**scan 15072**

Police Department Case

Related Records

No. 161 Part 1

Regarding the petition of Arnold White, an English subject and an authorized representative of Baron de Hirsch, about emigration of Russian Jews to America

Case opened: May 23, 1891

Case closed: September 20, 1902

**scan 15073-15080**

\*\*List of documents in the case: Total of 193 pages and an envelope with 15 documents

**scan 15081**

\*\*Text in French, partially translated into (*illegible*) Russian. Includes a list of gubernias, presumably those mentioned in the petition

**scan 15082**

\*\*Text in French

**scan 15083-15084**

The Office of the Acting Director of the Police Department

By the order of Your Excellency, I’m honored to present for your signature the document issued by Senator Pleve for distribution to the Governors of the Kiev, Vilno, and Warsaw gubernias. It is related to the visit of the subject of Great Britain, Mr. White. A similar document will be sent from (*name illegible*) to the Governors of the Kharkov, Chernigov, Yekaterinoslav, Kherson, Mogilev, Minsk, and Odessa gubernias.

\*\*Handwriting not completely legible

**scan 15085-15086**

Confidential

Minister of Internal Affairs

Dear Sir Iosif Vladimirovich:

The subject of Great Britain, Arnold White (Mr. Arnold Henry White), who has a written reference from our Ambassador in London, has arrived in Russia and petitioned the Ministry of Internal Affairs about assistance in his travel to some southern and western towns of the Russian Empire to familiarize himself with the everyday life of the Jewish population. His travels are in response to the initiative of the well-known banker Baron de Hirsch regarding the relocation, if permitted by the appropriate authorities, of Jews to the Republic of Argentina, with the goal of permanent residency in agricultural colonies.

Considering that it is inappropriate to ignore the petition of the said foreigner who was recommended by our Ambassador in London, I would like to alert Your Excellency of White’s intention to visit Warsaw and Lodz that are part of your locale and to advise you that the goals pursued by White do not contradict our government’s policy. I would also add to the above that the methods of his research conform to the requirements of social order.

Sir, please accept assurances of high esteem and complete devotion.

Ivan Durnovo (*signature*)

To His Excellency I.V. Gurko

No. 175

25 May, 1891.

**scan 15087**

\*\*To Ivan Semenovich Kakhanov

Identical to scan 15085; second page is missing

**scan 15088**

\*\*To Count Aleksej Pavlovich Ignatiev

Identical to scan 15085; second page is missing

**scan 15089**

\*\*Identical to scan 15086 with reference to Kiev and Kamenets-Podilsk; first page is missing

From Ivan Durnovo to Governor-General of Warsaw and Vilno

No. 177

25 May, 1891

**scan 15090-15091**

\*\*Identical to scan 15085-15086 with reference to Mogilev

To Aleksandr Stanislavovich Dembovetsky

No. 184

25 May, 1891

**scan 15092**

Same correspondence to:

1. His Excellency Prince Nikolaj Nikolayevich Trubetskoj

No. 183 Minsk

1. His Excellency Sergej Vilgelmovich Oliva

No. 182 Kherson

1. His Excellency Vladimir Karlovich Shlippe

No. 1821 Yekaterinoslav

1. His Excellency Aleksandr Ivanovich Petrov

No. 180 Kharkov

1. His Excellency Aleksandr Konstantinovich Anastasiev

No. 179 Chernigov

1. His Excellency Pavel Aleksejevich Zelyony

Odessa

City Government

**scan 15093-15094**

Confidential

Minister of Internal Affairs

Dear Sir Ivan Nikolayevich:

The Ambassador of Great Britain, Sir Robert Morier, has sent me, enclosed with his private letter, a note from a British subject, Arnold White, who arrived here as an official representative of a Jewish banker, Baron de Hirsch.

In this note, as you will kindly see, A. White offers, in the name of Baron de Hirsch, to organize the immigration of Jews to Argentina, funded by Hirsh.

Presented in general terms, this plan has to do with the assistance that the Imperial government may extend to the said emigration.

Forwarding the above mentioned note for the consideration of Your Excellency, I’m honored to ask to advise me of subsequent decisions.

Sir, please accept assurances of high esteem and complete devotion.

(*signature*)

To His Excellency I.N. Durnovo

No. 111

22 June, 1891

**scan 15095-15097 (original in English)**

St. Petersburg, 16/28 June 1891

Having regard to the abnormal situation of the Russian Jews, to the fact that many of them are vagabond and half fed, seeking homes wherever they can find outlets; and to the fact that hitherto the effort to escape has been a disorganized flight, without guidance, aim, or reason, Baron de Hirsch (deeply moved for his coreligionists), has asked me to study in Russia the questions of Jewish colonization, and to seek from the Government their effective support to a coherent and well organized plan for settling the poorer Jews in Argentina.

In pursuit of that object I have journeyed through Russia, and have found good material for the colonies, in the shape of sober, hardworking, and moral men and women, glad to engage in agriculture, and I consider, therefore, with the aid of the Government in regard to the following four points, the success of the Baron’s scheme is assured. Without that aid I see no means of organizing a plan designed to end the present state of confusion and distress, the more especially among the little children.

