

Sergei Zubatov's 'Police Socialism' in Russia, and the Creation of Zionism

by Marjorie Mazel Hecht

Sergei Zubatov¹ is an almost unknown name today, but the legacy of this Russian secret-police head is still very much alive, 100 years later, in the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. It was Zubatov, a master of psychological warfare, who convinced thousands of young Russian radicals to give up ideas of universal social justice, and limit themselves to narrow goals of personal financial improvement within his "legal" trade unions. It was Zubatov who seized on Zionism and its "blood-and-soil" ideology as a perfect counterinsurgency belief system to remove Jewish radical youth from the Russian political arena. Zubatov organized, through his Jewish recruits, the first Russian Zionist congress, in 1902, which, for the first time, brought the knowledge of Zionism to a wide Russian audience. Simultaneously, Zubatov spawned and controlled terrorist and "revenge" cells, to carry out political violence and assassinations against selected enemies.

To understand, and resolve, the Jewish-Arab conflict today, one must see how Zubatov shaped the views of the early settlers of Palestine, those Russian immigrants who became the Zionist founders of Israel, around "blood and soil," socialism and terrorism. Zubatovism must also be placed in the larger context of British geopolitics—Britain's alliance with Russia's old landed families to curb Eurasian development, and its colonial manipulations of Arab landowners and, later, the general Arab population in the Mideast. This, combined with Britain's brutal treatment of the Jewish population of Palestine, in the first five decades of the 20th Century, and its colonial administration's deliberate pitting of Jews against Arabs and Arabs against Jews, makes it clear that the cycle of violence between Jew and Arab is not indigenous, and that it can be stopped.

In the 1880s, Russia was emerging from feudalism into the modern world. For a 25-year period before the 1905 Russian Revolution, Great Britain had waged a covert war to

crush the Russian industrialist faction, which was supported by the Romanov Tsars. The British feared that Russia would become the "United States of the East," a powerful, industrial republic. The assassination of Alexander II in 1881 was a turning point in this process. Alexander was called the Tsar-Liberator, because he abolished serfdom and brought Russia into a strategic alliance with Abraham Lincoln's United States, during the U.S. Civil War.

In its destabilization operation, Britain aided the fascist "Black Hundreds" pogroms against the Jews, and then encouraged Jewish financiers in the West to put economic pressure on the Tsar to stop the pogroms; they helped finance various revolutionary groups, and they simultaneously aided the "police socialism" countergangs to keep these groups in line; they maneuvered certain government policies and they financed terrorists to go after the same government officials whose policies they determined.

And, to cause further chaos, the British bought and paid for the Japanese war against Russia in 1903—a deal worked out by the King's financial adviser Sir Ernest Cassel and Cassel's American colleague, financier Jacob Schiff of Kuhn Loeb.

Russia, at the time, had enormous potential: vast natural resources; a rapidly growing urban workforce; a strong pro-growth faction, steeped in the intellectual tradition of Henry Carey and Friedrich List, the economists who inspired the American Whig policy; a frontier that promised to become a trade-bridge to the East; and the seeds of a revolutionary movement that envisioned its nation becoming an industrial socialist republic. In short, Russia had the potential for bringing East and West together in the spirit of Lyndon LaRouche's Eurasian Land-Bridge proposal today.

This potential is what the British Empire set out to destroy, using Zubatovism, the method named for the Moscow chief of the Russian secret police, the Okhrana, as one of its weapons. The Zubatov operation, from 1896 to 1905, was part of the overall subversion scheme, in particular targeting Russia's newly emancipated and politicized Jews. (Between 1895 and 1904, for example, there were 2,276 Jewish worker

1. This report is dedicated to the memory of Mr. Hillel Kempinski, archivist of the Bund library in New York City, a survivor of the concentration camps of both Hitler and Stalin, and a lover of truth and justice, who wanted the story of Zubatov and his agents to become better known in America.



The Russian Okhrana (secret police) organized the bloody pogroms against Russia's Jews with one hand, while with the other, through Sergei Zubatov, it recruited Jewish radicals into Zionism. Here, an illustration of a pogrom in Kiev in 1881.

strikes in the Pale of Settlement, the area of Russia and Poland in which Jews were allowed to live).

'Take the Very Ground From Beneath His Feet'

When Sergei Vasilevich Zubatov was appointed chief of the Moscow Okhrana in 1896, he had to his credit a dozen years of police undercover work, in which he got to know the Russian radicals, and acquainted himself with Fabian socialist and Marxist literature. In the next decade, Zubatov put this intimate knowledge to work, to create a synthetic "legal" trade union movement that would pull the growing ferment into a strike force against Russia's industrialist faction, without making a revolution against the landed aristocracy.

Zubatov was supported in this operation by Russia's most backward aristocratic faction, which, not surprisingly, was pro-British and included the leading anti-Semites who funded and directed the bloody pogroms during the 1880s and later in 1903 and 1905. Chief among these was the Governor General of Moscow, Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich, the fourth son of Alexander II, and an avid British collaborator.

Both Zubatov and the Okhrana had been spawned out of the wealthy landed families' "Holy Brotherhood" organization. This was established after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, ostensibly to protect the new Tsar Alexander III, but really to try to control the political arena around him. The

founder of the Okhrana political police was Count N.P. Ignatyev, the commander of Russia's 1875-78 military campaigns in the Balkan Wars, which had been orchestrated by London. Another member of this circle, V.P. Meshchersky, became a patron of Zubatov. In the 1870s, Meshchersky had promoted the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, who was an enthusiast of the Balkan Wars. Some of Zubatov's philosophical writings are lifted straight from Dostoevsky (who died in 1881), and also echo the fascist ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche about "the triumph of the will."

