.³³ Mason also specifically called upon the JDC for immediate action. The efforts of Mason to bring more Jews to the United States initially bore fruit but were subsequently blocked by the anti-Bolshevik policy of the American government. From the middle of 1919, the American consul in Japan refused to grant visas to male refugees over the age of 16.³⁴

In October 1918, Herman Bernstein, a correspondent for the *New York Herald* in Siberia, called the attention of the JDC to a large number of Jewish refugees in Siberia.³⁵ "He found that thousands of exiles had already died from starvation, disease or exposure, and that many of the others were wandering aimlessly, while the remainder were living in cattle-and-freight-cars [*teplushkas*] and in the railway stations."³⁶ Mason's and Bernstein's alarm bells reached the receptive ears of Jacob H. Schiff, one of the founding fathers of the JDC. Schiff had been fighting Russian antisemitism through both financial and diplomatic means for more than a decade by then.³⁷ On the basis of the Mason Report and Bernstein's appeal, the JDC dispatched Rosenblatt to Siberia with instructions to aid the refugees and prisoners of war (see below), while HIAS delegated Samuel Mason, for the second time, to provide assistance to would-be immigrants.³⁸ However, it seems that the JDC acted upon greatly exaggerated data

regarding the dimensions of the calamity. Thus, Mason estimated that more than 20,000 Jewish refugees were scattered east of the Urals.³⁹ Bernstein thought “that there were no less than a half million refugees along the trans-Siberian railway from Omsk to Vladivostok, of whom no less than 100,000 were Jews.”⁴⁰ Moreover, on 19 February 1919, JDC Secretary Albert Lucas advised the US Secretary of State that “a very large number of Jews (about 500,000) are at present refugees throughout the whole of Siberia ... Among them there are many who are still, or have been, prisoners of war.”⁴¹ While giving this highly exaggerated total he referred to Herman Bernstein as a source and mixed two different problems, the refugees’ problem with that of war prisoners.

In fact, the actual number of refugees in need was less than even the smallest estimate, as became clear during the Rosenblatt mission. Refugees in severe need who registered at the Central Refugees’ Organization run by the NCJSU in November 1919 numbered 1088 people: 250 men, 420 women and 418 children located in Omsk, Novo-Nikolayevsk, Barguzin, Kabansk, Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and Petropavlovsk. This figure, of course, did not include the refugees residing in territories by that time captured by the Bolsheviks (the Urals), or those in Harbin or Vladivostok.⁴² All in all, the Jewish refugees’ problem was far less serious than it appeared from New York.

The prisoner-of-war problem

Contrary to the problems faced by the refugees, those experienced by prisoners of war (POWs) were quite serious because of their number, their deplorable living conditions and, as we shall see, because of difficulties connected to providing them aid. There were 150,000 to 160,000 POWs in Siberia. Bernstein estimated the number of Jews among them in the “tens of thousands.”⁴³ According to Rosenblatt’s initial estimates upon his arrival in Vladivostok, some 10,000 Jewish war prisoners were concentrated in 47 camps.⁴⁴ Partial statistics gathered for Rosenblatt by August 1919 on the shrinking territory controlled by Kolchak gave the figure of 5435 Jewish prisoners in 24 camps. The proportion of the officers among them was very high: 37% (2071 officers). However, one should take into account that privates more frequently worked and lived outside the camps, and therefore, probably, were undercounted.⁴⁵

The POWs suffered initially at the hands of the Czechoslovaks, who looted most of their possessions, which severely limited their chances of survival through the cold winter.⁴⁶ It was estimated that during the first half of 1919 the death toll in some camps reached 25%. A Jewish prisoner from the Nikolsk-Ussurisk camp, near Vladivostok, described how they survived the winter of 1919:

Imagine overcrowded barracks, with a double row of cots ... the buildings themselves are dilapidated; the window panes are broken, fuel is at a shortage, there are no facilities for washing, the wells are in a desolate condition and at a long distance from the barracks, the toilets are from 20 to 100 steps from the house and indescribably filthy. In the best preserved room in the barracks we never had, during the whole winter, a temperature above +5 Reamer [about 6.3° Celsius] in daytime; at night we were freezing like puppies.⁴⁷

There were approximately 700 Jews in this camp, including around 450 officers. About half of them came from Hungary. Of the rest, 30% were from Galicia and Bucovina, the remainder from other parts of Austria-Hungary.⁴⁸

Some of the camps fell under American or Japanese jurisdiction, and conditions in the American camps were much better. The prisoners received US\$1.00 (about 25 rubles) a day. The Russians maintained their prisoners on 70 kopeks a day, which often meant death from starvation; the price of a pound of bread, for instance, was two rubles. The clothing of the prisoners of the Russian camps was usually worn out. The prisoners had no underwear, no shoes.⁴⁹ The Kolchak regime regarded the POWs as enemies and a burden. In retreat, the army dragged the prisoners along with them, as the Whites feared that the prisoners, once freed, would join the Red Army. Their evacuation usually took place under inhumane conditions.

Aiding only Jews?

Before his departure Rosenblatt obtained a letter of commendation from Baron Feodor Guinsburg (sic, Guenzburg), a secretary in the Russian Embassy in the US, addressed to the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government in Omsk. Verbally, Baron Guinsburg advised Rosenblatt that “the Gentiles in Siberia are liable to feel some resentment over the fact that the clothing and the money will be distributed among Jews only.”⁵⁰

Whether to distribute American Jewish aid to Jews exclusively or to everybody continued to be a subject of discussion at the JDC in the years to come.⁵¹ Rosenblatt knew that an equal, non-sectarian distribution would not be praised by JDC contributors and would be unfair to the Jewish recipients, who suffered more than others because of antisemitism. However, the policy of the American Department of State was to force American Jews to work through non-Jewish agencies on a non-sectarian basis. Thus, the State Department permitted the mission of Frank Rosenblatt, but also viewed it with a measure of suspicion. Basil Miles, in charge of Russian affairs in the State Department, and to whom the JDC directed requests for letters of introduction on behalf of Rosenblatt to American diplomatic agents in Japan, China and Russia, said that he would prefer to honour a request from a congressman rather than from a little-known organisation like the JDC. Miles went on to say that the question of repatriation of prisoners could not be broached yet, while the question of rendering relief was in the hands of the Peace Conference in Paris, and probably some decision would be reached while Rosenblatt was still in Vladivostok. Personally, Miles did not object to Rosenblatt’s helping war prisoners in Siberia but refused to grant his permission in writing.⁵²

Similarly, American Red Cross (ARC) officers were often reluctant to cooperate with the JDC in aiding only Jews, though Rosenblatt had a letter of introduction from the Acting Chairman of the Red Cross Council, a Mr Wadsworth, to Lt Colonel Rudolf Teusler (a cousin of Edith Wilson, the President’s wife⁵³), the commissioner of the American Red Cross in Vladivostok and the head of all the Red Cross workers in Siberia.⁵⁴ In May, Teusler refused to assume responsibility for distributing JDC clothing to Jewish POWs in the Nikolsk-Ussuriisk camp. He was concerned that the Red Cross would be accused of discriminating in favour of Jewish war prisoners, and the international reputation of the Red Cross would be damaged.⁵⁵ Rosenblatt had to assign a private person to distribute the articles in the camp.