The following are the four points on which Government aid is needed:

1. Permission is required to obtain good local advice. Emigration Committees composed of worthy and respected Jews are required in each town in order:
2. To select families for emigration;
3. To spend the money remitted by Baron de Hirsch;
4. To control, organize and superintend the assembly and departure of emigrant parties.
5. To act as channels of communication between the Government, Baron de Hirsch, and emigrants. A central Committee in St. Petersburg will also be needed.

Under existing laws the Jew must either organize their emigration arrangements secretly, or not at all. If Government grants permission to form Committees, they would require to be represented on those Committees in order that disloyal persons may be excluded and to see that the Committees are not used to purposes not contemplated by the Government.

1. The passport system as it effects the emigrant Jews needs revision. A door must be open or shut. The Russian door is shut. It is necessary therefore to modify the costly and onerous passport system and to replace it by free Emigration certificates. The holders of these certificates should be deprived of all rights, and exempted from all duties as Russian subjects after the frontier is crossed. No extra penalty of additional military service ought to be imposed on the Jews who remain in Russia.
2. Gratuitous railway transport to the Russian frontier should be granted to all poor holders of Emigration Certificates.
3. Baron de Hirsch’s scheme will require years to perfect. We must look ahead. After the first corps d’elite is started as the pioneer body, we shall have a second rate ignorant population with which to deal. Some of the young Jews ought therefore to be trained in manual labor and in agriculture. Artisan and agricultural schools should therefore be started. There is no danger in this. Nihilists are the result of University training and empty stomachs. With hard manual labor and outdoor field work the Jews will be moralized, strengthened and prepared for colonization.

To sum up, we ask:

1. Power to appoint Emigration Committees.
2. Gratuitous Certificates of Emigration.
3. Railway transport to frontier.
4. Liberty to form agricultural and technical training schools.

Arnold White (*signature*)

**scan 15098-15102**

Translation into Russian of the English original in scan 15095-15097

**scan 15103-15109**

Confidential

Minister of Internal Affairs

Dear Sir Nikolaj Karlovich:

Having familiarized myself with Your Excellency’s letter #111 of 22 June attached to Arnold H. White’s note, I would like to comment, first of all, that the plan for a rather complex project of sending Russian Jews to Southern America has been only laid out in general terms and cannot be considered because of its raw presentation. But in view of the importance of this case it is my opinion that any steps that tend to decrease the Jewish population in Russia deserve special attention and sympathetic attitude to the Jews.

An appropriate organization for the resettlement of Jews, evidently, could only be carried out with the permission of the government and if the private persons that undertake it submit a detailed project then no difficulties can be envisioned in setting up organizational committees in provincial towns and in St. Petersburg that would operate under the control of the local governments and according to the existing laws. Said committees will be watched by private societies and committees and in cases when they break the rules and directions they were supposed to work under, they will be shut down by the Governors’ order.

Among steps that ease the eviction of Jews, it is important to create no impediments in taking away their Russian citizenship and furnishing, free of charge, appropriate certifications for moving abroad. Removal of citizenship is allowed, by law, only by permission of His Majesty, and although the certifications are assessed an insignificant fee of 80 kopeks, obtaining His Majesty’s permission is a rather complicated procedure and requires substantial time. The desire of Jews to emigrate that I have noticed this year caught my attention and it is not connected at all to the case at hand. I am considering, in the near future, to raise the question of the possibility to remove the complex process of obtaining emigration certificates and to deprive the Jews leaving their motherland of any responsibilities relative to Russian citizenship. To follow the latter, the Jewish families that lose their Russian citizenship will be subject to removal from the general list of Jews liable for the military draft, so that their removal will not cause the same for the Jews remaining in Russia that systematically try to avoid the responsibility of military service.

The question of free-of-charge travel of emigrating Jews to the border is closely connected to the financial and transportation administration. Without their involvement it is rather difficult to discuss the possibility of going along with A. White’s petition, especially that it is impossible, at this point, to forecast the size of the emigration and, consequently, determine even approximately the movement of the emigrants on the local Russian roads.

Finally, A. White offers to prepare artisans and farmers for resettlement and establish technical and agricultural schools in Russia for this purpose. Let alone that the decision on schools can only be formed upon familiarization with the detailed plan about their organization, it must be noted that in case of establishing schools particularly serving the emigrants, there will undoubtedly be serious questions regarding military and other services, for instance, it is possible that some students may wish to remain in Russia after graduation.

Submitting the above considerations to Your Excellency, I humbly ask that you relate the content of this letter to the Ambassador of Great Britain.

Sir, please accept assurances of high esteem and devotion.

Ivan Durnovo (*signature*)

**scan 15110-15112**

\*\*Text in French

**scan 15113-15117**

\*\*Text in Russian.

This scan contains a translation of a report, written in English by Arnold White, describing his 1891 visit regarding Russian Jewish settlements.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*This description is found by me (Y. Pasik) on pages 61 – 64 of the book *The Modern Jew* by Arnold White published in New York, by Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1899. See the English original below.

