

Leon Pinsker and “Autoemancipation!”: A Reevaluation

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ABSTRACT

Using recently uncovered writings by Leon Pinsker, a founder of the Hibat Tsiyon movement, the current article challenges the generally accepted understanding of Pinsker’s intellectual development as moving “from assimilation to nationalism.” In particular, the article reevaluates the idea that in his pamphlet “Autoemancipation!” Pinsker proposed territorial nationalism as an ideological substitute for Jewish civic emancipation in the Diaspora, particularly in the Russian empire. Rather, Pinsker held that the establishment of a national Jewish territory would, by its very existence, pave the way for the enhanced emancipation of those Jews who continued to live outside the territorial homeland.

Key words: Zionism, Russian empire, Leon Pinsker, Jewish emancipation

“**R**ead today [Pinsker’s] pamphlet, ‘Autoemancipation!’ . . . Dumbfounding agreement on the critical side, great similarity in the constructive. A pity that I had not read it before my own pamphlet was printed. Still, it is a good thing I knew nothing of it—or perhaps I might have abandoned my own undertaking.”¹ It appears that this entry in Theodor Herzl’s diary, from February 10, 1896, just at the time of the appearance of *The Jewish State*, was one of the decisive factors in determining the historiographical fate of Leon Pinsker (1821–91), founder of the Hibat Tsiyon movement, and of his pamphlet “Autoemancipation!” *An Appeal to His People by a Russian Jew* (1882), a foundational tract of modern political Jewish nationalism. In his synthesis of the major trends in twentieth-century

Zionist historiography, contained in his study of Zionist ideology, Gideon Shimoni expressed the conventional historiographical perception of the author of “*Autoemancipation!*” and his pamphlet: Pinsker was merely an early reflection of Herzl among the preemancipation Russian Jewish intelligentsia, and his essay “prefigured the essentials of Herzl’s analysis” in *The Jewish State*.² The placing of Pinsker in Herzl’s shadow largely explains the dearth of historiographical engagement with this Russian Jew and his manifesto. Scholarly biographies on Pinsker are largely lacking; there exist only a handful of studies on his personality, life, and activity,³ and only a few studies have focused on “*Autoemancipation!*”

A further outcome of the inclination to observe the author of “*Autoemancipation!*” through the prism of Herzl’s work is manifested in the tendency to view his life story, public persona, and intellectual development as a Jewish nationalist by means of the same long-accepted interpretational lens applied by earlier Zionist historians in representing Herzl’s path toward *The Jewish State* and political Zionism. The essence of this lens, which contained more than a bit of ideological didacticism, reflected the paradigm shift “from assimilation to nationalism.” This was a rather dramatic tale of disenchantment on the part of the enlightened European individual of Jewish origin with the idea of becoming integrated and involved in the social and national milieu of his country of residence on the basis of full and substantial equality of civil rights. This individual then directs all his energy toward political activism designed to reshape European Jewry as a particular national collectivity distinct from its European environment, thereafter leading the Jews away from extraterritorial dispersion among the territorial non-Jewish peoples and toward a territorial assembly as a sovereign political nation. In other words, this was to be a transition away from adherence to the concept of civil emancipation of Jews as individuals as they joined the civil-political collectives in their countries of birth and toward the quest for national emancipation of Jews as they became part of the national-political collective on the way to their homeland. Ben Halpern summarized this idea in his work *The Idea of the Jewish State*, in which he stated that Pinsker, like Herzl, proposed Zionism as an ideological substitute for emancipation, which the two men rejected as both the principle of Jewish status and the solution to the Jewish problem.⁵

The structure of this narrative of a paradigm shift incorporated the theme of the defining event, a decisive crossroads as it were, from which point onward the continued civil existence of the Jews in the postemancipation states (Herzl’s Habsburgian Austria) or the struggle for equal

civil rights for Jews in preemancipation states (the tsarist Russia of Pinsker) no longer appeared to the drama's protagonists to be viable alternatives for Jewish integration into the modern world. In Herzl's case, it was the Dreyfus Affair that was for some two generations perceived by historians to be the primary factor that had motivated the liberal Viennese journalist of the Jewish faith to reevaluate his position on the "Jewish question" in so radical a manner,⁶ whereas it is commonly thought that in Pinsker's case the defining event was the Storms in the South (1881–82), the wave of pogroms that swept over the southern Ukraine in the wake of the murder of Tsar Alexander II. In view of these pogroms' surprising dimensions, the tardy (at best) intervention by the police, and the continuing incitement against the Jews even in the progressive wing of the Russian press, Pinsker resolved, as it were, to cease his efforts to approach the Russian people and to abandon the dream of attaining citizenship in the Russian empire in favor of a national territorial solution.

The influential Zionist historian Ben-Zion Dinur described Pinsker's path from emancipation to autoemancipation in the following picturesque and captivating language:

A native of Galicia educated in Odessa, with German his mother tongue and Jewish wisdom his heritage, a student of Moscow University and an army physician during the Crimean War, a doctor renowned throughout southern Russia and a member of the intelligentsia in his city of residence "Yafat ha-Negev" (Odessa), a witty author of considered opinion, an independent and single-minded editor—Pinsker was possessed by a single aspiration: laying down roots and acquiring citizenship. And his objective—to share this aspiration with all Russian Jews. . . . He craved a homeland, and for many years he believed that he had reached "the desired shore": Russia—his homeland, its language—his language, and its life—his life. He was the devoted citizen of the great land and a faithful son to its people. Faithful in heart and soul. And entirely faithful, in all his thoughts and sentiments. And then came the tide of wild hatred, and the tempest of the "Storms in the South"—and his world collapsed around him, he lost the homeland in which he had always believed; the man who had labored to convey bricks for the construction of the new homeland—now found himself standing on the rubble of its ruin. . . . Was he not a contemporary of the destruction?—and this devastation of the homeland that he had craved enlightened him—to the true ruination: here he was, standing on the verge of the abyss of the great cataclysm that has endured for two thousand years. And he and his contemporaries had deluded themselves and their fellow people in vain and had sought "effortlessly" to repair "the calamity of their people." And Pinsker's heart emitted that "great and bitter lament" imbued with

[35]

*Leon Pinsker
and*

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Dimitry
Shumsky

grief and sorrow for his fellow people, which was also full of anger and indignation toward the people, who “had neither self-love nor the sentiment of national dignity.”⁷



It would not be an exaggeration to say that, with rare exceptions, Dinur’s description is emblematic of a portrayal of Pinsker divided along the temporal axis into Pinsker the emancipationist, prior to the Storms in the South, versus Pinsker the proponent of autoemancipation thereafter. This portrayal has persisted in Zionist historiography, from Yosef Klausner’s biographical survey of the author of “*Autoemancipation!*”, which appeared in 1921 in a commemorative publication marking Pinsker’s one hundredth anniversary, to the works on Zionist ideology and politics produced by David Vital and Shlomo Avineri.⁸

In contrast, the perception of the Dreyfus Affair as a revelatory event in Herzl’s Zionist evolution was first contested by Jacques Kornberg some three decades ago.⁹ Moreover, the “from assimilation to nationalism” paradigm has in recent decades lost much of its analytic and interpretational capacity to explain modern Jewish history.¹⁰ In the specific case of the historiography of the Jews of Russia in Pinsker’s time—namely, Russia under Nicholas I, during the time of the great reforms of Alexander II, and during the reaction under Alexander III—we have, from the early 1980s to the present time, witnessed a continuing and fundamental undermining of this paradigm. In addition, scholars have moved away from Dinur’s and Ettinger’s tendency¹¹ to regard 1881 and the Storms in the South as the watershed between the eras of emancipation and autoemancipation in the history of political trends among Russian Jewry. Although Jonathan Frankel was the most prominent proponent of the crisis perception of modern Jewish history and regarded 1881 as the decisive turning point in the history of Russian Jews,¹² in his work one can already find clear reservations about the presentation of emancipation, enlightenment, and integration as phenomena that hastened the disintegration of the inner unity of Jewish society and of “tradition.” Frankel was profoundly critical of what he defined as Dinur’s tendency “to describe modernization and Haskalah as simply standing in direct negation to the forces of collective survival, to the continuum made up of traditional Judaism and Jewish nationalism.”¹³ However sharp the discontinuity, it can, believed Frankel, still encompass a high degree of continuity.¹⁴