In September 1919, when the steamship *Yaehiyo-Maru* brought another 452 cases of clothing and shoes from the JDC, Rosenblatt made a new attempt to distribute it through the ARC. He arranged for the cases be stored in the ARC warehouse in Vladivostok and again turned to Teusler, who responded,

As far as practicable, we will give the clothing to Jewish prisoners, but we do not at all bind ourselves to give only to Jewish prisoners in case non-Jewish prisoners are in more need; we understand that we are at liberty to give clothing as our agents determine ...

5 I recognize fully the great need of all the German–Austrian prisoners in the camps in Siberia, and I think it would be a mistake for the Siberian Commission to show discrimination in allotting the clothing you have entrusted to our care only to Jewish prisoners. This would not only bring criticism to the American Red Cross, but it would make the matter very difficult among the prisoners themselves.⁵⁶

10 Having no other choice, Rosenblatt requested that Teusler transfer all the cases to Moisei Novomeysky in Irkutsk for distribution according to Rosenblatt’s instructions.⁵⁷ The Jewish community of Irkutsk sent a portion of the American clothing to the POW camps of Irkutsk (Batareinaya), Krasnoyarsk, Achinsk, Mariinsk, Chita and Sretensk, and distributed them to those POWs who passed through Irkutsk. It is not entirely clear whether the recipients were all Jews or not. The community also
15 aided 371 refugees, 443 local needy individuals (including 207 children) and 40 Bolsheviks, not necessary Jewish, released from prison after the fall of the Kolchak government.⁵⁸

20 In spite of a certain tension in his relations with the American Red Cross, Rosenblatt enjoyed its cooperation and help as well. Thus, the Red Cross stored JDC supplies and then delivered them safely to the NCJSU in Irkutsk. Rosenblatt also travelled on Red Cross trains, which ensured him crucial protection during his trips. In the end, the JDC and the Red Cross fully cooperated in the repatriation of the war prisoners.

25 With the fall of Kolchak’s regime in January 1920, the POWs were permitted to leave their camps and seek employment. The Vladivostok JDC branch established by Rosenblatt had to aid all of them, Jews and non-Jews alike, in matters of visas, passports, hospital treatment and the transmission of their mail abroad. They also made a census of all the prisoners in the area. In April 1920, after the last American soldiers left Siberia, the JDC, together with the American Red Cross and other American relief
30 organisations, formed the Siberian War Prisoners Repatriation Fund. The JDC and the Red Cross contributed US\$250,000 each to the Fund while other organisations contributed smaller sums. During 1920 the Fund spent US\$700,000 and sent home 9000 war prisoners, including 2000 Jews. The whole JDC expenditure in Siberia and Russian Far East amounted to half a million dollars.⁵⁹

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American interests or Jewish interests?

40 It is obvious that Jewish interests do not necessarily coincide with the interests of any particular country or government. In Siberia a controversial issue was the antisemitism of Kolchak’s government. Rosenblatt confronted it, but American diplomats backing Kolchak often chose to ignore it. The antisemitic propaganda of the Siberian government was predicated upon the perception that most of the Jews were Bolsheviks, and that the Jews controlled the Soviet regime. The execution (in fact, murder without a trial) of the Tsar and his family during the night of 16–17 July 1918 in Yekaterinburg,
45 provided additional grounds for these claims, as Yakov Yurovsky, a Jew baptised as a Lutheran, commanded the squad of executioners.⁶⁰

Newspapers circulated in Siberia were replete with anti-Jewish reports. On one occasion the official *Russkaia armia* published “information” of the propaganda department of the White Army’s General Staff, claiming that “in one sector of our

front, telephonists had tapped the wires of the enemy but could use nothing [of what they overheard], as during long hours of overhearing many different persons commanding red units acting in this sector spoke only Yiddish.”⁶¹ Another Siberian newspaper, *Vpered*, wrote,

It has been announced in Bolshevik wireless telegrams that the Soviet government had discontinued the observing of Sunday and had instituted Saturday as a holiday. Other telegrams have reported that in North Russia the Bolsheviks had destroyed many orthodox churches and had killed the priests. These new crimes against the Russian people we calmly charge to the account of those to whom a settlement is due. *We see everything, we understand everything and we forget nothing. Our day of revenge and retaliation will come.*⁶² (Emphasis added)

Such publications kept Siberian Jews in a state of consternation. Every day, they brought Rosenblatt copies of proclamations calling for the death of Jews. Rumours of approaching pogroms circulated constantly. As Rosenblatt shared the collective memory of Ukrainian Jewry, he was receptive to these rumours; he was convinced that “a Jew is not liked in this country and has never been liked in this country.”⁶³ On 18 April 1919, soon after his arrival, he decided to send the JDC a cable notifying them of the danger of pogroms in a number of Siberian cities. However, at the American Red Cross Commission office, where he intended to send his cable, the staff strongly disapproved, as we can gather from the Rosenblatt’s diary:

Dr. Magnet against sending the cable ... Dr. Teusler said that the cable is one-sided. The fact is, that the pogrom agitation is based in his opinion on real facts of Jewish B[olshevism] ... Major Emerson became red in the face and declared that if such a cable is sent, the R. C. will send its cable stating that the agitation has solid ground. The Jews cannot be trusted was the opinion of both.

Instead of my cable, they suggested that if I really wished to serve my people, to cable that the Jews in America, Jacob Schiff, etc., immediately issue an appeal to the Russian Jews that they cease B[olshevik] activity and profiteering, as they put in jeopardy the whole Jewish Race.