--------------------THE JEW AS AGRICULTURIST, page 61

*A few particulars of some of the colonies may not be without interest.*

*I arrived at the colony of Dobraya at sundown on June 16.*

*The straggling village consisted of 104 houses, many of them*

*neat and substantial; others were in a state of decay, which*

*gave an untidy air to the streets. On inquiry, however, I found*

*that the uninhabited and tumbledown cottages were those*

*originally inhabited by colonists who had outgrown their*

*modest habitations, and who had prospered sufficiently to*

*provide more ambitious residences. The population of the*

*village amounted to 500 souls. That night I took the evidence*

*of fifteen men, clad in long frock coats; serious, stalwart,*

*sunburnt fellows. Among them was Visnawata, a*

*blacksmith, of forty-two years of age, married, and*

------------------------- THE MODERN JEW, page 62

*the father of three children. He had been thirty-seven*

*years in Dobraya, was capable of making ploughs and*

*carts, including the wheels. His hands were hard, and*

*the work he turned out, though not equal to that of*

*Ransomes and Sims or Howard of Bedford, was serviceable*

*and good. His income in good years amounted*

*to 800 roubles. Zadik Passil, a мan of forty, married,*

*with six children, lived on his land — thirty dessiatines.*

*He uses horses, four or six in the team, which are his*

*own property. Except for the eternal frock coat his*

*bearing was that of a capable small farmer. Zessi*

*Liptaski, twenty-six, bachelor, worked for his father on*

*his allotment. He is one of four brothers who, with*

*the parent, gain a living from the thirty dessiatines.*

*Land is hired on "parole" from a neighboring proprietor.*

*These men, like their companions, gave one the*

*impression of a natural dignity born of duties done*

*and a consciousness of natural power of mind. The*

*little community is governed by ten old men, with a*

*chairman appointed by Government. They enjoy*

*power to inflict fines up to thirty roubles. There is no*

*crime and no robbery in the village. The policeman*

*was the weakest and most incapable man conceivable,*

*and his physical infirmities formed a silent tribute to*

*the virtues of the people. On my remarking the*

*absence of trees or flowers round the houses, they*

*admitted the defect, but said that for the last few years*

*they were afraid of making improvements which might*

*at any time be confiscated by the Government, but as*

*a matter of fact some of them had begun to plant*

*trees. One excellent feature in Dobraya was the*

*existence of a mutual insurance society, in which no*

---------------------THE JEW AS AGRICULTURIST, page 63

*loss exceeding 400 roubles was recoverable. The*

*average earnings of heads of families amounted to 400*

*roubles, a very small income for large families. On*

*inquiring into the question of money-lending, I found*

*that, while there were no usurers among the Jewish*

*population, some of the poorest were apt to borrow*

*money at 36 per cent, from a neighbouring Russian*

*peasant, thus giving a Muscovite version of the fable of*

*the wolf and the lamb.*

*Next day I visited a number of the colonists in their*

*own homes. I paid surprise visits at random, and*

*found the cleanliness and self-respect universal. The*

*Rabbi had great influence, and if ever I saw practical*

*religion carried into daily life it was among those grave*

*and sober Hebrew ploughmen.*

*Three-furrow ploughs, reapers, rollers of fluted stone,*

*were all made in the place. The blacksmiths and the*

*ploughmen, the miller and the haymakers all exhibited*

*their skill and strength, and I was not surprised to learn*

*from neighbouring proprietors that they prefer Jewish*

*labourers in harvest time to Russians or to Germans-*

*Vodka has no charms for the former.*

*Space will not allow me to describe the other colonies*

*I visited, where I found results even more favourable*

*to the Jewish population. There is a hunger and thirst*

*for knowledge which is almost pathetic. All the*

*children are educated, and apparently there were no*

*black sheep. It is true that the cultivation is not good*

*to English eyes. Charlock is too plentiful in the young*

*wheat. The potatoes are not "hilled up," The*

*furrows are not straight. Roads are unmended. But*

*the Russian proprietors do no better, if as well, and the*

----------------------------- THE MODERN JEW, page 64

*Government studiously neglects this splendid population.*

*Well led and well organized, they are susceptible*

*of great development. To a trained eye, however, their*

*moral and physical condition is full of promise.*

*In the colony of Novaya Poltavka I found 185*

*houses, inhabited by 1634 souls in all, cultivating 2850*

*dessiatines. To the profits of agriculture they added*

*horse breeding. The young men rode like Cossacks of*

*the Don, and on my proposing some races, and*

*offering a few roubles as prizes, there were twenty-eight*

*entries in five minutes. The first race — which we*

*called the "Prix du Baron de Hirsch" — was most eagerly*

*contested by eight-and-twenty lads, catch weights,*

*riding without saddles or stirrups, and the winner was*

*warmly congratulated on all sides. At last I heard*

*a Russian Jew laugh, and even cheer. For when I left*

*these fine fellows they rode by the side of the cart, and*

*gave me a good salvo of Hebrew cheers, which showed*

*that the gloom and sombre silence of the Jewish population*

*of Russia is removable by sunshine and toil.*

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**scan 15118-15120**

# 2721, 14 August, 1891

To His Excellency S. V. Oliva

Director of Police Department

Dear Sir, Sergej Vilgelmovich:

The subject of Great Britain, Arnold White, already familiar to Your Excellency from my letter of 25 May, #182, has completed his travels in Russia, commissioned by the banker Baron de Hirsch, with the goal of learning the life of Jews in order to organize their immigration to the Argentinian Republic, published a book in which he described, among others, the Jewish agricultural colonies Dobraya and Novaya Poltavka. It is clear from the enclosed excerpt from the said work that Mr. White came to favorable conclusions in regard to the Jewish agricultural colonies.