Other leading scholars of the history of eastern European Jewry in the modern age adopted an approach far more critical than Frankel’s toward the paradigm of polar trends in modern Jewish historiography,

while continually calling into question the crisis-centric interpretation of Russian-Jewish history in the nineteenth century. Though they kept in mind the importance of the events of 1881 in hastening the pace of change in Russian Jewish society, these scholars argued that several of the most significant cognitive, cultural, and political phenomena identified with the autoemancipatory, nationally oriented trends previously thought to have originated solely with the Storms in the South had actually preceded that year of crisis. Thus, Steven Zipperstein's study of the cultural history of Odessa's Jews from the founding of the city up to 1881,¹⁵ Michael Stanislawski's intellectual biography of Judah Leib Gordon,¹⁶ and Israel Bartal's history of eastern European Jewry following the divisions of Poland¹⁷ showed that, at the time of Alexander II's reforms, certain parts of the Russian Jewish public had already become skeptical that liberal trends in the Russian state would promote emancipation and acknowledged the ineffectuality of emancipation-oriented maskilic Jewish ideology. It thus transpired that even prior to the crisis and the reaction of the 1880s, prominent circles within the thin layer of the Russian Jewish intelligentsia and bourgeoisie had not viewed the Jews as passive objects of political and social processes driven by the forces of the external environment, but rather as active subjects who were called upon to contend with these processes through their own collective will. Or, as Eli Lederhendler wrote in his book on the developments and transformations in the Jewish community politics of tsarist Russia from the end of the eighteenth century to the third quarter of the nineteenth century, "the call for Jewish Autoemancipation grew out of the political crisis of Russian Jewry before 1881."¹⁸

The division of Russian Jewish history into the period of emancipatory dreams and hopes up to 1881 on the one hand and the period of disappointment and the shedding of illusions of emancipation, accompanied by a transition to independent national or revolutionary activism, on the other has been challenged from the opposite end of the spectrum as well. In his book *Beyond the Pale* (2004), Benjamin Nathans showed that despite crisis and disappointment in the wake of the Storms in the South, the Russian Jewish intelligentsia continued to entertain patterns of thought and action clearly directed toward emancipation and integration into Russian society and the Russian state, alongside nationalist and radical socialist trends.¹⁹ By adding Nathans' conclusions, according to which the period of hope for citizenship extended beyond 1881, to those of the new historiography of the 1980s, which determined that nationally oriented trends among Russian Jews appeared prior to 1881, we are able to arrive at an inclusive and complex picture of the trends and developments in

[37]

Leon Pinsker
and

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Dimitry
Shumsky

the lives of the Jews of tsarist Russia as expounded in post-Dinurian historiography. This may be described by means of an expanded paraphrasing of Lederhendler's words: "Just as the call for Jewish autoemancipation grew out of the political crisis of Russian Jewry before 1881, so did the call for civil emancipation of the Jews persist despite the exacerbation of the political crisis of 1881." We thus observe a continuity of complex patterns within Russian Jewry at the time of Pinsker, during which the dual trends—civil emancipation, which claimed equal civil rights for Jews, and national autoemancipation, which called upon the Jews to act as a singular national collective with its own interests—coexisted prior to the Storms in the South and continued to pulsate more powerfully thereafter.

These trends in the historiography of nineteenth-century Russian Jewry thus challenged the bipolar historiographical mold from which the dichotomous representation of Pinsker in Zionist historiography, as an assimilationist prior to 1881 and a nationalist thereafter, largely derives. Yet these trends left this representation of Pinsker out of the critical discussion that they led. Among these new historians²⁰ of tsarist Russian Jewry, only Steven Zipperstein has argued that Pinsker's conversion to Zionism was less sudden than generally depicted in Zionist historiography.²¹ Yet the scholars of Russian Jewry who followed him refrained from continuing to explore this issue. On the contrary, as if there were a tacit agreement on a division of historiographical labor of sorts between historians of Zionism and historians of Russian Jewry, the latter allowed the Zionist historians to retain a monopoly over Pinsker and the study of his thought. This state of affairs evolved in spite of the fact that Pinsker was a prominent personality who represented the dilemmas of modernization, integration, and nationalism to a greater degree than most of his Russian Jewish contemporaries—or, perhaps, precisely because of this fact.

The wave of new research on modern Jewish history in general and on Russian Jewish history in particular, which has, over recent decades, challenged the dichotomous paradigms, made a considerable effort to refrain from engaging with emblematic figures identified with larger political and ideological trends. These historians asserted that areas such as the study of the society, the culture, and the daily lives of ordinary Jews had been unjustifiably neglected owing to the tendency to focus upon powerful phenomena such as politicization, radicalism, socialism, nationalism, and of course Zionism. In the spirit of this assertion, Pinsker would, after all, be the last figure in whom contemporary scholars of Russian Jewish history should take an interest. Let us observe for a moment his major biographical milestones:²² Pinsker—who

was born in 1821 in the remote town of Tomashov in today's Western Ukraine—was born to Simcha Pinsker, a prominent rabbi and maskil at one and the same time, a linguist and scholar of Karaism, and a key representative of the Russian version of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Upon the family's move to Odessa when the young Pinsker was still an infant, the father taught Hebrew at the reformed Jewish primary school, where religious study was combined with the teaching of Hebrew grammar, secular studies, Russian, and German. The son attended this school and subsequently studied at the famous and prestigious Odessa high school, the Richelieu Lyceum, from which he graduated as a "candidate for the study of law" in 1844. He then taught briefly at the special Russian-Jewish school at Kishinev, part of the new educational system for Jews founded during the reign of Nicholas I with the aim of promoting the Russianization of the Jewish population. Some years later he was accepted to study medicine at Moscow University, becoming one of the first Jewish students in tsarist Russia. He received advanced training in Germany and Austria and returned to Odessa to become one of the city's most respected people—a successful private physician who at the same time served as director of the psychiatric department of the municipal hospital. He fought in the Crimean War and received a commendation for bravery. In the early 1860s he was among those who laid the foundations of the Russian-language Jewish press. And finally, in 1882, he wrote the essay that is now recognized as a foundational text of political Zionism.

Indeed, this impressive career did not exactly reflect the patterns prevalent among contemporary Russian Jewry in the Pale of Settlement, which was generally remote from the trend toward Russianization represented by the Pinsker of the 1850s and 1860s and from the trend toward a proto-Zionist territorialization that he is said to represent in the 1880s. It is thus not surprising that the new studies of Russian Jews, with their somewhat antielitist scholarly agenda, do not exhibit a particular inclination to focus on Pinsker. On the contrary, it appears that these studies at times reinforce the image of Pinsker's divided biography in the form of a counterparadigm of sorts, as if they were seeking to stress how different and more complex was the path of ordinary Russian Jews than that represented by the ambivalent figure of Pinsker. Benjamin Nathans, for example, questioned the crisis-oriented, bipolar paradigm of the annals of Russian Jews, noting the trends toward advancement and entrenchment of the processes of integration and entry to civil society. To Nathans, Pinsker's evolving public career was a prime example of a polar transition from the integrationist to the nationalist position, which has been incor-

[39]

*Leon Pinsker
and*

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Dimitry
Shumsky

rectly perceived to be paradigmatic of the intellectual-political transformation among his Russian Jewish contemporaries.²³

Yet a number of new studies of the patterns of Jewish political nationalist thought have demonstrated that, prior to World War I and during most of the interwar period, notions of territorially based self-determination of Jewish nationality, on the one hand, and of the reassertion of Jews' civic emancipation as a part of the diaspora Jewish nationality concept, on the other, were far from being mutually exclusive.²⁴ In accordance with, and in some cases relying on, the theoretical criticisms²⁵ of the linkage between political nationalism and the nation-state that was central to the study of nationalism until recently, some of these studies show that before the 1940s, even uncompromisingly statist Zionist figures did not envision Jewish emancipation in the diaspora as superfluous to future Jewish national territorial sovereignty. Rather, they conceived of it in terms of the national extraterritorial rights of Jewish personal nationality, complementary—if secondary—to territorial self-determination.²⁶ Thus, although those figures frequently perceived as Pinsker's ideological followers, such as David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, or Vladimir Jabotinsky, are depicted by scholars as possessing a rather different understanding of the relationship between the Jews' territorial homeland and the diaspora, Pinsker himself is referred to as a founding father of catastrophic Zionism.

Yet could Pinsker have been a more complex figure than that portrayed by Zionist historiographers, as Zipperstein has contended?²⁷ To what extent does Pinsker the symbol—the member of the educated elite who makes a paradigmatic turn away from integration into his immediate non-Jewish surroundings and toward nationalism and revolt against the status quo—reflect the real-life Pinsker? Further, living in the age of multiethnic empires, could he have possessed a perception of Jewish civil and national rights no less complex than was characteristic of his putative successors in the interwar period of nation-states? To answer these questions, we must closely examine the progression of his opinions and positions prior to 1881 and the writing of “*Autoemancipation!*” and after 1881, including “*Autoemancipation!*” No such study, which I seek to outline below, has thus far been undertaken.