They re-iterate that there is great danger of antisemitic outbreaks but that it will be fully deserved and will be the retribution for the wrongs perpetrated against the people by the Jews. “They cannot be trusted. We tried to give them responsible positions. They lied to me.”⁶⁴

The attitude of the Siberian Red Cross Commission was reflected in its policy not to employ Jews, even American Jews. The Deputy Commissioner wrote to ARC headquarters, “In selecting any who can speak Russian always watch out for Jewish blood and if found DON’T enrol.”⁶⁵

In the end, Rosenblatt did not send the cable, but took other steps to fight antisemitic incitement.⁶⁶ On 14 May 1919, he submitted a detailed memorandum on the antisemitic propaganda conducted by both the Russian military and civil authorities to the US Consul in Vladivostok, John K. Caldwell.⁶⁷ In his approach to the Kolchak government Rosenblatt, on Novomeisky’s advice, premised the problem “not as a Jewish question but as a state question,” which jeopardised the Western backing of Kolchak.⁶⁸ On 27 June 1919, in Omsk, Rosenblatt met the acting Foreign Minister Ivan Soukine, who assured him that “the government has taken all measures to stop it [the antisemitic propaganda]. Soukine said that the condition of Jews in Russia is

dangerous, and the sooner the Bolsheviks are deposed, the milder will be the wrath of the people and even here there is danger of the right party losing supremacy.”⁶⁹

Three days later Rosenblatt obtained an audience with the Supreme Ruler of Siberia, Admiral Kolchak himself.⁷⁰ Rosenblatt advised Kolchak that American Jews, having learned about the antisemitic propaganda in Siberia and the Urals, would be extremely concerned about the fate of their brethren. Kolchak, conscious of Allied support, tried to reassure him:

Let me first assure you that during the eight months of the existence of my government, no doubt has ever arisen as to Jewish loyalty and consciousness of duty ... The Siberian Jews had made considerable voluntary contributions of money and other means for the Siberian Army. There has never been misunderstanding by us of the Jews ... It is true that during the months of March and April a vicious sort of propaganda was started among some Army officers, and some proclamations which I read afterwards were published ... I gave strict orders to stop such propaganda, and I am satisfied that there is no longer any danger in these quarters.⁷¹

Regarding the particular report on the use of Yiddish by Red Army wire, Kolchak did not find anything antisemitic in it, saying that similar information was published about the Germans, Hungarians and Latvians. He argued that the General Staff should inform the population what was happening at the front. He admitted that the number of Jews amongst the Red Army commanders was negligible and that army was not under Jewish control. He repeated that Jews had nothing to worry about in Siberia: “Some danger exists only in the Far East, where the international situation is extremely complicated. Scum of all the nations gathered there including bad elements of Jewry.”⁷²

Frank Rosenblatt, a left-winger, had been certain that “antisemitic agitation is nothing but the old monarchist method of diverting the channels of popular unrest against the Jews.”⁷³ However, upon acquainting himself with the Jewish “scum” Admiral Kolchak had in mind, Rosenblatt’s positive attitude was seriously eroded. Apparently, Jewish profiteers, adventurers of every ilk returning from the United States, as well as deserters, contributed to the heightening of antisemitic tensions in the Russian Far East. This did not, however, diminish the necessity of fighting the antisemitic campaign conducted by the White press.

With the retreat of the White Army, reports of anti-Jewish excesses began to reach Rosenblatt in ever increasing volume, though Kolchak promised that as long as he remained in control there would be no anti-Jewish outbreaks. On the eve of the withdrawal of Kolchak’s forces from Yekaterinburg, Rosenblatt visited the city and could sense the approaching violence by watching the flight of the Jews:⁷⁴

“A people in exile!” – wrote Rosenblatt to his wife Kitty, “Can there be anything more frightful, more appalling to the son of an ancestry which time and over again was forced to pick up the wind and wander and wander, – the Wandering Jew. It may be atavism, it may be whatever name one will chose to give it, but I lived through all the horrors and all the shame which had ever been heaped upon the heads of our people. I think only a Jew can feel what I felt during the two days I stayed in Yekaterinburg.”⁷⁵

According to the report submitted by the American military attaché at Omsk, Major Slaughter to General Graves, after the regular troops of Kolchak evacuated the city, Chief Ataman B.V. Annenkov, with his Semipalatinsk Cossacks, entered Yekaterinburg. Annenkov’s forces killed many Jews, though the number of victims given as

3000 was not confirmed. The news had been supported by a report of the British consul at Yekaterinburg, an eye-witness, who had testified that the streets of the town had been “filled with Jewish blood.”⁷⁶

Three thousand was surely an exaggerated number, as only about 450 Jewish families lived in Yekaterinburg in 1919, but the pogrom, no doubt, took place.⁷⁷ Another eye-witness, one Prezbilsky, an agent of American military intelligence, testified that the pogrom occurred on 15 July 1919, following a demonstration of SRs (Socialists Revolutionaries) who carried red flags. The perpetrators were soldiers, deserters and Annenkov’s Cossacks without insignia. The mob looted and destroyed Jewish shops and houses:

20 minutes later the whole of Uspenskaya Street was a mass of ruins, all the windows were broken. The mob then divided itself into a number of smaller groups and an hour later the following streets were completely devastated, with numerous corpses lying about: Pokrovskaya, Voznesenskaya, Alexandrovskaya, partly the Main Prospect ... streets ... [were] strewn with the corpses of dead Jews.⁷⁸

In order to verify the news of the pogrom, Rosenblatt interviewed Ronald S. Morris, American Ambassador in Tokyo, who was visiting Siberia at that time. The Ambassador confirmed the fact of the pogrom:

The number of killed, three thousands, is without doubt exaggerated ... There may have been five hundred or one thousand, or less, but the fact of the pogrom is without doubt. It was made by Onikoff [Annenkov] forces after the Allies had left. They came in and killed Jews.⁷⁹

On 12 September 1919, Rosenblatt sent the JDC a cablegram with the news about the pogrom, mentioning 3000 victims as an unconfirmed number. The American Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, requested an explanation from the Consul General in Omsk, Ernest Lloyd Harris. The Consul, a committed believer in Kolchak, answered:

Statement of Rosenblatt [is] absolutely false. At no time has there been a single pogrom or any Jew discriminated against since Kolchak came in power ... These false reports emanate possibly from certain Jews who were attempting to escape military service.⁸⁰

This, of course, was wilful deception and it extended to the alleged equality of the Jews under Kolchak. While certain Jews did evade conscription, those who wanted to serve were refused admission to military schools, and their promotion to officers was blocked. Even Jewish volunteers were sometimes prevented from joining the army because of their Jewishness. The Rosenblatt Papers contain numerous testimonies and petitions by Siberian Jewish organisations to the authorities regarding the discrimination. As for the pogrom itself, Harris chose to deny it entirely.