Having found the mentioned colonies blossoming and having confirmed that the Jews that lived there, indeed, work on land and they are so successful that, at harvest time, the local landowners preferred to hire Jews because they are better compared to Russian workers.

However, information that the Ministry of Internal Affairs possesses based on the report of the former acting Governor-General of Odessa, indicates that Jewish agricultural colonies are in a sad state: the land remains uncultivated and is rented for part of the harvest to local peasants, and the majority of colonies’ residents live outside the colonies. Also, from the journals of the Kherson Gubernia Commission on the Jewish question stated in 1881 that agricultural activities of Jews only served as secondary to other, easier ventures. For the most part, Jews in colonies pay more attention to trade, preferably of alcohol, frequently connected to usury.

Based on the above mentioned considerations, I am honored to request Your Excellency, according to the order of the Minister of Internal Affairs, to commission the most reliable and experienced functionary of special affairs with local learning of the state of the agricultural colonies of Dobraya and Novaya Poltavka and check whether Mr. White’s description reflects reality. I humbly ask that you advise me about the results of the investigation.

Sir, please accept assurances of high esteem and devotion.

Durnovo (*signature*)

**scan 15121-15123**

Very confidential

July 5, 1891

Assistant of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

4 June, 1891

#4591

Dear Sir, Ivan Nikolayevich:

July 5

In the private letter of the 25th of last June, #2073, Your Excellency advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of your consideration regarding the note from the representative of Baron de Hirsch about the immigration of Russian Jews to Argentina. Specifically, you kindly expressed your suggestion about familiarizing, privately, the Ambassador of Great Britain with the content of your feedback.

As a consequence, I personally related to A. White, in the presence of Sir Robert Morier, the general outline of the comments made by Your Excellency about the project presented to them. A. White summarized the content of our conversation in his letter to me with satisfactory precision.

Enclosing hereby the copy of the said letter, I am humbly requesting that you, dear Sir, return it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as soon as it is not needed any longer.

Dear Sir, please accept assurances of the best esteem and complete devotion.

Shishkin (*signature*)

**scan 15124**

\*\*top paragraph in French

\*\*restof textoriginally in English

St. Petersburg, 26 June/8 July, 1891

Excellency,

Having regard to the importance of the conversation I have had the honor of holding with your Excellency today, I venture to recapitulate what passed, with the view of placing on record that which I understand to be the attitude of His Majesty’s Government towards the scheme of Baron de Hirsch for the Colonization of the Russian Jews.

With reference to my Memorandum of the 16/28 June I understand the Government to be generally in accord with the desire expressed therein for the aid of the Administration, and willing to assist the plan in question.

**scan 15125 (original in English)**

With regard to the four points named by me I gathered from your Excellency that the Government is prepared to sanction the Central and Local Committees, subject to the details of the plan being submitted to and approved by the Government. I understood that one element on the Committee shall be a person or persons approved by Government, and selected by the Jews representatives and those of Baron de Hirsch, respectively. Adequate precautions shall be taken to prevent the committee turning from the purposes for which they are organized.

2) I understand that the paragraph in the Memorandum of 16/28 June is generally approved but requires elaboration.

3) The question of gratuitous railway transport has not yet been fully considered by the Minister of Ways and Communications but in principle the assistance of the State will be given, if not by gratuitous convergence, at all events by considerable reductions on normal rates.

4) The question of the establishment of Agricultural Schools is not unfavorably viewed by the Government but will require detailed study and examination of what is proposed before a definite answer can be given.

I shall be greatly obliged if Your Excellency will confirm the accuracy of what passed during our interview.

I am, Excellency, Your obedient humble servant

*(signed)* Arnold White

P.S. It is understood that this communication is of a confidential matter for the use of Baron de Hirsch and not for publication in the newspapers.

*(signed)* A. W.

**scan 15127-15130 (draft translation of the above letter into Russian)**

Document #2367, 15 June 1891

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**scan 15131 (no text)**

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**scan 15132-15135**

\*\*Text in French

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**scan 15136**

\*\*No meaningful text

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**scan 15137-15140**

\*\*Text in French

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**scan 15141 (original in English)**

Copenhagen

August 23

September 4, 1891

Excellency,

According to my promise, I write to inform Your Excellency that yesterday I had a long interview with Her Majesty the Empress in which I said all that I had already said to Your Excellency. Her Majesty was graciously pleased to assure me of her intention of helping me by every means in her power, the more especially on her return to St. Petersburg.

I beg leave to point out to Your Excellency a letter of mine in The Times of 1st September (Tuesday). It is on page 11.

I trust that Your Excellency will allow me to see the report of the (*illegible*) mailed by me. Allow me to renew to Your Excellency the expression of my highest consideration.