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The conventional representation of Pinsker in his pre-“*Autoemancipation!*” period, as someone who advocated the assimilation of Jews with their Russian-speaking environment as the preferred means of promoting integration and civic emancipation, became entrenched in

Zionist historiography despite the fact that most of his writings of that period remained unknown to scholars. To be sure, the anonymous author of “*Autoemancipation!*” was a well-known figure among the stratum of Jewish intellectuals in tsarist Russia before becoming the leader of Hibat Tsiyon. In the early 1860s, at a time when the reforms enacted at the beginning of Alexander II’s rule appeared to the progressive forces in Russia to presage a trend toward universal civil equality,²⁸ Pinsker was one of the group that founded the first two major Russian-language Jewish journals, which openly raised the standard of Jewish emancipation in the country. These were the Odessa weeklies *Razsvet* (1860) and *Sion* (1861–62). Yet the exact number and identity of Pinsker’s publications in the Russian Jewish press remained a mystery for many years. Holding a public position as head of department in an Odessa government hospital, Pinsker was constantly apprehensive of the censor and signed most of his pieces with combinations of a few letters of his given name or surname. Asher Druyanov, the historian of the Hibat Tsiyon movement and author of the only biography of Pinsker, was able to identify with certainty only three items written by Pinsker, all of which were published in the weekly *Sion* in 1861–62.²⁹ These were the weekly’s first editorial³⁰ and two polemical articles critical of *Osnova*, the Ukrainian Russian-language monthly.³¹ It was only about a decade ago, in 1999, that a scholar of Slavic studies, Bella Vernikova, undertook a comprehensive effort to identify Pinsker’s publications in the Russian-Jewish press, as part of her doctoral study on Odessa’s Jewish-Russian literature.³² Thanks to Vernikova’s work, we now have at our disposal what seems to be a complete list of Pinsker’s no fewer than 90 published items, the majority of which, 77 in number, predate the appearance of “*Autoemancipation!*”³³ The analysis of Pinsker’s civil and national perceptions offered below thus rests upon a corpus of texts part of which has never been examined.

The main body of articles that Pinsker wrote prior to “*Autoemancipation!*”—67 out of 77—was published in the Jewish-Russian weekly whose very name—*Sion* (Zion)—serves to sow some initial doubt as to the contemporary assimilationist image of Pinsker. Indeed, perusal of the programmatic editor’s opinion piece in the first issue of the weekly, which was known to be by Pinsker prior to Vernikova’s bibliographical discoveries, provides evidence of the considerable complexity of his civil-political and collective vision of the future of Russia’s Jews. In a period in which hopes for emancipation were dawning over the Russian empire, so Pinsker believed, enlightened Russian Jews should aspire to the twin goals that “history had placed before them” at this time: “to become the sons of their time and [the

[41]

Leon Pinsker
and

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Dimitry
Shumsky

sons of] their immediate homeland without ceasing to be true Jews.”³⁴ Yet the Jews, as Pinsker saw them—to his great regret—were devoting themselves to the achievement of the first objective alone. Maskilim had severed “the vibrant link to their past and to the masses of their fellows, and had almost completely alienated themselves from their lives.”³⁵ This was, according to Pinsker, a very grave political-civil mistake since, so he believed, it was impossible to promote Russian Jews’ equality of civil rights unless they aroused “a lively interest and identification with our nationality” among their non-Jewish surroundings and acquainted the Russian public with the special characteristics of the past and present of Jews in general and of Russian Jews in particular. On the contrary, it was only through overt Jewish awareness of “the interests of our people” in the Russian state and an explicit emphasis on the historical continuity of the existence of the Jewish nation on the soil of the Russian empire that the enlightened citizens of Russia could be induced to show the respect toward the Jews that was a prerequisite for stepping up the emancipatory effort.³⁶

Druyanov, too, did not neglect the concepts “tribe” (*plemya*), “nationality” (*natsional’nost’*), and “nation” (*natsia*) in Pinsker’s references to Russian Jewry in his emancipatory discourse that he had previously developed. Failing to produce a satisfactory explanation, Druyanov asserted that the 1860s Pinsker of *Sion* had somewhat incidentally “come across . . . the national question,” whereas his fundamental perception of the future of the Russian empire and its Jews had been a cosmopolitan, supranational one.³⁷ In other words, given the dual components of Pinsker’s approach to the issue of the Jews’ self-positioning in anticipation of the hoped-for adoption of the principles of civil equality in the Russian empire—political-civil identification with the Russian empire (“to become . . . the sons of their immediate homeland”) and reinforcement of the Jewish collective self in real ethno-national terms (“to be true Jews” in the sense of demonstration of Jewish awareness and identification as a national group whose members living on Russian soil had a continuous collective past worthy of respect within the Russian state)—Druyanov chose the first of these while deemphasizing the second.

Ben-Zion Netanyahu, a distinguished historian then working mostly as a Revisionist journalist, registered a strong opposition to the interpretation of Pinsker’s civil-political worldview as movement from assimilation to nationalism. In his introduction to a 1944 translation of “*Autoemancipation!*” Netanyahu presented an argument against what he defined as the conventional view, which held that the pre-1880s Pinsker was an assimilationist in the spirit of Western postemancipatory Jews.

Resting his case on the same programmatic text by Pinsker in the first issue of *Sion*, mentioned above, Netanyahu characterized the Pinsker of the 1860s as someone who held very clear Jewish national opinions.³⁸ Yet just as Druyanov had underrated the weight of the ethno-national component of Pinsker's perception of the relations between the Jews and the Russian state, so did Netanyahu fail to attach importance to its civil-political component. His translation of Pinsker's key sentence cited above, which in the same breath mentioned the Jews' attachment to the Russian homeland *and* the matter of their collective Jewish identification, was inaccurate. "To become the sons of their period and [the sons of] their immediate homeland without ceasing to be true Jews" was rendered in Netanyahu's translation as "history has imposed two duties upon the Jews, one of responding to the call of their time and native land, and one of being true Jews."³⁹ This rendition created a significant discrepancy with regard to the essence of Pinsker's attitude toward the Russian empire: "responding to the call of their . . . native land," versus Pinsker's original formulation, which determines that Russian Jews should "become *the sons* . . . of their homeland"—a turn of phrase that has deep emotional significance in Russian (indicating not merely "locals" in general but a real bond between father and sons).

Before turning our attention to the remaining sources of Pinsker the publicist, it would appear that we are entitled to assume, at least on the strength of the position he spelled out in the aforementioned editorial, that Pinsker held a complex, multidimensional view that cannot be reduced to an essential component on the one hand and a secondary one on the other. We do not find here merely the civil-emancipatory trend as asserted by Druyanov and traditional Zionist historiographers in his wake, nor merely the ethnic-national Jewish trend as discerned by Netanyahu. Rather, we have here a civil-national vision predicated on both these trends, according to which Pinsker calls upon the Jews to become the faithful sons of the Russian state, without relinquishing their ethnic (or in his words, "tribal") and national bond—indeed, he himself used the word national—as Jews.

Pinsker was a particularly prolific contributor to *Sion*. In his subsequent reports and polemical articles, he is aware that to bring about this dual civil-national vision, and for the Jews to become the sons of the Russian homeland as an ethnic, religious, national group entitled to nurture its singular collective heritage, a profound change would have to occur both in the regime of the Russian state itself and in the manner in which the empire's "progressive" forces, as he put it, perceived the matter of Jewish emancipation.⁴⁰ Mindful, it seems clear, of the censor, in his writing during this period Pinsker addressed the

[43]

Leon Pinsker
and

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Dimitry
Shumsky



authorities in an oblique and restrained manner, staking a general claim to equal civil rights for the Jews as individual members of an ethnic-national collective with a distinct identity within the body of Russian citizenry. This is an appropriate point at which to clarify a conceptual linguistic issue essential to understanding the very possibility of conceiving of such a civil-political evolution under the Russian regime. In the Russian language there is a clear distinction between the two concepts *russskiy* and *rossiiskiy*, both of which are translated into Western languages and into Hebrew as “Russian.” While the former concept means “Russian” in the sense of an ethnic people, the latter denotes a territory that explicitly refers to all the empire’s subjects, whatever their ethnic origins. By adopting the civil-territorial term *rossiiskiy*, the dimension of Russianness, Pinsker outlined an inclusive and complex model for Jewish emancipation that criticized the unwritten emancipatory contract between the modern nation-state and the Jews that had been evolving in western and central Europe since the days of the French Revolution. According to this contract, in return for full partnership in the civil-political body the Jews were called upon to abandon their national collective affiliation. According to Pinsker’s alternative model—which he articulated cautiously but with sufficient clarity—the emancipatory contract in the multinational Russian empire should have a different complexion: like the other ethno-national groups that populated the vast territorial expanse of tsarist Russia, the Jews should regard themselves as loyal patriots of the Russian state and should also gain full command of the Russian language, which would be the lingua franca of all the citizens of the State of Russia or, more precisely, of all the nationalities of the State of Russia. At the same time, they should preserve their own historical-national heritage, and the Russian state, for its part, should not regard Russianization as a means of assimilating non-Russian groups nor of converting non-Pravoslavlic peoples to Christianity.