Shortly thereafter, on 26 September 1919, the Consul sent Rosenblatt a cable indicating his resentment at Rosenblatt’s action and a veiled threat of reprisals by the Kolchak forces. The cable read,

Such false and irresponsible reports as these coming from you cannot help but have a tendency to embitter the Omsk government against the Jews, therefore, I would suggest that in your telegrams of the future you state only the actual facts.⁸¹

The harsh response of the Consul implied that Rosenblatt was a liar. Rosenblatt had to send another cable with his explanation of the incident, but the State Department,

the only means through which he could communicate with the US, never delivered it to the JDC.⁸² Having only the official version, JDC headquarters reprimanded Rosenblatt and stressed the necessity of cooperating with the American diplomats in Siberia. General Graves received instructions not to send any more telegrams for Rosenblatt, not even commercial messages if they contained criticism of Kolchak's adherents.⁸³

In spite of American diplomatic backing of the Siberian government, some local Russians were far from friendly to the Americans, considering them pro-Jewish, and preferring the British, French and Japanese over the American forces. A Siberian industrialist and entrepreneur, S.D. Merkulov, wrote to his companion in Petrograd,

It would have been far better had fate not slapped us with a scourge in the form of American Yids. In any case, they can't be called American "fighters" ... They turn up, behave scandalously, screw around, infect the entire region with venereal disease, mock the Russians, engage in Bolshevik propaganda, supply arms to the Bolsheviks, and corrupt organized military units.

The Americans express contempt for everyone except the Bolsheviks and the extremist socialist-wreckers. Indignation at Americans is becoming more and more marked in society. With the exception of two newspapers, subsidized by the American Masonic Society, all the newspapers now bring daily reports of American "exploits" ... It is a pity that American forces over here are chock-a-block with Yids and all manner of criminal émigré elements ... It is a publicly recognized fact here today, that there is no nastier, more repulsive nation than the Americans ...

Our relations with the small, almost pitifully small English, French, Italian, Canadian and especially Japanese brigades are an entirely different matter. They are all wonderful people – so courteous and polite.⁸⁴

Later, in April 1921, Merkulov formed the Priamurskoye vremennoye pravitel'stvo (Amur Coastal Provisional Government) in Vladivostok backed by the Japanese. His favourable attitude to the British stemmed, probably, from the antisemitism of the British officers.⁸⁵ A British historian Edward Carr called Merkulov "a nonentity."⁸⁶

Upon his arrival, Rosenblatt learned from General Graves that the feelings against the Americans were strong amongst Kolchak's officers, due to the former employing many Jewish interpreters who allegedly sympathised with the Bolsheviks and influenced the American military command. All blamed these Jews for American military passivity. Graves himself was called a Bolshevik, and, according to him, all who did not fully agree with Kolchak's methods were so labelled. "No American will stand for these methods," Graves told Rosenblatt.⁸⁷ "Several high officers came to him demanding the removal of Jewish interpreters, though the three Graves' own interpreters were not Jewish. The same demands were presented to the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] administration."⁸⁸ In fact, the Bolshevik government resented the Americans as well because of their attempts to speak out against the Red Terror and other instances of brutal violations of human rights by the Bolsheviks.⁸⁹

Under the circumstances, American policy was to distance itself from Jewish interests in Siberia. "The Yekaterinburg pogrom" incident was but one example of the conflict of interests between the Joint, which sought to protect the Jews, and the State Department, which preferred not to upset the anti-Bolshevik forces. One should admit, however, that the very presence of American forces in Siberia may have limited anti-Jewish violence and enabled Rosenblatt to fulfil his mission.

Responses of the local communities to the POWs and refugees problems

1. *The Siberian Jews and the refugees*

It had been assumed that the Siberian Jews could not provide effective relief to the refugees because of their small number. However, according to Mason, they did not try too hard. “The old Jewish Relief Committee at Harbin is dominated by officials that simply do not wish to make any systematic effort to help these unfortunate people. Most of the refugees had once applied to the community but meeting with discouragement, never cared to ask for aid again,” he wrote in his report. The same was true with regard to the Vladivostok Jewish community. Mason found that on the way to Vladivostok refugees were often discouraged “by different communities who have been asked by the Vladivostok Jewish Committee not to permit any more refugees to come until ready to provide for them ... The main trouble there is the male refugees who are not given any assistance by the local communities.”⁹⁰ The First Congress of the Jewish Communities of Siberia and the Urals, which took place in January 1919, decided to form a Central Refugees’ Organization.⁹¹ The Organization began a survey of the refugees but was faced with apathy on the part of the local Jews.

On 12 April 1919 Rosenblatt had a meeting with representatives of the Vladivostok Jewish parties and organisations.⁹² He was told that the local Jewish Charitable Society was formed in November 1917, and its aim was to cope with the growing number of refugees transiting through Vladivostok, rather than Harbin, as they had been before, to Japan and the US. Until the autumn of 1918, the Society successfully cared for the refugees, kept their shelter in the city clean and administrated the Emigration Information Bureau established by Mason. In September, 150 new refugees, mainly women and children, arrived, which resulted in the breakdown of assistance, as the small local community claimed it could not bear the growing expenses. The shelter was transferred outside the city to unsanitary army barracks without heating.

For the following six months, the community succeeded in sending the majority of the refugees to Yokohama, while Mason, on his second trip, improved the conditions in the shelter.⁹³ The community desired to build a new shelter to ease the problem. Mason had promised money for that purpose but did not provide it, while Rosenblatt refused to support the construction of a new building after finding only 50 refugees (!) in Vladivostok.⁹⁴ On 20 August 1919, he cabled the JDC in New York: “Number of needy refugees Siberoural [Siberia & Ural] was extremely exaggerated.”⁹⁵

In Vladivostok, Rosenblatt, like Mason before him, discovered that the real problem of refugee relief work was not the lack of funds, but rather the indifference of the Siberian Jews. While the old-timers were still involved in communal work, newer settlers who comprised the majority of the Jews in Vladivostok and Harbin, some of whom had grown rich during the war, “were afraid of their own shadows and talked in whispers,” according to Rosenblatt. Another problem was the mobilisation into the army of young, capable Jews. Under such conditions Rosenblatt found it hard to boost the activity of the Vladivostok Jewish public and resorted to the services of responsible salaried administrators to distribute JDC aid.