(*signed*) Arnold White

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**scan 15142-15149 (scanned copy of The Times: letter mentioned in 15141, some classified ads.)**

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**scan 15150 (missing)**

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**scan 15151-15152**

Ministry of Internal Affairs

Office of the Governor of Poltava

Department 1

September 26, 1891

Poltava

#32765; 5774

October 1, 1891

To the Police Department

The Police Superintendent of Kremenchug, presented to me his report #9546 of September 23 of this year regarding the appeal from Paris of M. von Hirsh received by the Kremenchug Uyezd (district) rabbi regarding the resettling the Jews of the Russian Empire. He advised me that the said rabbi is petitioning for permission to distribute that appeal among Jews.

Enclosing the mentioned appeal, I am honored to humbly request the clarification by the Police Department whether it is acceptable for distribution among Jews.

For the Governor, signed by the Vice Governor (*signature*)

**scan 15153, 15157**

Printed text of the appeal mentioned is in 15151-15152 in German, Yiddish, and Russian.

**scan 15154-15156**

\*\*Text in Yiddish

**scan 15158-15159**

Not completely legible

**scan 15160-15161**

To His Excellency P. N. Durnovo

Ministry of Internal Affairs

Governor of Kherson

September 28, 1891

Kherson

#1775

Your Excellency, Pyotr Nikolayavich

Pressing issues and, especially, the issue of providing bread to and planting the fields for the population that suffered from a bad harvest, were the reasons that only now I can comply with your request included in the letter of August 14, #2721. I am forwarding to Your Excellency a note about the state of Jewish colonies, compiled by the head of office, Collegiate Councilor Zhuryari, who was sent by me to make a local inspection.

With full esteem and devotion, privileged to be Your Excellency’s

(*signature*)

**scan 15162-15186**

The note about the state of Jewish colonies

Without fanfare, expected by no one and known to no one and, therefore, with unspoiled possibility to view the beautiful picture, created in my imagination thanks to the sketch presented by the artful hand of Mr. White, I entered the Jewish colony Dobraya. It was 9 o’clock in the morning on September 22.

I traveled down a wide, straight street. On the sides there are clean little houses surrounded by significant woods. They make a pleasant impression as they remind me of our southern German settlements. There was not a soul in the street. “Everybody must have left for the fields to take advantage of yesterday’s rain and plant the winter crop,” I thought. I was ready, on the strength of the first impression, to believe that those who revile the Jews of the colonies came here with preconceived notions, and that things are not as bad as they said, and, given the opportunity to work, Jews would become good agricultural workers.

But three hundred steps farther along the main street or, rather, the road that crossed the colony, the picture was suddenly different: the German estates of exemplary owners, erected in the beginning of the colony on the side of the town of Balatsky, are replaced here and there haphazardly by little houses or huts, residents of which see the sun not only through the windows but through the half-open roofs; no fence around, neither house nor home. I didn’t even see any marked beginning and end of most of the Jewish estates. Only about five or six, seven at the most, estates in the entire colony that I later crossed on foot in all directions present a pleasant exception. Of them I could only name four: Tseplyarsky, Verkholaz, Ikonnikov, and Ruban, even though they are as much agriculture workers as merchants.

Disappointments followed me one after another: while waiting for the return of the coachman who went to find the lady of the house that I had chosen for my temporary quarters I remained in the street and soon I saw Jews walking in groups in the same direction. I followed them and entered the synagogue, where the service was on because September 22 was the day of the Jewish holiday “Rash Gashen” [probably Rosh Hashanah, the New Year]. The synagogue was full. Then I saw Jews going to another synagogue; later I saw a whole crowd standing on the shore of the pond and gazing into the water. Now I realized that it’s not the field work that explains the lack of life in the street.

Continuing my story about what I saw and heard, I will try to keep to Mr. White’s program.

According to the statistical information, the population of Colony Dobraya consists of 945 men and 845 women. The number utilized by Mr. White came from the 1885 enumeration list was used. Thanks to the holiday that attracted to the colony many Jews who are usually away on commercial business, about which I will have a chance to say below, I had an opportunity to see several hundred people, look closely at their faces and hands: all familiar Jews-merchants, only with tanned faces, typical of their race, and resembling Russian plowmen. Older male residents wear long coats, and the Jewesses wear hats of various design, gold brooches and earrings. Their sons wear fashionable coats, and the daughters – beautiful fashionable dresses. That excludes any reference to agriculture, working the lands with one’s own hands and needing as many pair of hands as possible.

I also saw Visnovats, a Jew that Mr. White was so excited about, and his smithy: it’s a stone building 9 steps in length, 5 steps in width; a furnace inside one wall, half-fallen-apart stove inside another wall; next to it lay old wheels; the middle is crowded with a frame of the water source. There is no free space, and 3-4 people can barely fit in. Visnovata keeps just one boy as a servant in the smithy. About the state of his business I will tell in my own words and in the words of two German residents of the colony: Fris and Graf. “I arrived in the colony Dobraya six years ago and settled on my father’s land. When I lived in the village of Yavkino, which was for about 14 years, my shop gave me a nice income, but now I can only get up to 500 rubles, in a good year, and this is not enough to support a family.” The frame in the smithy is braced by old iron, in my view, is self-made, and I think that I’m not mistaken when I come to this conclusion: “Visnovata makes not more than two-three agricultural tools in a year, Fris and Graf (old established residents) said, because the demand for them is only in cases of emergency; otherwise plows, harrows and such are purchased in the colony Efingar where the German worker makes them better and stronger.”