Although the attempt to formulate a model for a multinational civil society in the Russian state was perhaps viable in the semantic and conceptual senses, we may assume that had Pinsker openly advocated it in the pages of *Sion*, the weekly may well have existed for an even shorter period than the ten months (July 1861–May 1862) during which it succeeded in surviving the censor’s scrutiny. Pinsker did indeed develop an original strategy designed to disseminate this model: he criticized the policy whereby the Jews’ civil equality was made conditional upon their assimilation to the nationality of the majority, as well as the ideas of national unification of the given multinational space, but he did so without referring to the dangerous Russian-Jewish context. The principal

polemical genres that Pinsker adopted to serve as vehicles for this strategy were trenchant, critical surveys of the status of the “Jewish question” in the European countries in which Jewish emancipation had recently been applied or was waiting in the wings.

Pinsker offered Hungary as an example of the problematic and unjust nature of the approach that sought to promote civil equality in return for cultural resemblance to the hegemonic national group. At that very time—the early 1860s—Hungarian nationalism, over which the Habsburgs had gained a pyrrhic victory in 1848 with the aid of Russian forces, was marking up one gain after another, accumulating ever more power, and was also beginning to regard the multinational space of the former Hungarian kingdom as a kind of nation-state in the making. This trend gained momentum following the *Ausgleich* of 1867 and the founding of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.⁴¹ The aggressive Magyarization policy toward non-Hungarian national groups thus became a byword in contemporary central Europe in the 1860s.

In one of his earliest reports (in late July 1861), Pinsker surveyed developments on the issue of civil equality for Jews in western and central Europe and referred to the echoes of the debate over the emancipation of the Jews of Hungary, which had yet to achieve a privileged status within the Habsburg empire but which was well on its way to this goal. In his article Pinsker explicitly identified with the voices of the minority in the Hungarian national camp, which pointed to a fundamental defect in the way that the liberal statutes enacted in the wake of Hungary’s 1848 revolution referred to the Jews. How was it possible, Pinsker wondered together with these minority voices, that while the 1848 laws clearly implied the principle of equal rights for all nationalities residing in Hungary, in the case of the Jews, who certainly constituted a singular nationality alongside the other nationalities, this principle was not recognized?⁴² This query was by no means obvious at a time when the ideal of Jewish emancipation was linked to a perception of the Jews as a religious confession that lacked not only the characteristics of a separate and particularistic collective body but also, certainly, of a nationality; it contained the seed of the critical approach toward the emancipatory ideal from which Pinsker’s comprehensive civil-national *Weltanschauung* would grow.

Some two months later, in September and December 1861, Pinsker published two articles—“The Hungarian Nationality and the Jews” and “The Situation of the Jews in Hungary”—that specifically addressed the Hungarian-Jewish issue. In them, Pinsker outspokenly presented his misgivings about the policy of linking civil emancipation to cultural-national Magyarization. In the first article Pinsker

[45]

*Leon Pinsker
and*

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Dimitry
Shumsky

bluntly asserted that the granting of civil equality to the Jews of Hungary should not be conditional upon the sweeping adoption of Hungarian language and culture. The Hungarians, so he believed, should be satisfied with the fact that the Jews regarded Hungary as their homeland and should respect the right of the Jews—as well as that of other nationalities sharing the fate of the Hungarian people—to retain their own religious and national attributes.⁴³

In the second article, Pinsker expressed even more sharply his opposition to what he appositely defined as the dimension of “national exclusion” (*natsional'naya iskliuchitel'nost'*) in the Hungarian policy toward the non-Magyar peoples of the land. It is worth citing the key sentences of his counterattack against this phenomenon, since Pinsker here reveals his general insight into the relations between nationalities, which extended beyond the specific Hungarian-Jewish context:

They [the Hungarians] are not satisfied with unambiguous proof of the Jews' sincere identification with them and their cause—[which is] the cause of the entire *land*. They [the Hungarians] would like the Jews to be reborn as Magyars, and thereby forget that one can adopt from a different people—and this too, not all at once—[only] the external forms: clothes, way of life, customs, language, but by no means the spirit nor the character of the foreign nationality.⁴⁴

Pinsker's basic affirmation in these lines of civil-territorial identification with “the cause of the entire *land*” and his rejection of national-cultural assimilation as a principle in the relations between neighboring nationalities were yet more clearly brought to the fore in his argument with the Ukrainian monthly *Osnova* in the pages of *Sion*. In June 1861 *Osnova* bluntly attacked what it defined as the isolationist way of life of “the Jewish tribe” in the Ukraine, which had nothing in common with the Ukrainian nation apart from the fact that the Jews had resided in the country for generations. The Ukrainian monthly went on to assert firmly that “there is nothing more harmful to a nation than the existence of other small peoples within it, which stand idly by and are indifferent toward its fate.”⁴⁵

In focusing its attack on the isolationism of the Jewish “tribe” in relation to the Ukrainian “nation,” *Osnova* was thus expressing a more general perception of nationality that contrasted strongly with Pinsker's views concerning “people” and “land” and that therefore angered him no less than the attacks on his “tribe.” And indeed, in responding to the piece in *Osnova*, Pinsker placed primary emphasis on the fundamental implications of *Osnova*'s position on the “Jewish

question” for the perception of “the nationalities question” in the Russian empire in general. In this situation, as he confronted the mouthpiece of Ukrainian nationalism rather than facing off directly with Russian nationalism, Pinsker discerned an appropriate opportunity to present his perception of the future of the empire and its nationalities in a systematic manner.

Pinsker first of all found it necessary to make clear that he would not hesitate to accept the gist of *Osnova*’s assertion with regard to the harm caused by “the existence of other small peoples within it [the nation] which stand idly by and are indifferent toward its fate,” were the word “nation” to be replaced by the word “land”—“land” not necessarily in the sense of “the entire territory of a state,” he stressed, but rather in the sense of “local and regional patriotism.”⁴⁶ On the contrary, in a state instituting true equality between the “tribes” residing therein, it would be reasonable to demand of each group that it sacrifice some of its “tribal” interests in favor of countrywide interests or, in the case of a single region (such as the Ukraine, within tsarist Russia), region-wide interests.⁴⁷ Pinsker instructively drew an analogy to civil society, in which “for the general good” each individual member must “sacrifice some of his personal interests, limit to some extent his personal freedom, and relinquish many of his singular characteristics.”⁴⁸

Yet, asserted Pinsker, one could not accept a situation in which a part of the population of a given state or of its particular regions—for example, the Ukrainian nation in the south of the Russian empire, according to *Osnova*—“identifies itself with the whole (with the general, nationally mixed population of any state/region),”⁴⁹ for this could only mean that this “part” would take control of this “whole” or, in other words, lead to the dominance of one of the nationalities, which generally enjoyed numerical superiority, over another, smaller nationality or nationalities.⁵⁰ This, warned Pinsker, could have dire implications for the communal life of the whole population of that region. In order to illustrate these implications, he again invoked central Europe, far distant from Russia and the Ukraine:

What would happen to the poor Slovaks, Serbs and Croats, not to mention the Germans, were the Hungarians to adopt your theory, as they observed the Slovaks, or for example the Serbs, and all the more so the Germans to be fairly indifferent to the singular fate of the Hungarian nation, to retain their own special characteristics, and not to conceive of joining the Magyars unless they were aware of the general good, of the interests of the homeland in general including their own, what if in light of all this the Hungarians were to take advantage of their numerical superiority to declare that the existence of the Slovaks or the Germans

[47]

Leon Pinsker
and

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Dimitry
Shumsky

amongst them was immensely harmful to them, and were they then to begin to exterminate them or expel them? . . . Do you, like the medieval inquisition, fail to understand that diversity is life, and that only death is featureless?⁵¹

Pinsker's sense of the fluidity of the boundary between national-cultural uniformity and ethnic cleansing is especially remarkable for someone writing in the mid-nineteenth century. In his confrontation with *Osnova*, Pinsker articulated two original conceptual steps with regard to the reorganization of a multinational state that were likewise altogether innovative for his time. First, eight years before another Jewish physician—Adolf Fischhof (1816–93), who was among the leaders of the 1848 revolution in Vienna—would set forth a multinational understanding of citizenship in his *Austria and the Guarantees for Its Existence*,⁵² and some 40 years before the Austro-Marxists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer,⁵³ Pinsker proposed the idea of separation between “state” and “nation” or, to be more precise, between a “state” and its “nations.”⁵⁴

Second—and not entirely independently of the previous proposition—Pinsker generated a personification of ethno-national groups as collective individuals of sorts, visualizing Russia as a state that contained nationalities free to nurture their identity as long as so doing did not undermine the general civil partnership based on the territorial link to the Russian empire. It is particularly appropriate to mention in this context the parallel that Pinsker drew between *Osnova's* mono-national perception of the Ukraine and the Inquisition, with its religious intolerance. He perceived of the separation of nationality and state (or of “nation” and “land,” in his terminology) in terms of an analogy with the separation of religion and state in liberal discourse. Nationalities are, in a way, collective citizens, and just as the state should not interfere with the individual's religious activities, which are his preserve, so too should it refrain from interfering in the national-cultural sphere, which is the preserve of the national collective. Although the idea of personification of nationalities had of course been known in Europe since the time of Herder, the “imagining” of nations, including the extraterritorial Jewish one, as collective free citizens of a single vast political entity predated the Austro-Marxist perception of personal nationality, which contested the inevitability of the bond between nationality and territory.