On his summer journey Rosenblatt visited Tumen, Omsk, Yekaterinburg, Irkutsk, Harbin and other places in Siberia. He found that all these communities, but for Omsk, were able to maintain their own refugees. In Omsk he contributed a quarter of a million rubles for building a special two-storey, 16-apartment shelter and, thus, compelled the community to raise the missing funds.

The largest and most prosperous Jewish community in Siberia was that of Harbin. The community maintained a shelter for 150 refugees and began construction of a second shelter for others who received no support. The Harbin community council requested that the JDC provide it with a large loan of US\$100,000. However, Rosenblatt declined the idea, as he felt community leaders wanted to use American aid for the refugees to implement their own communal programmes, such as the construction of new buildings and establishing a Hebrew printing house or a vocational school. One member of the Executive Committee of the Harbin Community Council confirmed his suspicions by saying that there were enough rich people in Harbin to care for the needy, and that the Americans should not give money but rather convince the local rich to open their purses.⁹⁶

2. *Siberian Jews and POWs*

In contrast to the “problem” of Jewish refugees, a real problem with Jewish POWs did in fact exist and, in contrast to the case of the refugees, Siberian Jews had justifiable reasons to keep their distance from the Jewish POWs. Providing aid to “the enemy” could be interpreted as disloyalty to the Russian government at a time when suspicious and hostile attitudes towards Jews were already prevalent. Thus, the involvement of the local communities in aiding POWs was minimal.

In Achinsk, for instance, for five months the POWs solicited a collective loan from the local community but to no avail. One of them complained that “Siberian Jewry see in us not brothers, who at home were men just like themselves, but some human beings worthy only of pity to whom they willingly give charity, but with whom they will have nothing to do.”⁹⁷ In Petropavlovsk, a town some 200 kilometres west of Omsk, 3000 prisoners were kept in barracks made of thin planks, with neither floors nor a decent roof. From the beginning of 1917, a quarter of them (781), including 130 Jews, died from typhus, cold and hunger. In May 1919, 125 Jewish officers and 25 privates remained in the camp. “The Jews of Omsk never made any attempt even to relieve the distress of the war prisoners. The Kolchak regime kept them in such dread, that they were afraid of being accused of disloyalty, if they try to help Austrian or German war prisoners,” Rosenblatt reported to JDC leaders upon his return to New York.⁹⁸

Not all of the organised Jewish public in Siberia and the Far East avoided contact with war prisoners. The Siberian Zionist Organization became involved in the POW issue soon after its emergence in November 1918. It obtained permission to communicate with and assist the prisoners. A POW Aid Department under the Central Bureau of the Zionist Organization was soon formed in Irkutsk. The Department coordinated all work with the war prisoners and, in fact, became a representative of the National Council. The Department distributed questionnaires in the camps, gathered statistics regarding Jewish POWs and learned about living conditions in the camp.

The Department opened POW offices in other Siberian and Ural cities, organised lectures in camps and regularly sent the prisoners an Irkutsk periodical *Evreiskaya zhizn*. It also aided the POWs with clothes from funds raised by various Jewish communities, first of all in Irkutsk. Over Passover, many communities organised special *seders* for POWs. In the legal sphere the POWs Department obtained official permission for POWs to marry and to engage in manual labour. A request by the Zionists to concentrate all Jewish POWs in one location was turned down by the authorities with the explanation that only Romance and Slavic nationalities were eligible.⁹⁹ Zosa Szajkowski observed,

Rosenblatt, himself a labour anti-Zionist, turned over the whole relief work to the Zionists: "I could not help it," he reported; "they were the only group to whom I could have turned over the relief work, the most reliable people, the most conscientious people, trustworthy people, and the others did not want to participate."¹⁰⁰

The fact that the Zionists more so than others were engaged in relief operations for the POWs resulted in increased Zionist activity among Jewish prisoners; they had lost the fatherland they fought for after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but seemingly had a chance to discover a new one, in Palestine, after the publication of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917. From Nikolsk-Ussurisk camp they reported,

Our Zionists in the camp are very active. Many of them already speak Hebrew; reports are being read in that language; there are courses in the Hebrew language which are attended in large numbers ...

To all of them [the Zionists], the highest ideal is to be able some day to enter the land we are yearning for; they have all declared their readiness to go as colonists to Palestine and enlist in the service of the national course. There are indeed so many among them who have no longer a country which they may call their own – all those unfortunate men from Galicia and Bucovina.¹⁰¹

Rosenblatt relied on the National Council and its POW Aid Department in Irkutsk. However, in Vladivostok he trusted only a few local figures. Therefore he decided to establish a JDC branch in Vladivostok to take care of the Far East region in an administrative rather than a public way. He nominated a lawyer, Haim Abramovitch Soloveitchik, to chair the Vladivostok Auxiliary Committee of the JDC. It was established on 15 December 1919 and consisted of seven members: five local Jews selected by Rosenblatt and two POW representatives elected in the camps.¹⁰² The Committee was supposed to aid POWs under the direction of the New York JDC Headquarter. With great difficulty Rosenblatt secured permission for this committee to administer aid to the war prisoners. Having succeeded, after almost nine months' hard work, he set sail for New York.

Under the Bolsheviks

On 14 February 1920, Moisei Novomeysky sent Rosenblatt a financial report together with a description of the most recent events, namely the Irkutsk revolt against the Kolchak forces, atrocities perpetrated by the Whites and the circumstances of Kolchak's execution by the Bolsheviks. The Jewish Communists, old and new, declared a crusade against the Jewish community. The Jewish Socialists retired from the National Council, some of them joined the Bolsheviks. The NCJSU was only able, through the YMCA, to send clothes to several camps near Irkutsk. The rest of the items waited for available transportation.¹⁰³

Conclusion

While the intervention of American troops may not have achieved its original goals in Siberia, it was definitely good for the JDC, Jewish POWs and refugees to whom "the Joint" extended its aid. That antisemitic propaganda of the Whites did not result in even greater violence was due in part to the presence of the Americans, whose support

the Whites needed and whom they considered to be influenced by the Jews. In fact, however, American diplomacy distanced itself from Jewish suffering in favour of closer ties with the Kolchak regime. Some AEF and ARC officials (excluding General Graves himself) were also infected with antisemitism, which made the relief mission of Frank Rosenblatt more complex. Furthermore, local Jewish communities in Siberia often acted half-heartedly in cooperating with the JDC representative and providing aid to the needy. This partly derived from their fear of appearing to be non-loyalists in the eyes of the authorities, and partly due to the fact that they were newcomers in Siberia themselves.