What didTsadik Passil do to attract attention, I can’t say. He actually lives off the land, like everybody said, but, from looking at him, did not differ at all from a Jew that spends all his life at the counter of his shop with the meter or scales in his hands and does not resemble a worker who has to work with a plow or other agricultural equipment during the harvest.

I saw Zus Thyplyarsky [Zessie Lintassky] in the crowd, as well. He was discharged from the army only at the end of last year and he still keeps some of his military bearing. “He did not rent and still does not rent any land from his neighbors,” explained his friends, all twelve of them, with whom I spoke, “he works on the land allotted to his father.”

Trying to learn the functioning of Jewish self-governance, 10 old men and their head, I asked the people around me, but, instead of answering they exchanged surprising looks. “We have nothing like that,” said their leader finally after my explanation. “Small misunderstandings get resolved by me, and quarrels and complaints are decided by the Justice of the Peace.” “And there are a lot of these each year,” he added. And based on the records of the village office and on the words of Jews themselves, there are not much fewer criminal cases, I’d like to say. “And there are so many unreported thefts”, the colony residents blabbed out, “that it’s hard to express.” The market is located by the tavern kept by a Jew on the shore of a rotting pond, in a crowded lot, on the main road. There is no market day that has no theft, but there are no instances when the guilty are caught. “The victim cries a bit and goes home.” It must have become unbearable for the neighboring peasants from the village of Yavkino to suffer systematic abuse at the market, so this year they wrote to the office of the colony Dobraya. Can this phenomenon be explained by the simplistic local policemen and their complete incompetence? I think so. In the agricultural office there is only evidence of crime that is known to the locals and to the police and is impossible to hide: four cases of horse theft; breaking into a shop and stealing the goods; false measure by the tavern owner; and breaking the law of serving alcohol. In the governor’s office there are many indicators of petty theft, most from pockets, that are not known to the representative or police but are known to the residents of the colony, as they acknowledged themselves.

I can’t explain the reason for the demand in 1889 to establish sponsorship over the Jewish colonies to ensure that any happenings were reported immediately, not in several months or even several years. But I think it has to do with the absence or order locally: an old stooped clerk, a similarly wretched leader and foreman that are all candidates for public welfare, plus a little perkier officer, represent order in the colony. The office is located in a dreadful hut with one room and a dirt floor; it has no table or chairs, only a filthy bench. Rubbish collects around the houses and at the very front doors. The two public wells should be closed for hygiene purposes; they are built near a rotting pond and they face a brushwood path made of manure. The water from the pond leaks freely through a side opening into one of the wells. One synagogue has been waiting for substantial repair for a long time; another is under construction for many years; only walls are erected, in spite of the fact that a new prayer house is urgently needed. The synagogue that I visited overflowed with people. The stuffy air and the heat forced them to go back and forth between the outside and the synagogue. Many houses badly need a coat of paint.

I counted 215 houses on the insurance declaration that are insured in the local council and I greatly surprised the residents by asking about the state of public insurance, a question that the Jews, evidently, heard for the first time.

Following in Mr. White’s footsteps, I was ready to learn, in as much detail as possible, the credit business, but could not and, therefore, I can only explain the success of Mr. White, who only spent several hours in the colony, to a lucky coincidence; I can say that I don’t know of Jews-usurers or their Russian neighbors that lend money under 36% annual; both groups told me they don’t have any.

Neither was I able to see the farriers, with the exception of Visnovata, and millers, and I’m not sure how many there are, because the colony only has two smithies and one mill, and four trestle sets for pressing grain and making flour. It is possible that these businesses are good enough at what they do, I have no reason to doubt that the agricultural tools are made for the colony workers by local farriers, but I don’t know how many such tools are being used: the list in the office shows, for instance, 33 plows, whereas I, upon inspecting more than a hundred estates, only saw one and what a weakling it was compared to those I saw in the German estates!

The only thing left to talk about is Jewish plowman and reaper. According to the official list, there are 102 heads of household that work on land, that cultivated 2,422 dessiatina and planted 319 dessiatina of winter crop and 884 of spring crop (1 dessiatina = 2.7 acres or 10,900 square meters). Almost every house has a pack of straw stored next to it as evidence that Jews work in agriculture. But is that the case? Is the straw the fruit of Jewish hands? I am convinced that in the majority of instances it is not and here is why: the appearance of Jews, like I said before, removes any accepted signs of land worker and such a worker that cultivates, with his family, twenty dessiatina. “There are landowners, for example, Tsiplyarsky, Verkholaz,” the Germans told me, “that work the land themselves along with hired help, but many rent out their lots either to sharecroppers or hire Russian plowmen.” The first to get a lot are the Germans, among Jews there are 19 families considered exemplary (the son of the above mentioned Graf rents 50 dessiatina), after them – the neighboring peasants of villages Malo-Aleksandrovka and Novo-Georgiyevka; it could be heard that they cultivate at least one-third of the land in the village of Zaselye for the colony Dobraya. In the records of the Novo-Poltavka office I found proof that the Zaselye and the German peasants told me the truth: in August of last year the overseer of the Jewish colonies had sent such an order to the office: “many of the land workers that do not have enough agricultural tools and cattle and some that are tardy, rent out part of their allotment to others or give it to sharecroppers” and, therefore, Jews should be ordered to personally work on their land and the neighboring peasants should be warned that their transactions would be considered void.