In addition to the matter of multinational citizenship, which is the essence of the early Pinsker's national-civil outlook, there are two further minor points to be stressed. First, he distinguished between the

religious and the national dimensions among the Jews, referring to them in the sense both of religion and natsional'nost'. Second, the Pinsker of *Sion* was not only aware of the existence of those who would subsequently be known as the precursors of Zionism, but he also approved of the efforts to establish a Jewish agricultural settlement in Palestine that would be essentially different in nature from that of the old Yishuv that lived off charitable donations from the diaspora. On three occasions when he was writing for *Sion*, Pinsker referred favorably to the activity of Ha-Hevrah le-Yishuv Erets Yisrael (Palestine Settlement Society) in Frankfurt an der Oder, founded by Dr. Haim Luria, assistant to Rabbi Zvi Kalisher and the publisher of his *Derishat Tsiyon*.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Pinsker dissociated himself from the idea of "reestablishing the political independence of the Jews in Palestine." He believed that it was primarily the British who were behind this idea, out of an interest in erecting a barrier against "the outbreak of Moslem fanaticism" in Syria: "this idea appears to us to be difficult to implement, utopian: it is doubtful whether the governments of those states in which the Jews reside would decide to part with this section of their subjects, without mentioning that the Jews themselves would in all likelihood refuse to agree to such a transition; and, moreover, that those who favor the idea of reviving national independence . . . assume that conversion to Christianity would be a necessary condition."⁵⁶ In parenthesis one should add that herein perhaps lies part of the explanation for Pinsker's reservations in "*Autoemancipation!*" about turning the "restoring of the ancient land of Judea"⁵⁷ into the heart of his political program. It appears that Pinsker saw that this was potentially an explosive theological issue and in any event, at least in 1861, he felt uneasy about the possibility that the Jews would become the tools of Western powers in the face of "the outbreak of Moslem fanaticism."

[49]

Leon Pinsker
and

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Dimitry
Shumsky

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With the closure of *Sion* in May 1862, the Russian-Jewish press was muzzled for a considerable time, and Pinsker's publicist voice fell silent, in effect, for some 18 years. His silence during this period was broken only once, in June 1870, in the short-lived Russian-Jewish journal *Den*. Relying on Heinrich Graetz, Pinsker presented to the readers of this paper the story of the rise of the Himyarite kingdom, the Jewish kingdom created in the Arabian Peninsula in the sixth century.⁵⁸ It is notable that he chose at this juncture to write about a topic of a clearly Jewish national nature. This serves to balance and to cast into question the emphatic assertion made by Druyanov, who, on

the strength of Pinsker's activity at that time in The Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment Among the Jews in Russia, concluded that during that period Pinsker had, in effect, advocated the assimilation of the Jews into the Russian environment.⁵⁹

Pinsker took up his political writing with renewed vigor in 1880, alongside the renaissance of the Jewish Russian-language press. In January of that year, his trenchant article entitled "For Whom Does the Jewish-Russian Press Exist?" appeared in the St. Petersburg Russian-Jewish weekly *Ruski yevrei*.⁶⁰ In this article Pinsker severely criticized what he regarded as the indifference shown by the Jewish Russian-language journals to "our tribal interests" and in this context referred approvingly and rather proudly to *Sion* and its strong stand against the vilification of the Jewish national character that had, according to him, surfaced in the confrontation with *Osnova*. At the same time, over the coming months and almost up to the outbreak of the "Storms in the South" in March 1881, all Pinsker's writing in *Ruski yevrei* was devoted to a most enthusiastic retrospective survey of the era of struggle for genuine equality of rights for the Jews of western and central Europe, at the forefront of which stood the admired heroes Gabriel Riesser and Adolf Crémieux, symbols of Western Jewry's emancipatory era.⁶¹ Thus, as in the optimistic early 1860s, now too in 1880, the final year of the era of Alexander II, during which the reactionary trend began to make its mark, we still witness the same coupling of civil emancipatory awareness with a stand for Jewish national selfhood.

What, then, became of Pinsker's civil-national positions in the wake of the Storms in the South? As I see it, the basic national-civil model to which Pinsker had aspired ever since the beginning of his public career—equal citizenship without relinquishing collective selfhood—remained unchanged. "Has the Southern Russian rabble done away with Jewish self awareness and independent activity?" Pinsker wondered in August 1881, as he called for the formation of a new leadership for Russian Jewry that would propose novel ways of dealing with the current crisis.⁶² He did not, however, abandon the previous emancipatory discourse. Particularly instructive in this context is a caustically critical article that Pinsker wrote in November 1882, two months after the appearance of "*Autoemancipation!*", on a pamphlet entitled *The New Israel*, written by a radical intellectual named Emanuel Ben-Zion, in which the author demanded of the Jews of Russia that they make sweeping changes to their religion.⁶³ As in the 1860s, Pinsker asserted that the emancipation of the Jews should not be made conditional upon their forgoing the special characteristics of their way of life. The time for religious reforms would come only once

all the onerous legal restrictions on the Jews of Russia had been removed. He even casually termed the Russian language “the language of the homeland”—again, as he had done in *Sion*.

How did Pinsker’s perception nevertheless change after March 1881? The answer to this question becomes obvious upon reading what he wrote in the Russian-Jewish press—namely, he began to advocate on behalf of Jewish emigration. From the spring of 1881 onward, he perceives emigration to be an essential means of solving the “Jewish question” in tsarist Russia as well as in other countries with large Jewish populations.⁶⁴ The question that now arises is how the idea of emigration from Russia could be compatible with Pinsker’s continued advocacy of the principle of emancipation without assimilation within Russia. His “*Autoemancipation!*” provides an answer to just this question.

The obvious difference between “*Autoemancipation!*” and everything that Pinsker had uttered prior to its publication in September 1882 lies in the recognition of the need to establish a national territorial homeland for the Jews, a territory in which the Jews would constitute a numerical majority and enjoy political sovereignty. But did this idea replace the perception of civil emancipation in the diaspora in general and in the imperial diasporas in particular? This is, of course, the view taken by most readings of “*Autoemancipation!*”⁶⁵ Yet instead of examining Pinsker’s text in the context of his contemporary writing and thought, these readings regard it as an essay that presages catastrophic Zionism, and isolate its idea of territorial nationality. Let us therefore turn to the text itself. Pinsker clearly recognizes that the perception of civil emancipation of the Jews has become obsolete; he furthermore diagnoses the root cause of this failure:

Since the Jew is nowhere at home, nowhere regarded as a native, he remains an alien everywhere. That he himself and his forefathers as well are born in the country does not alter this fact in the least. . . . [*N*]ever is he considered a legitimate child of the fatherland. . . . [The] *legal* emancipation [of the Jews] is not *social* emancipation, and with the proclamation of the former the Jews are still far from being emancipated from their exceptional *social position*. . . . The stigma attached to this people, which forces it into an unenviable isolation among the nations, cannot be removed by any sort of official emancipation, as long as this people produces in accordance with its nature vagrant nomads, as long as it cannot give a satisfactory account of whence it comes and whither it goes.⁶⁶

It is this lack of homeland that is the mark of disgrace, the Jews’ unmistakable trademark that indicates their special social status, different from that of all other nations, rendering them total strangers in the

[51]

Leon Pinsker
and

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Dimitry
Shumsky



eyes of these nations and preventing the completion of their social emancipation founded upon reciprocal national respect. The founding of a homeland will correct this condition, will fundamentally turn the Jews from the ultimate homeless into people with a home. Consequently, once the Jews rid themselves of their dubious singularity as a paradigmatic people without a homeland, they will be a people like all others, like Germans in Germany and Greeks in Greece, and like Germans in St. Petersburg and Greeks, Ukrainians, Tatars, Armenians, and Turks scattered throughout the Russian empire—people who are unmistakably regarded by those around them as having a national homeland, albeit not always in the form of a nation-state.