When defining the goals of Rosenblatt's mission, the New York JDC headquarters relied on inflated and unverified data – the result of wartime chaos and the activity of interests groups. Such situations are common for any philanthropic activity conducted by remote control in a distant society little known to the benefactor. Evaluating the results in retrospect, one may conclude that JDC aid to the Siberian war sufferers and refugees achieved little, whereas aid to the POWs was both necessary and effectively provided. In his letter to the workers of the JDC branch in Vladivostok in May 1921, Rosenblatt wrote,

In my opinion the JDC ought never to have spent a cent for relief of the general population in Siberia. I was sent to your territory on misinformation and misrepresentation of facts which misled the JDC into the belief that there were tens of thousands of war victims in the Far East and in Siberia. I was chagrined and hurt when I came to Vladivostok to find that your community and other communities in the Far East had a large number of multi-millionaires who could certainly have cared for the negligible number of war sufferers and refugees.

... They did not do half of what they could and should have done.

... I was shocked to learn that some of the shoes and clothing which I had turned over to Mr. Novomeysky for distribution among the war prisoners and refugees was still held in Irkutsk, Omsk and Chelyabinsk by the local communities. I say I was shocked to learn this because there was horrible need of such articles of clothing in the Russian towns and particularly in the Ukraine and White Russia. The children's shoes would have been a boon to thousands of orphans, and I shall have to understand why the Irkutsk Committee kept these shoes and other articles of clothing without allowing them to be distributed wherever there was need for them.¹⁰⁴

Notwithstanding Rosenblatt's own criticisms regarding the efficaciousness of his mission, the JDC seemed to be satisfied with his labours in Siberia and sent him once again to Russia in 1920, this time to negotiate a relief agreement with the Soviet government. Regarding the aid to the war prisoners, Rosenblatt felt satisfied with the JDC's and his own accomplishments:

I must congratulate you on the good work and the success with which you accomplished the repatriation of the war prisoners ... While in Europe I met several former war prisoners from Siberia and I was happy to hear that the one sweet memory that these men carried away from Siberia was due to the work of the JDC and your branch. It is something to compensate you for the hard work and self-sacrifice of every one of your committee ...

While the general population did not need our help, the Jewish war prisoners were in a condition which only an American representative could relieve.



The war prisoners, it seems, were of the same opinion. Those at the camp of Pervaya Rechka wrote to him,

You have saved many Jewish lives, *you have restored courage in Jewish hearts that had lost all hope* [italics added], you have preserved sons, husbands, brothers, to their beloved ones and to the Jewish people ... Please tell the Jews of America that we shall never forget the help they have given us ... In this war, in which we Jews had to fight in all armies, on all battlefields, opposing each other, brother against brother, in this war, the American Jews showed that we, Jews, are one people, even in days of greatest want.¹⁰⁵

Acknowledgements

Research for this article was made possible through the Drench Memorial Fellowship of the YIVO Institute for Jewish research and through the support of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. It was first reported at the Drench Memorial Lecture at the YIVO Institute on 27 April 2006. I would like to thank the fellowship sponsor Daniel Drench; the Director of the YIVO Institute, Carl Reiness; YIVO archivists Gunner Berg, Kricia Fisher and Vital Zaika; the AJJDC Director of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) programmes, Asher Ostrin; the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC) Archives' manager, Sherry Hyman, and its archivist Misha Mitsel. My thanks also to Steven Zipperstein at Stanford University and Mark Tolts at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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Notes

1. *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Report*, October 1914 to 31 December 1926: 5. Hoover Institution Archives, American Relief Administration – European Unit, Box 543, Folder 1.
2. Beizer and Mitsel, *The American Brother*, 15, 17, 21, 23, 29–32. For a brief history of the AJJDC see Handlin, *A Continuing Task*.
3. On the circumstances of the Friedlaender and Cantor murders, see Beizer, "New Light on the Murder of Professor Israel Friedlaender and Rabbi Bernard Cantor," 63–114.
4. On the activity of the AJJDC in Soviet Russia during the inter-war period see, for example, Altshuler, "Siuia yehudei haolam leyehudei Berit Hamoatsot bein milhamot haolam," 116–29; Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 57–104; idem, "The Relation between the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Soviet Government," 271–82; Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land*; Szajkowski, *The Mirage of American Jewish Aid in Soviet Russia*; Beizer and Mitsel, *The American Brother*, 33–160; Beizer, "The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee," 41–2.
5. On the mission of Rosenblatt to Siberia see, first of all, Szajkowski, *Kolchak*. Another important source is Bernstein, "A JDC History," esp. 404–25. Though the manuscript is written by a journalist and does not include footnotes, it is a valuable source, as the author was close to the events and knew the scene well. Herman Bernstein (1876–1935), a writer

and journalist in Yiddish and English, was also a member of the HIAS Board of Directors. Bernstein became famous by his exposing *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a forgery to the American public. He also instituted legal proceedings against Henry Ford, who helped to circulate the *Protocols*. Among recent publications certain aspects of the mission are discussed in Budnitskii, *Rossiiskie evrei mezhdru krasnymi i belymi*, 250–4, 381–4; Nam and Naumova, “Evreiskaya diaspora Sibiri v usloviyakh smeny politicheskikh rezhimov,” 124–9; Romanova, “Deyatel’nost’ ‘Dzhointa’ na vostoke Rossii v gody grazhdanskoi voyny,” 103–9.