Now I understand Mr. White’s comment that the cultivation of land by Jews, quality-wise, does not differ from that of Russians, but I can’t see the source where he saw that the neighboring landowners, in time of harvest, prefer Jewish laborers to Russian and even German. Here, there is a misunderstanding. There were instances when Jews were hired to work in the neighboring businesses: masons and glaziers; it was these laborers, most living in poverty, who must have given Mr. White the false information. Jews, it can be said directly, work on land only out of necessity, since they cannot even conceive of dedicating themselves to hard agricultural labor, but they carefully hide that fact, concerned that examples of removal of property from the tardy will be repeated by order of the government.

The colony has two taverns, one of which serves also as a wholesale warehouse under the name of Barkunsky, a Jew, and the other under the name of the Luka Moisejchuk, a peasant of the village of Novo-Georgiyevka, who is a front for Braverman, a Jew. Residents of the colony that became rich own twelve different trade businesses.

And only strict research can reveal how many of them are involved in purchasing bread from peasants on the way to the market. I will only allow myself to note that, based on the words of the Jews themselves, they prefer easy and profitable commerce to agriculture. Since I could not learn the size of their agricultural business I, reluctantly, look at the reliable data for 1880, collected by V. N. Nikitin in his book “Jews in Agriculture”: out of 96 families, 52 cultivate the land with their own hands, 23 use hired help, and 21 rent out their land or give it out to sharecroppers. Let somebody ask the head of the railroad station at Dobraya how many Jews work on land and he will probably reply that Jews constantly crowd the station and that he was forced to ask for police assistance in order to stop making the railroad station into a place of trade and entertainment.

There is only one school in the colony of Dobraya. It takes up a rather spacious room furnished with six benches, each 4 arshin (1 arshin = .71 meter) long. If Mr. White thought that a school of that size could teach all the Jewish children, without exception, then I have no choice but to assume that the colony has illegal melameds that only support fanaticism and are hidden from the government. One young Jewish man told me, “We all would like to study in the school but it doesn’t have enough slots.”

From the colony of Dobraya I went to Novo-Poltavka using a nice straight road which surprised me greatly as I recalled that Mr. White had talked about the terrible state of the roads; if only he had not have come in the rainy season, the most demanding person could not reproach the Jews in this regard. Here, too, is the same illusion as in the Dobraya Colony: clean houses owned by Germans (exemplary owners) make a pleasant impression, but it darkens quickly. Dilapidated, unfenced houses with no plants around them, the total of 185 (according to the report for the year 1890 the colony has 36 lawns and 53 storage units and stables). They are, actually, larger in size than the houses of our peasants. The cane roofs are rotted, sometimes half-opened, with piles of manure near the houses; small groups of men in long jackets and coats bustling about, in spite of it being a workday; and Jewish women’s silk and satin dresses airing outside the houses, all indicate the flair that the colony residents have for household management.

However, the residents of the Nova-Poltavka colony seem to work the land more than those of the Dobraya colony, at least based on the information received by me at the office. But here too, as the cases at the office demonstrate, there is plenty of tardiness: not too far in the past, in 1880, the government allotted 1,000 dessiatina of land that the colony was entitled to for those who did not really wish to be truly village people. The colony has ten shops, one tavern, and one vodka storage area in the name of Russians, and two taverns managed by the Jewish society. All of that serves the peasants that pass through Novo-Poltavka, because Jews, as Mr. White justly noted, do not see value in vodka: in the entire year all the residents of the colony, according to the office, only spend 200 rubles in the taverns.

A beautiful grove of four thousand trees, created by the government, is now not taken care off and is being consistently destroyed by cattle.

The working horses owned by the Novo-Poltavka Jews are good, but no real horse breeding exists, nor did I notice any studs. The horse race run by the Jewish young men that gave Mr. White reason to compare the riders with the Don Cossacks was organized as follows. They were offered to ride to the railroad station 1 ½ versta (1 versta = 3,500 feet or 1.6 km) away, on these conditions: the person that races the entire distance gets a ruble; a person that finishes first two times, gets three rubles; and, finally, a person that finishes first three times, gets five rubles. “It was taking place at the time when Mr. White, surrounded by all the available residents, was viewing the herd,” my coachman, a young Jew, told me, “and I, too, among more than 30 people took part in the race and received three rubles; a few people fell off their horses but we jumped over them.”

In the colony of Novo-Poltavka I had an opportunity to familiarize myself with the Jewish self-governing that caught Mr. White’s attention when he talked about the colony of Dobraya. It is nothing more than a group of several people who, under the leadership of one of them, considers small misunderstandings. “If one side is not happy with the outcome then,” the leader told me, “the case goes to the Justice of Peace.”

The Novo-Poltavka leader Deener is a clever, efficient Jew, who has been in this role for a long time, it appears. He made sure that the office has a place to work; it is one room in the school building located in a solid construction. More children study here than in the Dobraya Colony; three melameds teach 43 small boys and 37 small girls; and school is attended by 57 boys and 67 girls.