Indeed, the founding of a national territorial homeland for Jews was, according to “*Autoemancipation!*”, not intended to bring about a radical change in their actual condition of dispersal. “Land of our own” would not replace the “exile” but would pave the way for the dual options for the existence of Jews in the modern world: both in the new territorial homeland and in their current homelands: “[T]he Jew, not only is he not a native in his own home country, but he is also not a foreigner; he is, in very truth, the stranger par excellence. He is regarded as neither friend nor foe but an alien, of whom the only thing known is that he has no home. . . . The foreigner claims hospitality, which he can repay in the same coin. The Jew can make no such return; consequently he can make no claim to hospitality.”⁶⁷ This is a vital point that requires clarification. The concept of hospitality (*Gastfreundschaft* in the German original)⁶⁸ is not used here as a metaphor for tourists visiting a particular country but is rather an essentially legal category, since it aims to re-regulate the legal status of those Jews who, following the founding of the Jewish homeland, will choose to remain in their non-Jewish land of birth. Pinsker’s concept of *Gastfreundschaft* is strikingly reminiscent of the other concept of hospitality, namely, Immanuel Kant’s *Hospitalität*, from his *Perpetual Peace*, written in 1795 in the wake of Prussia’s ceding of the disputed territory to the west of the Rhine to France in the Peace of Basel. To Kant this concept had a primarily civil-political meaning. It denoted the status of fully equal citizens within the general concept of world citizenship that he expounded in this essay. Since Kant believed that no person had a greater right to the land in any location than did his fellow, it followed that the civil status of a citizen of one land who resided peacefully in a different land should be equal to that of a citizen of the host country.⁶⁹ The host country thus becomes, according to Kantian logic, a country that offers citizenship, and Pinsker saw things in the same light. Therefore, Pinsker’s “*Autoemancipation!*” was not a substitute for the civil emancipation of the Jews

but a correction of it. By absorbing “the surplus of those Jews who live as proletarians in the different countries and are a burden to the native citizens,”⁷⁰ the Jewish homeland would at the same time generate the vital transformation in the social status of those who remain (primarily “the wealthy” among them, in his terminology), who would from now on enjoy true equality of rights.

At this point we should turn our attention to an essential aspect of “*Autoemancipation!*” that remains obscure if not read in the context of Pinsker’s other writings, both prior to and after 1881. Throughout his life, from the early 1860s up to his latest articles published in the Russian-Jewish press in parallel with the appearance of “*Autoemancipation!*”, Pinsker opposed assimilation and consistently championed the right of Jews to preserve their national characteristics as an intrinsic part of the civil rights that they should demand in their current countries of residence. In other words, the founding of a national territorial homeland for one part of the people should, as he perceived it, prepare this corrected civil-national emancipation for the other part, which chooses to remain in exile. Unlike Herzl, who thought that the Jewish homeland could help those who remained in exile to assimilate,⁷¹ Pinsker sought to help those who remained to reaffirm their national Jewish selfhood alongside their civil bonds with the states in which they continued to reside.

As someone who shaped his national-civil conception in a mixed ethnic-national environment, in which the majority of “all the nations” were perceived by one another to maintain two patterns of territorial affinity, one to the immediate civil homeland and the other to the (in some cases) distant national homeland, Pinsker wished the Jews, too, to be so perceived by their neighbors. He sought to turn the Jew from a member of an obviously homeless people into a person with a dual home, like a Greek in Odessa or a Ukrainian in Moscow. This element of “dual homeland” was extremely important to Pinsker himself and to the Russian-Jewish context of his post-“*Autoemancipation!*” worldview. It contained, in fact, a strong inclination to return in the direction of Russia, as evidenced in his sad letter of March 1884 to the publishers of the Russian collection of articles on the activity of Hibat Tsiyon in Palestine:

We are nevertheless the ancient sons of the Russian land. On her soil our forefathers were raised and died. On this soil Russia found us. We consider ourselves indigenous inhabitants of the Russian State, to which we have always been devoted as to our homeland. In equal measure to all others we think of ourselves as subjects of the Czar of Russia, in

whom we place all our hopes, for whom we are prepared to lay down our lives and our property. No-one can take from us this right, however much they may try to contest it.⁷²



The Pinsker of “*Autoemancipation!*” thus kept hold of both homelands. On the one hand he identified with the turn toward a Jewish territory, and on the other he refused to unravel the bond with the Russian empire, defied all who questioned the right of the Jews to regard Russia as their homeland, and in so doing even implied a highly subversive argument: “on this soil Russia found us.” In other words, he said, we Jews have resided for generations on land conquered by Russia—which was of course correct. Israel Bartal provides an illuminating insight in asserting that since it was not the Jews who had come to tsarist Russia but tsarist Russia that had “come” to the Jews, it would be most instructive to observe the relations between tsarist Russia and its Jews from a postcolonial perspective.⁷³ And indeed, Pinsker was raising an argument on behalf of the colonized, and he continued by demanding the national-civil liberation of the Jews in Russia alongside his advocacy of the idea of national-political liberation in a territorial homeland elsewhere. Or, through the national-political autoemancipation of the Jews who would emigrate to “a land of our own,” he sought to liberate the national “personality” of Jews everywhere and from this foundation to reclaim the national-civil (auto)emancipation of the Jews in the empire of his homeland, which he did not forego. To him, the national territory was thus a means of liberation also for the members of the nation located outside of it, in a multinational empire.

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To conclude, on the strength of our analysis of Pinsker’s positions on the civil and national issues within the multiethnic sphere in general and on “the Jewish question” in Russia in particular from the early 1860s to the early 1880s, we can reinforce Steven Zipperstein’s hypothesis that “[h]is eventual conversion to Zionism . . . was probably less sudden than is generally assumed.”⁷⁴ Indeed, upon reading Pinsker’s political writing spanning both the “emancipatory” and the “autoemancipatory” periods in its entirety, one discerns that in the face of the crisis of 1881, his positions underwent a rather gradual development, which comprised change and continuity at one and the same time. Prior to the Storms in the South, the tsarist authorities’ regression from the politics of reform, and the radicalization of Jewish politics in Russia

in the early 1880s, Pinsker had consistently advocated a vision of multinational citizenship in the Russian state. This was a formula that would, so he had hoped, facilitate the complex move toward civil emancipation of the Jews as individuals alongside reinforcement of their singular national bond as a collective juridical extraterritorial personality of sorts. With the changing of eras in Russian politics, Pinsker's civil-national outlook did indeed undergo considerable change. At this stage he abandoned the purely extraterritorial perception of Jewish nationality in favor of a new understanding, according to which a recognized national territorial homeland constituted the necessary and vital condition for correcting the Jews' anomalous social status as the ultimate homeless people and for normalizing their social image in the eyes of the world's nations. And yet, Pinsker on no account intended the territorialization of the Jewish people to serve as a substitute for Jewish emancipation in the diasporas in general and in the Russian empire in particular, which he had upheld before 1881. On the contrary, the establishment of a national territory and the concentration of part of the world's Jews in it were meant, as he perceived them, to pave the way for the enhanced emancipation of the other wing of the people, which chooses to continue to live outside the homeland but which ceases to be—and to be perceived as—an anomalous collective personality by virtue of the very existence of a homeland, however distant it may be, as an indicator of the normalization of its national condition. In other words, the autoemancipation of the Jews in their national home was, to Pinsker, akin to a correction of the emancipation of the Jews in their civil homelands.

From this we can draw some historiographical conclusions. The first relates to Pinsker's representation in the historiography of the Jews of tsarist Russia and the second to his place in the historiography of Zionism and modern Jewish nationalism. With regard to the historiography of nineteenth-century Russian Jewry, we now see that Pinsker's intellectual development is consistent with parallel developments in Russian Jewish thinking—that is to say, it was a complex evolution rather than a radical shift. As established in the first part of this article, one may sum up one of the central insights gained through the study of the Jews of tsarist Russia in the last generation by paraphrasing Eli Lederhendler's conclusion in his book on pre-1881 Jewish politics in Russia: "Just as the call for Jewish autoemancipation grew out of the political crisis of Russian Jewry prior to 1881, so did the call for civil emancipation of Jews persist with the exacerbation of the political crisis of 1881." This conclusion is valid also for Pinsker's perceptions of the "Jewish question." We have indeed seen

[55]

*Leon Pinsker
and*

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Dimitry
Shumsky

that, just as the call for “Jewish autoemancipation”—namely, civil emancipation together with rejection of assimilation—was certainly evident in Pinsker’s pre-1881 political writing, so too did his call for civil emancipation, together with his affirmation of the 1860s idea that “we are nevertheless the ancient sons of the Russian land,” retain its validity beyond that year.

