

But while the Russian giant was wrestling with the hapless Jews, the Jews, without any effort or intention, won many voluntary recruits from the camp of the enemy. Russia, with her entrenched Greek Catholicism, in which the Renaissance and the Reformation had produced scarcely a ripple, has furnished more proselytes to Judaism than any other country in Christendom. In Russia, Judaism, or some semblance of it, made its appeal not only to a few individuals, but to whole groups, and today there are all over the world hundreds of thousands of former Russian Orthodox Christians who are strict observers of the religion of Israel.

Dissatisfaction with the doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church began almost simultaneously with the conversion of St Olga. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the prevailing religious unrest had already produced several dissenting sects. One of these, the Strigolniki, so called after its founder Carp Strigolnik, whose center was in Novgorod, abrogated many of the rites of the Greek Church and denied the divinity of Christ. Whether the Jew Skaria (Zechariah), who was reputed to have studied "astrology, necromancy, and various other magic arts," was in any way connected with this movement is uncertain, but by 1475 we hear of the *Szydovstvoichy*, or the "Judaizing Heresy." Led by the priest Denis and the Archbishop Aleksey, who took the name Abraham and called his wife Sarah, many Russians, including priests, monks, and mechanics, accepted the Jewish day of rest as their Sabbath and some of them even submitted to the rite of circumcision. Among the Judaized courtiers of Ivan III was the Secretary of State Fedor Kuritzyn, the Archimandrite Zosimus, the Monk Zacharias, the Czar's daughter-in-law, Princess Helena, and his grandson Dimitri who in 1498 became heir apparent. It seemed as if Russia was on the eve of becoming another Khazaria, when the Church Council, with

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.... Kherson and Kiev, Podolia and Volhynia, Twersk and Kuba. The number of these *Yudistvuyuschy*, as they called themselves, was estimated at no less than one hundred thousand while that of the *Molokani* and *Subbotniki*, who in most instances were on their way to complete Judaization, was assumed to be as high as two million. The reaction which soon set in drove many of them under cover again, but many more left their possessions, which were sometimes considerable and with their families sought refuge in Canada, the United States, South America, and Palestine. Of those who emigrated to America, over a hundred families settled at Boyle Heights near Los Angeles, California. The three hundred Cossack families from Kuba who established themselves in a cooperative colony in Uruguay, made such a success of their enterprise that the government recommended them as models for emulation by the natives.

The Zionist movement which infused new hope into the hearts of the miserable dwellers in the Pale, and caused many indifferent and even converted Jews to retrace their steps to the synagogue, profoundly affected also the Judaizing Russian Christians. To numerous Cossacks on the Volga, Theodore Herzl appeared as the promised Messiah, and whole villages emigrated to "Palestinka." Hundreds of families from Caucasia and Siberia are now settled in Jerusalem,

Jaffa, Tel-Aviv, Rishon l'Zion, and other colonies. They were among the first to rehabilitate Galilee, and became fishermen on the Sea of Kinneret. They proved themselves both industrious and excellent agriculturists and adaptable to, and lovers of, the land of Israel. Their children speak Hebrew and feel insulted; they are referred to as *gerim*.

Among other more or less prominent individuals who groped their solitary way to Judaism we may single out the daughter of a Polish Count who played an important part in the uprising of 1830, and a youth who belonged to the noble family of Tishkevitz, which two centuries before had produced the proselyte of righteousness, Zarembo. There was also a general of a corps of Cossacks, Mikhail de Lusinian, a former prince of Cyprus, who became a convert to Judaism at the age of thirty,

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took the name of David, and died in St. Petersburg in 1912. The motive which prompted Doctor Krassilnikoff of Odessa to cast his lot with the Jews to the extent of adopting their religion and even their Yiddish dialect was strange indeed. He was one of the *Narodnichestoo*, or public spirited men and women of the Russian intelligentsia during the reign of Alexander II who undertook to raise the economic and cultural standard of their countrymen regardless of race and religion. In his intense idealism, Krassilnikoff held himself responsible for the misery of his fellow-Russians of the Jewish race and felt it his duty to expiate for the horrors perpetrated on them by his people. His conversion, like the wearing of the Jewish arm band by the Dutch and Belgians under Nazi domination, was intended not only as a protest but a sort of "vicarious atonement for the transgressions of his State and Church: "If they flog a Muzhik," he would say, "let them flog me, too; if they martyrize the Jews, let them make a martyr of me also," which the Russian officials probably did.

By the Treaty of Versailles, Poland and Lithuania were given their autonomy. But though they both drank of the same bitter cup as did the Jews while under the iron heel of Czarist Russia, and despite the special provisions to protect the rights of minorities, the Jews in these countries fared no better than before, while Russia, by "liquidating" all religion as the "opiate of the people," dealt a staggering blow to both Judaism and Christianity. Yet even in Bolshevik Russia and Nazified Poland and Lithuania, there were not lacking some who sought after the God of Israel. In 1927 the rabbinate in Warsaw and Kaunas found it necessary to convoke a conference to deal with the many applications of would-be *gerim*. Strange to say, when the candidates for conversion whose applications were rejected appealed to the government, it rebuked the rabbinate for imposing difficult conditions on intending proselytes. The government itself, however, was hostile to converts as to Jews, and public opinion was even more so. Theodor Leschek, who became a proselyte and took the lame Abraham b. Abraham, was dismissed from his professorship at the Tarnow High School on the unsupported