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6. According to the biographical note at the YIVO Archive (Catalogue of the Dr Frank Rosenblatt Collection. YIVO. RG 1572, B1). In the Form for Naturalized Citizen, Frank Rosenblatt indicated Zhitomir as his birthplace. AJJDC Archives, New York (AJJDC NY), Reel (R) 8, Frames (Fr) 1835–6.
7. YIVO, RG 1572, B1. According to Zosa Szajkowski, he was actually arrested in May 1903 but managed to escape. Szajkowski, “Kolchak,” 162.
8. Catalogue of the Dr Frank Rosenblatt Archive. YIVO. RG 1572, B1. Form for naturalized citizen. AJJDC NY. R 8, Fr 1835–6; Szajkowski, “Kolchak,” 162.
9. Unterberger, *The United States, Revolutionary Russia and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*; Bradley, *The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia*.
10. On AEF in Siberia see: Willett, *Russian Sideshow*; Hendrick, *An Investigation of American Siberian intervention*; Connaughton, *The Republic of the Ushakovka*; Hudson, *Intervention in Russia*; Graves, *America’s Siberian Adventure*.
11. Szajkowski, “Kolchak,” 8.
12. Szajkowski, “Kolchak,” 11. Graves, *America’s Siberian Adventure*, 354.
13. Alexander Kolchak (1874–1920) graduated from the St Petersburg Naval College and became a respected and successful Russian Navy officer and Arctic explorer. During World War I he was promoted to vice-admiral and made Commander of the Black Sea Fleet. After the 1917 February Revolution, Kolchak was removed from command of the fleet. As the Provisional Government feared that Kolchak might become a dictator, he was forced to leave for the United States via Great Britain. He soon returned to Russia, as the British suggested he take part in overthrowing of the Bolsheviks. Arriving in Omsk, he agreed to become a minister in the Siberian Regional Government, and by December 1919, as a result of a military *coup d’etat*, he became the Supreme Ruler (Verkhovnyi Pravitel) of Siberia and the leader of the White anti-Bolshevik forces in Siberia and the Urals. His regime was a tough military dictatorship, and his government was notoriously corrupt. The Kolchak forces first gained territory but then had to withdraw under the growing pressure of the Red Army. They evacuated Omsk on 14 November 1919. In late December, Irkutsk fell to a leftist group and formed the Political Centre. Kolchak resigned and was promised safe passage to the British military mission in Irkutsk. Instead, the Czechoslovaks transferred him to the Political Center, which subsequently, on 20 January 1919, submitted itself to a Bolshevik military committee, simultaneously handing over the imprisoned admiral to this committee. The Bolsheviks sentenced him to death and shot him on 7 February 1920.
14. The territory of Siberia, at that time, included parts of today’s northern Kazakhstan (Pavlodar, Semipalatinsk, etc.), parts of the Urals (Niznii Tagil, for example), the Russian Far East (Primorskii Krai – the area along the Pacific shore) and the territory along the Russian-owned Eastern Chinese Railway in Manchuria (including the city of Harbin), where Russian law was in force.
15. Goncharov, *Ocherki istorii evreiskikh obshchin Zapadnoi Sibiri XIX – nachala XX vv.*, 31–35, 103. See <http://new.hist.asu.ru/biblio/evrei/22-37.html>; <http://new.hist.asu.ru/biblio/evrei/103-105.html>.
16. Bernstein, “A JDC History,” 426.
17. Data of the National Council of the Jews of Siberia and the Urals, 11 August 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F46.
18. Goncharov, “Evrei v sibirskom sotsiume vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachala XX v.,” 31–2, 36, 42–3.
19. On autonomism see Dubnov, *Pis’ma o starom and novom evreistve*; on the building of the democratic Jewish communities in Petrograd and in Russia see Beizer, *Evrei Leningrada*, 172–91.
20. Rafaeli, *Bemaavak legeula*, 59; Novomeysky, *My Siberian Life*.

21. On the expulsion see, for instance, Goldin, "Deportation of Jews by the Russian Military Command," 40–72.
22. On EKOPO see Sverdlova, "Havaad hayehudi leezrat nifgaei hamilhama (YEKOPO) be-Russia," 19–30.
23. Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 40. Rosenblatt to Teusler, 10 September 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F62. Szajkowski writes that by August 1917 there were 19,333 Jewish refugees in Ekaterinoslav (meaning apparently Yekaterinburg) Province alone (Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 40). 5
24. Szajkowski mistakenly calls it the "HIAS Foreign Relations Committee" (Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 41). Formally, the organisation named HIAS was founded in 1902. However, only after it merged with the Hebrew Sheltering House Association in March 1909 and formed the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, did it develop from a small association of social aid to a nationwide organisation. Samuel Mason, a Russian-born accountant, became manager of HIAS in 1907 (1909–14 general manager; from 1914 member of the HIAS Board of Directors) and was influential in its affairs until his death in 1950. Wischnitzer, *Visas to Freedom*, 38, 40, 47, 48, 62, 84. 10
25. *Our Mission to the Far East*, report by Mr Samuel Mason. HIAS: NYC, [1918] (Mason Report), 7. 15
26. HIAS press release, 2 September [1918] YIVO, HIAS Collection. RG 245, B, F15–3; Mason Report, 8.
27. Mason report, 8.
28. About Mason's achievements in Yokohama see Mason Report; Wischnitzer, *Visas to Freedom*, 84–5; Bernstein, "A JDC History," 429, 430, 441–3.
29. Mason Report, 7; Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 44. Szajkowski gives this information with a distortion. 20
30. Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 44.
31. V.S. Zavoiko (Kourbatoff) was a former Petrograd businessman. One of the organisers of General Lavr Kornilov's uprising (August 1917), he later became Kornilov's adjutant. He participated in the White Movement as "Colonel Kourbatoff," unsuccessfully intrigued against Kolchak's government, was exiled and continued his activity in New York. Later he served with Ataman Semenov. He blamed Denikin and Kolchak for their misguided strategy against the Bolsheviks. 25
32. 25 November 1918, AJJDC NY, AR 14/18, F147.
33. Ibid.
34. Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 44, 45.
35. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 427. Wischnitzer, *Visas to Freedom*, 82. 30
36. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 427–8.
37. Roberts, "Jewish Bankers, Russia, and the Soviet Union," 9–37.
38. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 429.
39. "Terrible Plight of Jewish War Refugees," HIAS press release, 2 September 1918. YIVO, MKM 15.50. Series 245.4.15.
40. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 427–8. 35
41. Lucas to Secretary of State, 19 February 1919, YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F63.
42. A. Ya. Gornshstein's report at the Joint Session of the National Council with Members of the Central Bureau of the Central Refugees' Organization, and the Department of Aid to Prisoners of War, 12–13, 16, November 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F12.
43. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 426.
44. Ibid., 428. 40
45. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F14.
46. Complaint by a group of German POW officers to the commandant of the Kansk POW camp. October 1918. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F5. According to the prisoners, the Czechoslovaks robbed them of 168,000 rubles and hundreds of boots, shoes, overcoats, trousers and other clothes.
47. Erwin Zweigenthal and Ashor Becker (POW) to Rosenblatt, 20 August 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F17. 45
48. Ibid.
49. Interview with General Graves, 7 May 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F30; Rosenblatt's Report at JDC. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F13.
50. AJJDC NY, R 8, Fr 1855–6.