Regarding the historiography of Jewish nationalism, it would appear that the time has come to “de-Herzlike” Pinsker. Both these fathers of Zionism did indeed regard the gaining of a territorial political homeland for the Jews as a solution to the integration of the Jewish nation into the modern world. Yet Herzl found no room for a Jewish *national* existence outside of that homeland. On the contrary, Jews who chose to remain in the diaspora were likely, as far as he was concerned, to assimilate into the non-Jewish national environment. In Pinsker’s view, in contrast, once the Jews were recognized and identified by their environment as a people in possession of its own territorial homeland, then those who chose the option of remaining rather than emigrating to that same homeland could gain a sort of joint civil-national (auto)emancipation, following which these Jews would be included in the civil body of their state of residence both as the holders of individual civil rights and as members of a singular national group entitled to continue to preserve the special characteristics of its collective identity. It follows that Pinsker thus preceded not Herzlian Zionism but rather post-Herzlian Russian Zionism, that of the Helsingfors Conference of 1906, which brought together the elements of territorial and extraterritorial autonomy.

This being the case, one can add Pinsker’s civil-national (auto) emancipation to the emerging narrative in recent scholarship on the history of Jewish national political thought, which has tended to highlight a number of representatives of modern Jewish nationalism who sought a rapprochement of sorts between diaspora and Zion.⁷⁵ This affinity applies in particular to those later American Jewish thinkers, such as Simon Rawidowicz, Mordecai Kaplan, Horace Kallen, Israel Friedlander, and Oscar Janowsky, who developed broad models of nationhood and political sovereignty in order to balance dual commitments to American civic nationalism and Zionism.⁷⁶ Pinsker, who in terms of political thinking was nourished by the multi-ethnic empires of pre-Versailles Europe, naturally came up with even more flexible patterns of political nationalism: be it located in Palestine or in North America, Pinsker envisioned the Jews’ territorial homeland in a profoundly statist format, either as an Ottoman *pashalik* (a district administered by a pasha) or as a *territorium* in

America.⁷⁷ This format corresponded to the political-nationality claims of most of the leaders of the national movements in the Habsburg and Romanov empires, who aimed, for a variety of reasons, not at full independence in the form of a nation-state but at a rather restrained model of national self-determination in the form of territorial autonomy within the political framework of a multinational state.⁷⁸ It was not a sovereign statehood that Pinsker's territorial homeland was designed to achieve but rather, above all, the demographic concentration of Jews within a portion of an existing, large-scale, and multinational polity, as a means to make the Jewish collectivity into a nation in social terms. That is, Pinsker's homeland would create an essential dimension of social similarity between the Jewish "national personality" and its non-Jewish neighbors in a multi-ethnic setting, in terms of identification with the territorially based center of nationality.

In this connection, one can recall that in his eulogy written immediately after Pinsker's death, Ahad Ha'am explicitly testified that the idea of founding "the national spiritual center" in Erets Yisrael was delivered to him and several of his fellows by none other than the author of "*Autoemancipation!*" as he lay on his deathbed.⁷⁹ Historians have tended to regard these words of Ahad Ha'am with considerable skepticism. Yet it would seem that we can place greater trust in them and conclude that Pinsker was more the father of "the spiritual center" than of the "Judenstaat."

[57]

Leon Pinsker
and

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Dimitry
Shumsky

Notes

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1 *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. and trans. with an introduction by Marvin Lowenthal (New York, 1956), 96.

2 Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover, N.H., 1995), 87.

- 3 Yosef Klausner, *Sefer Pinsker* (Jerusalem, 1920); Asher Druyanov, *Pinsker u-zemano* (Jerusalem, 1953); Steven J. Zipperstein, "Representations of Leadership (and Failure) in Russian Zionism: Picturing Leon Pinsker," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York, 1996), 191–209.
- 4 Ben-Zion Dinur, *Hibat Tsiyon*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1932), 1: 62–69; Ben-Zion Netanyahu, "Introduction," in *Road to Freedom: Writings and Addresses by Leo Pinsker* (New York, 1944), 7–73; David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford, 1975), 122–32; Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York, 1981), 73–82; Shai Ginsburg, "Politics and Letters: On the Rhetoric of the Nation in Pinsker and Ahad Ha-Am," *Prooftexts* 29, no. 2 (2009): 173–205, esp. 179–83.
- 5 Ben Halpern, *The Idea of the Jewish State* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 15, 80.
- 6 Alex Bein, *Theodore Herzl: A Biography*, trans. Maurice Samuel (Philadelphia, 1956). For a brief bibliographical sketch of the main trends in Zionist historiography on Herzl from 1914 to 1993, see Yossi Goldstein, "Herzl's Place in Zionist Historiography," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 11 (1995): 195–204.
- 7 Dinur, *Hibat Tsiyon*, 62–63.
- 8 Klausner, *Sefer Pinsker*, 22; Druyanov, *Pinsker u-zemano*, 149, 193–95; S. Ettinger, "Yihudah shel ha-tenua' ha-leumit ha-yehudit," in *Ideologiyah u-mediniyut tsiyonit*, ed. Ben-Zion Yehoshua and Aharon Kedar (Jerusalem, 1978), 16–17; Vital, *Origins of Zionism*; Avineri, *Making of Modern Zionism*.
- 9 Jacques Kornberg, "Theodore Herzl: A Reevaluation," *Journal of Modern History* 52, no. 2 (1980): 226–52; idem, *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993).
- 10 On the origins, rise, and decline of the "from assimilation to nationalism" paradigm, see Jonathan Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth Century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?" in *Assimilation and Community*, ed. Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (Cambridge, Engl., 1992), 1–37.
- 11 Ben-Zion Dinur, *Be-mifneh ha-dorot* (Jerusalem, 1972), 64–65; Ettinger, "Yihudah," 16.
- 12 Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jew, 1862–1917* (Cambridge, Engl., 1981); idem, "Crisis as a Factor in Modern Jewish Politics, 1840 and 1881–82," in *Living with Antisemitism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz (Hanover, N.H., 1987), 42–58; idem, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth Century Europe," 26–27.
- 13 Frankel, "Crisis as a Factor," 45.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881* (Stanford, 1985), 139–50.

- 16 Michael Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry* (New York, 1988), 146–47.
- 17 Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772–1881* (Philadelphia, 2005), 141–42. Bartal had challenged this paradigm as early as 1981, in the framework of his doctoral dissertation, “Ha-lo-Yehudim ve-hevratam be-sifrut ‘Ivrit ve-Yiddish be-mizrah Eiropah bein ha-shanim 1856–1914” (Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1981), 2–3.
- 18 Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York, 1989), 155.
- 19 Ben Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, 2002).
- 20 Frankel, “Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth Century Europe.”
- 21 Zipperstein, *Jews of Odessa*, 141.
- 22 Klausner, *Sefer Pinsker*; Druyanov, *Pinsker u-zemano*.
- 23 Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, 193.
- 24 Israel Bartal, *Kozak u-Vedui*: “‘Am” ve-“erets” ba-leumiyut ha-yehudit (Tel Aviv, 2007), 152–69; David N. Myers, *Between Jew and Arab: The Lost Voice of Simon Rawidowicz* (Hanover, N.H., 2008); Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken: Rawidowicz, Kaplan, Kohn* (Bloomington, Ind., 2010); James Loeffler, “Between Zionism and Liberalism: Oscar Janowsky and Diaspora Nationalism in America,” *AJS Review* 34 (2010): 289–308; Dimitry Shumsky, “Brith Shalom’s Uniqueness Reconsidered: Hans Kohn and Autonomist Zionism,” *Jewish History* 25, no. 3–4 (2011): 339–53.
- 25 The following are some central works in the multidisciplinary study of nationalism that have challenged the inevitability of the link between nationality and nation-state: Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford, 1995); Michael Keating, *Nations against the State* (New York, 1996); Charles Taylor, “Nationalism and Modernity,” in *The Morality of Nationalism*, ed. Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan (New York, 1997), 66–74; C. Gans, *The Limits of Nationalism* (Cambridge, Engl., 2003); Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism* (Cambridge, Engl., 2004); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).
- 26 Bartal, *Kozak u-Vedui*; Loeffler, “Between Zionism and Liberalism,” 300; Shumsky, “Brith Shalom’s Uniqueness Reconsidered.”
- 27 Zipperstein, *Jews of Odessa*, 141.
- 28 Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets* (New York, 1964), 39–42; Bartal, *Jews of Eastern Europe*, 102–11.
- 29 Druyanov, *Pinsker u-zemano*, 61.
- 30 *Sion* no. 1, July 7, 1861.
- 31 Lev Pinsker, “‘Osnova’ i vopros o natsional’nostyakh,” *Sion* no. 10, Sept. 10, 1861; idem, “‘Osnova’ i ‘Sion’ pred sudom russkoi zhurnalistiki,” *Sion* no. 37, Mar. 16, 1862.