After I reviewed the register for passports issued, it was clear that of 71 Jews that left the colony this year, only four returned. Passing by a smithy closed for lack of business and two mills (these are the only industrial plants of the colony along with one trestle set for making flour), I headed to the colony of Efingar.

Here were the same bustling groups of Jews. Their houses not only unpainted, opened and half-opened, like I had already seen, but also houses so decrepit that they are not fit to be occupied; this is recorded in the office. I was again greeted with the reality of the Jews who are ready to leave the colony at any opportunity; the proof of this is the fact that 200 passports were issued here this year, and many are requesting public assistance, although the harvest was average for the area. I saw the same agriculture workers in the neighboring settlement where two of them trade; they were selling various fruit from a peasant’s carriage. I did not notice Jewish plowmen anywhere, whereas the peasants were hurrying to plant seed into the ground wet from the recent rain.

I saw no other colonies but the Jews themselves told me that those I did see should be considered successful. This was confirmed by other people who frequently visited colonies, and therefore are familiar with their economic system.

(подпись - И. Журьяри)

**scan 15187-15190**

Record management

9 October 1891

#3279

To the District Council

The banker Baron de Hirsch, aiming to ease the immigration of Russian Jews by providing them with the means to settle in America, has acquired 3,000 million hectares of land in the Republic of Argentina to be colonized by Jews. He appealed to the Minister of Internal Affairs to permit the establishment in Russia of immigration committees to serve as conduits for gradual realization of the said endeavor.

Considering that the emigration of substantial numbers of Jews who accumulated within the Pale of Permanent Jewish Settlements would be rather desirable, the Minister of Internal Affairs expressed his agreement, in principle, with the organization of the said committees. He proposed to submit the draft of the bylaws of the organizing committees and the instructions for their activities that were designed by Baron de Hirsch to the attention of the Minister Committee.

It is suggested that only emigration of entire families should be allowed, where the family is considered as consisting of father, wife and unmarried children of all ages. As to the duties of the emigrating Jews to military service, it is petitioned that the young people who leave through the assistance of the said committees, and who are given their exit certificates from the appropriate authorities, should be relieved from military service. Relieving people of draft age that emigrate, does not have any effect on their coreligionists remaining in Russia. Thus, the number of emigrants should not be used to reduce the quota of Jews that are supposed to serve in the army.

Taking into account that determining the conditions of Jewish emigration relative to the military draft belongs in the realm of the District Council and the Police Department, by the order of His Excellency the Minister, I’m privileged to advise the District Council of the aforementioned, and humbly request to discuss, in the near future, the question of the possibility of providing the Jews who leave Russia for good and who denounce their citizenship, the following benefits: 1) Jews who leave with their entire families with the help of the colonization committees, and who receive the appropriate certificates, are relieved from military duty; and 2) the absence of those that emigrate during their draft age do not cause military duty for their coreligionists remaining in Russia.

The Department feels the responsibility to add that it is suggested that if the activities of the colonization committees turned out to be detrimental to state interest, then the Minister of Internal Affairs has the right to stop further work of the said committees and, at the same time, cease Baron de Hirsch’s project if within three years it has not accomplished its goal.

Signed by Director Durnovo

Signed by record-keeper Sevastianov

Copy confirmed (*signature*).

**scan 15191-15192**

Director of Police Department

Dear Sir, Nikolai Pavlovich

To follow up on the request of the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Police Department is asking to discuss at the District Council the question in #3279 about the release from military duty of Jews emigrating from Russia.

Due to this, and considering the order of His Excellency to immediately submit to the Minister Committee a presentation addressing the procedure of accomplishing Baron de Hirsch’s project of settling Russian Jew in America, I must humbly request that you, Dear Sir, expedite the urgent report to the District Council on the said subject, because its absence will delay other important presentations.

Please accept, Your Excellency, assurances of complete esteem and devotion.

Signature of Director Ivan Durnovo

**scan 15193-15195**

Ministry of Internal Affairs

District Council

Records on military duty

10 October 1891

#4915

To the Police Department

Per the request of October 9, the District Council is privileged to advise that, in the opinion of the Council, there should be no obstacles in providing the Jews leaving Russia for good and denouncing their citizenship with relieving them from military duty as is presented in the said request. But conditions must be set as listed below:

1. According to the military duty law (statute 130-132), the apportionment of the annual contingent takes place first in the gubernias and oblasts, then in the draft centers, according to the number of persons in the draft lists that are supplied by July 1. Therefore, in order to remove unnecessary hardships regarding military service, not only relative to the Jews remaining in Russia but also relative to those who may be concerned about the Christian population, the Jews of draft age who will get relieved must be excluded from the draft lists by July 1. And the draft notifications must be received from the appropriate organizations at the same time the lists are compiled, not later than May 1 (statute 118).

2. In order to prevent avoidance of military draft by falsely suggesting emigration, it must be determined that the Jews of draft age who received relief certification and then did not leave Russia until other men of their age drew their lottery and did not notify the appropriate office, must be drafted without going through the lottery as people that tried to avoid it. Those who notified of remaining in Russia in a timely manner will have the opportunity to participate in the lottery on general basis.

Head of Department (*signature*).

**scan 15196-15198**

\*\*Typed version of 15187-15190