51. Two years later, the JDC had to provide aid to the Ukrainian population suffering from hunger on a non-sectarian basis, as its umbrella organisation, the American Relief Administration (ARA), demanded. "And we heard also from Mr. Frank Rosenblatt, who had gone into Russia for us as investigator. 'Did we intend to feed all the Ukraine?' – he asked. 'What of the East Ukraine where the Cossacks lived who had no mercy for the Jews? Would we feed them also? Are you going to feed these bandits so that they may be kept alive to kill your men and children and shame your women?'" (Bogen, *Born a Jew*, 276).
52. Rosenblatt's Report to JDC. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F13.
53. "A very staunch autocrat" according to Graves (Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 85).
54. AJJDC NY, R 8, Fr 1858.
55. Rosenblatt to Teusler. 6 May 1919, YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F60.
56. Teusler to Rosenblatt, 11 September 1919, YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F62.
57. Rosenblatt to Teusler, 15 September 1919, YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F60.
58. Novomeysky to Rosenblatt, 14 February 1920, YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F55.
59. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 437–41.
60. Budnitskii, *Rossiiskie evrei mezhdru krasnymi i byelymi*, 405.
61. *Evreiskaya zhizn'* (Irkutsk) 24 (1919): 8.
62. *Vperiod*, March 15, 1919.
63. Interview with General Graves, 7 May 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F30.
64. Rosenblatt's diary, 18 April 1919. YIVO, RG 1572.
65. Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 86.
66. "I am afraid that if such a cable were sent the result would be very bad for me and that it would not reach its destination ... I could be shot from the corner, accidentally. I could be arrested as a Bolshevik agitator – they could do anything with me – any frame-up would be enough to get rid of me." Interview with General Graves, 7 May 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F30.
67. Rosenblatt to Caldwell, 14 May 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F63.
68. Rosenblatt's diary, 8 June 1919, YIVO, RG 1572.
69. Ivan Ivanovich Soukine (1890–?) until 1918 was secretary of the Russian Embassy in Washington, from December 1918 through December 1919 foreign minister for the Kolchak government. After the fall of Kolchak he emigrated to China, then to the United States. Rosenblatt's diary, 27 June 1919, YIVO, RG 1572. According to Bernstein, Soukine also played the "Jewish card" to achieve his political goals. He told Rosenblatt "that the only way to save the Jews was for him to urge the United States to recognise the Kolchak regime, for if that fell, reactionaries would obtain control and oppress the Jews" (Bernstein, "A JDC History," 432). The quotation is a proof that Soukine believed in the tremendous power of the Jews to influence American foreign policy.
70. See, for instance, Rosenblatt's report about this meeting to Ernest Lloyd Harris, Council General of the United States in Siberia. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F63.
71. Rosenblatt to Harris, 1 July 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F63.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Rosenblatt's diary, 18 April 1919, YIVO, RG 1572.
74. *Evreiskaya zhizn'* 24 (1919): 8–10. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 432.
75. Rosenblatt to Kitty Rosenblatt, 28 July 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B5, F92.
76. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 433.
77. Data of NCJSU, 11 August 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F46.
78. Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 73.
79. *Ibid.*, 70.
80. *Ibid.*, 70.
81. 24 September 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F63. Bernstein, "A JDC History," 433. "As I learned subsequently, Annenkoff [Annenkov] Cossacks entered the city after the allied forces and the regular army had evacuated, and flooded the streets with Jewish blood," Rosenblatt wrote to his wife.
82. Rosenblatt's diary, YIVO, RG 1572. Interview between Graves and Rosenblatt, 29 September 1919. Morris was US Ambassador in Japan and was sent to Siberia with a supervising mission. Also: Macgowan to Secretary of State. Paraphrase to Rosenblatt, 16 October 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F63.
83. Louis Marshall to Rosenblatt. 31 October 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F63. Szajkowski, "Kolchak," 71.

84. 15 March 1919. Aldoshin et al., *Sovietsko-amerikanskije otnosheniya: Gody nepriznaniya, 1918–1926* (Soviet–American Relations: The Years of Non-recognition 1918–1926). Moscow, 2002, 77–8.
85. General A. Knox, British representative with Kolchak’s army, reported to the British War Ministry that the execution of Nikolai II and his family was planned and implemented by the Jews. Budnitskii, *Russian Jews between the Reds and the Whites*, 404; Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, 300. 5
86. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, 364.
87. Rosenblatt’s diary, 12 April 1919.
88. Rosenblatt’s diary, 16 April 1919.
89. See A. Wordwell, Head of the ARC Mission in Russia, to G.V. Chicherin, People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs, 8 September 1918; Chicherin to Wordwell, 11 September 1918; Wordwell to Chicherin, 18 September 1918; Aldoshin et al., *Sovietsko-amerikanskije otnosheniya: Gody nepriznaniya*, 58–61, 63–5. 10
90. Mason Report, 8.
91. *Bulleten S’ezda Everiskikh Obshchin Sibiri i Urala* 3 (1919): 6–7.
92. Protocol of meeting, 12 April 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F41.
93. Survey of the emergence and existence of the Emigrants Aid Organization. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F41. 15
94. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F41.
95. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F44.
96. Memorandum, Harbin Jewish Community (Hebrew, undated). YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F42.
97. H. Tarchiner to CB of the Zionist Organization, 30 March 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F28.
98. Rosenblatt Report. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F13, p. 3.
99. Official answer to the CB of ZO, 17 February 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F34. 20
100. Szajkowski, “Kolchak,” 43.
101. Erwin Zweigenthal and Ashor Becker (POW) to Rosenblatt, 20 August 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B1, F17. Two parts of Austria-Hungary, Bukovina and Galicia, became parts of Romania and Poland, respectively, after the war.
102. Protocol of the Organization Meeting of the Auxiliary Committee of the JDC, 15–16 December 1919. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F38. 25
103. Novomeysky to Rosenblatt. 14 February, 1920. YIVO, RG 1572, B3, F55.
104. YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F40. The latter was connected to the JDC’s intention to close its branch in Vladivostok and was intended to justify that decision.
105. The letter was signed by engineer Victor Seelenfreund, Papa, Hungary; Siegfried Graubart, Innsbruck, Austria. Seal of the Zionist Organization of War Prisoners in Pervaya Rechka YIVO, RG 1572, B2, F16. 30

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