[59]

Leon Pinsker
and

●
Dimitry
Shumsky



- 32 Bella Vernikova, "Russko-yevreiskiy pisateli Odessy vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachala XX veka: K kharakteristike sociokulturnogo phenomena "Russko-yevreiskaya literatura" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001); and see in particular Vernikova's bibliographical essay devoted specifically to the attribution of Pinsker's writings in the Russian-Jewish press, "Atributsiya statei L'va Pinskera v russko-yevreiskoi pechati 1860–1880," *Vestnik Yevreiskogo Universiteta* 26 (2003): 41–94.
- 33 For the completed list of Pinsker's publications in the Russian-Jewish press, as compiled by Vernikova, see Vernikova, "Atributsiya statei L'va Pinskera," 80–87.
- 34 *Sion* no. 1, July 7, 1861.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Druyanov, *Pinsker u-zemano*, 64. Compare to Shlomo Breiman, "Ha-mifneh ba-mahshavah ha-tsiburit ha-yehudit be-reshit shenot ha-shemonim," *Shivat Tsiyon* 2–3 (1951–52): 205–6. Unlike Druyanov, Breiman completely overlooks the salience of Jewish nationally based categories in Pinsker's editorial in the first issue of *Sion*.
- 38 Netanyahu, "Introduction," 34–36.
- 39 Ibid., 34.
- 40 *Sion* no. 1, July 7, 1861.
- 41 Robert J. W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs* (New York, 2006), 245–65.
- 42 Lev Pinsker, "Yevrei v Avstrii: Vopros ob emancipatsii ikh v Vengrii," *Sion* no. 3, July 21, 1861.
- 43 Lev Pinsker, "Vengerskaya natsional'nost' i yevrei," *Sion* no. 10, Sept. 10, 1861.
- 44 Lev Pinsker, "Polozheniye yevreev v Vengrii," *Sion* no. 26, Dec. 29, 1861; emphasis added.
- 45 Pinsker, "'Osnova' i vopros o natsional'nostyakh."
- 46 Pinsker, "'Osnova' i 'Sion' pred sudom russkoi zhurnalistiki."
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Pinsker, "'Osnova' i vopros o natsional'nostyakh."
- 49 Pinsker, "'Osnova' i 'Sion' pred sudom russkoi zhurnalistiki."
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Pinsker, "'Osnova' i vopros o natsional'nostyakh."
- 52 Adolf Fischhof, *Österreich und die Bürgschaften seines Bestandes* (Vienna, 1869).
- 53 The significant difference between Pinsker on the one hand and Fischhof and the Austro-Marxists on the other lay in the fact that Pinsker perceived the Jews to be a nationality that would have to uphold its right to maintain its national-cultural character, whereas Fischhof called upon the Jews to assimilate. See Robert A. Kann, *The Multi-national Empire*, 2 vols. (New York, 1950), 2: 143–78; Werner J. Cahnman, "Adolf Fischhof and His Jewish Followers," *Leo Baeck Institute*

- Yearbook* 4: (1959): 111–39; Ian Reifowitz, *Imagining an Austrian Nation: Joseph Samuel Bloch and the Search for a Multiethnic Austrian Identity, 1846–1919* (New York, 2003), 198–228.
- 54 To be sure, Pinsker was not the first to articulate the innovative idea of reorganizing a multinational empire as a *Nationalitätenstaat*. He was preceded by József Eötvös (1813–71), a prominent Hungarian statesman who criticized the trend toward aggressive Magyarization in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg empire and who in 1859 published his most important work, *Guarantees of Austria's Power and Unity* (József Eötvös, *Die Garantien der Macht und Einheit Oesterreichs* [Leipzig, 1859]), in which he proposed several formulas for multinational decentralization of the empire. Given Pinsker's deep interest in Hungarian affairs, it is quite likely that he was familiar with this essay. On Eötvös, see Kann, *Multinational Empire*, 2: 93–99; Reifowitz, *Imagining an Austrian Nation*, 179–91.
- 55 Lev Pinsker, "Yevrei Palestiny i nedavniye raspry mezhdru nimi," *Sion* no. 14, Oct. 6, 1861; idem, "Obschestvo zaseleniya Palestiny yevreyami-zemledel'tsami," *Sion* no. 23, Dec. 8, 1861; idem, "Yevrei-zemledel'tsy v Palestinye," *Sion* no. 33, Feb. 16, 1862.
- 56 Pinsker, "Obschestvo zaseleniya Palestiny yevreyami-zemledel'tsami."
- 57 Leo Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation: An Appeal to His People by a Russian Jew," in *Road to Freedom: Writings and Addresses by Leo Pinsker*, trans. David S. Blondheim (New York, 1944), 94.
- 58 Lev Pinkser, "Stranitsy iz istorii yevreyev: I. Svobodnoye yevreiskoye tsarstvo na Araviiskom poluostrove (500–622) (po Gretzu)," *Den'* no. 25, June 20, 1870.
- 59 Druyanov, *Pinsker u-zemano*, 83.
- 60 Lev Pinkser, "Dlya kogo suschestvuiut yevreisko-russkiye organy?," *Russkiy yevrei* no. 1, Jan. 2, 1880; no. 2, Jan. 9, 1880.
- 61 Lev Pinsker, "Cremieux v Damaske v 1840," *Russkiy yevrei* no. 7, Feb. 13, 1880; no. 8, Feb. 20, 1880; no. 9, Feb. 27, 1880; no. 10, Mar. 05, 1880; no. 11, Mar. 12, 1880; no. 12, Mar. 19, 1880; no. 14, Apr. 2, 1880; no. 17, Apr. 23, 1880; no. 21, May 21, 1880; no. 27, July 2, 1880; idem, "Gabriel Riserer i yego epokha," *Russkiy yevrei* no. 36, Sept. 2, 1880; no. 37, Sept. 12, 1880; no. 46, Nov. 12, 1880; no. 48, Nov. 26, 1880; no. 49, Dec. 3, 1880.
- 62 Lev Pinkser, "Nashi predstaviteli," *Razsvet* no. 34, Aug. 21, 1881.
- 63 Lev Pinkser, "Yevrei-reformatory," *Razsvet* no. 45, Nov. 7, 1882.
- 64 Pinsker, "Nashi predstaviteli"; idem, "Konferentsiya po emigratsionnomu voprosu," *Razsvet* no. 17, Apr. 27, 1882; idem, "Chteniye ravvina, d-ra Vertgeimera," *Razsvet* no. 18, May 4, 1882; idem, "Novaya komissiya ob uregulirovaniy emigratsii i novye punkty," *Razsvet* no. 22, May 30, 1882.
- 65 See above, nn. 7–8.
- 66 Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation," 81–82.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 81.

[61]

Leon Pinsker
and

●
Dimitry
Shumsky



- 68 Leon Pinsker, "Autoemancipation!" *Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen von einem russischen Juden* (Berlin, 1882), 8.
- 69 Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, ed. with an introduction by L. W. Beck (Indianapolis, Ind., 1957), 20–23.
- 70 Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation," 99.
- 71 Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. Lotta Levensohn (1902; New York, 1941), 178.
- 72 Lev Pinsker, "Pis'mo k izdatelyam," in *Palestina: Sbornik statei i svedeniy o yevreiskikh poseleniyakh v sv. zemle* (St. Petersburg, 1884), 3–4.
- 73 Bartal, *Jews of Eastern Europe*, ch. 5, esp. 66–67.
- 74 Zipperstein, *Jews of Odessa*, 141.
- 75 See above, n. 24.
- 76 Myers, *Between Jew and Arab*; Noam Pianko, "'The True Liberalism of Zionism': Horace Kallen, Jewish Nationalism, and the Limits of American Pluralism," *American Jewish History* 94 (2008): 299–329; idem, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken; Conservative Judaism* 56 (2004), special issue devoted to Israel Friedlander; Loeffler, "Between Zionism and Liberalism." Compare Ezra Mendelsohn's brilliant account of the politics of rapprochement between ethnic homeland-oriented nationalism and American civic-national identity in the American Greek, Polish, and Irish communities: "Ha-paradoksaliyut shel ha-leumiyut: Iyui mashveh ba-leumiyut ha-etnit be-Aratsot ha-Berith," *Historiya* 2 (1998): 87–101.
- 77 Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation," 102. It is crucial here, however, to refer to the German original, for the term "ein suzerānes Paschalik" was mistranslated by David S. Blondheim as "a sovereign Pashalik" [!], thereby confusing "suzerainty" and "sovereignty"; see Pinsker, "Auto-emancipation!," 30.
- 78 Miroslav Hroch, "National Self-Determination from a Historical Perspective," in *Notions of Nationalism*, ed. S. Periwal (Budapest, 1995), 65–82.
- 79 Ahad Ha'am, "Dr. Pinsker u-mahbarto," in *Kol kitvei Ahad Ha'am* (Tel Aviv, 1956), 45.