The Okhrana was not a small operation: In 1904, it employed 12,000 agents-provocateurs, by 1906 there were 19,500, and by 1912, there were 26,000.

Zubatov's ideas about taking over the mass political movements of Russia, were based on his view that, "The history of the revolutionary movement has shown that the intelligentsia alone is not strong enough to win in its struggle with the government, even if it arms itself with explosives." Therefore, he said, it was necessary to prevent the intelligentsia from mobilizing the masses, which could best be accomplished *not* by using traditional police repressive measures. As Zubatov wrote in an 1898 memo to the acting prefect of Moscow:

"While a revolutionary advocates pure socialism, he can be dealt with by means of repressive measures alone, but when he begins to exploit for his purpose minor shortcomings

of the existing lawful structure, the repressive measures alone cease to be sufficient. It becomes necessary to take the very ground from underneath his feet.”²

Zubatov’s solution—taking the very ground from underneath the socialists’ feet—was to enable workers to organize for narrow improvements in their working conditions within the existing system, under the supervision of the police, and, at the same time, to use police authority, to remove any revolutionary troublemakers (or industrialist troublemakers) from the scene. At the time, trade unions were prohibited, and Zubatov’s “unions,” known as *Zubatovshchina*, came under the aegis of “mutual-aid” societies, which were permitted.

The Zubatov program is standard British social-engineering practice for political control. Set up a program with the narrowest economic goals; focus on self-help, ethnic culture, and welfare programs; isolate political leadership by attacking them as “too intellectual” and not “of the people”; and lavishly fund the whole works. As Zubatov commented, “It remains for the supra-class autocracy to divide and rule” the other classes.

Meanwhile, Zubatov’s counterpart in charge of the Okhrana Foreign Agency, Pyotr Ivanovich Rachkovsky, had successfully used the same kinds of tactics against the revolutionaries abroad, from his base in Paris, from 1885 to 1902. He was an expert at using provocateurs to foster terrorism, and an expert at forging left-wing documents. He forged letters from members against the leadership, bombed some offices, and attributed the bombings to dissident leftists, and, in 1891, he launched a campaign against the Jews.

The most infamous document Rachkovsky forged was *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, alleging a Jewish-Masonic plot to rule the world. The *Protocols*, first published in 1903, and still promulgated today in anti-Semitic circles, were an almost word-for-word copy of an 1864 satire of Napoleon III, written in French, by Maurice Joly, titled *Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu on the Politics of Machiavelli in the Nineteenth Century*. Joly was a pro-monarchist lawyer who wanted to expose Napoleon’s plans to seize absolute power. The *Protocols* simply copied the remarks of Joly’s Machiavelli about despotism, substituting “Elders of Zion” for Machiavelli. Joly, himself an anti-Semite, was jailed for 15 months for publishing his satire of Napoleon.

Rachkovsky calculated the circulation of his forged document to turn the Tsar against the Jews, and to damage the modernizing-industrial policies of the Minister of Finance,

2. There are two main English sources on Zubatov: *Russian Police Trade Unionism: Experiment or Provocation* by Dimitry Pospelovsky (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971); and *Sergei Zubatov and Revolutionary Marxism: The Struggle for the Working Class in Tsarist Russia* by Jeremiah Schneiderman (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976). Most of the quotations by or on Zubatov cited here were taken from Schneiderman’s translations of Zubatov’s many articles and reports, and those of his contemporaries.



Count Sergei Witte, whose plans for modernizing and industrializing Russia made him a main target of the Zubatov operation.

Count Sergei Yulievich Witte, whose policies he thought were too lenient toward Jews.³

Target: Witte and Industrialization

Witte was one of the main targets of the Zubatov’s schemes. The Russian Minister of Finance from 1892 to 1903, Witte was the leading force in the campaign to industrialize and modernize the country, explicitly along the lines of the American System (see *EIR*, Jan. 3, 1992, for a review of *The Memoirs of Count Witte*). Witte and his faction—which included the scientist Dmitri Mendeleev, who shaped the core of scientists that was crucial to the Witte administration and later the Bolsheviks—wanted a labor policy based on a sound economy: modern, large-scale, profit-making industries and a well-paid, educated, skilled workforce. Under their influence, Russia’s urban working class had increased by 60% from 1887 to 1897 (to 2 million), and Russia’s industries were among the most modern in Europe. In 1901, for example,

3. The *Protocols* reached a wider world audience when the *Times* of London published a lead article on May 8, 1920, titled, “The Jewish Danger, A Disturbing Pamphlet Requires Investigation.” The forgery was exposed by the *Times* a year later, but, as is usual with such journalistic retractions, the damage had already been done.

Russia produced one-half of the world's oil, using the most advanced methods of that time.

Witte, Mendeleyev, and others around them, understood the necessity to develop the most advanced technology, and they fought against the landed aristocracy's small-farm feudalism, and the decentralized peasant cooperatives fostered by the British Fabians. In an 1899 memo to Nicholas II, Witte wrote:

"The welfare of Your Empire is based on national labor. The increase of its productivity and the discovery of new fields for Russian enterprise will always serve as the most reliable way for making the entire nation more prosperous.

"We have to develop mass-production industries, widely dispersed and variegated. We must give the country such industrial perfection as has been reached by the United States of America which firmly bases its prosperity on two pillars—agriculture and industry."

The key in Witte's development plan was Siberia—Russia's vast frontier. Witte saw Siberia as Russia's California and Texas, and he envisioned its settlement and industrial development by hundreds of thousands of Russians, including Russia's Jews, who, for the most part, led a miserable ghetto existence. The completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, under Witte, would make this possible.

The Art of Brainwashing

As a counterpole to Witte, Zubatov and his allies in the Interior Ministry maneuvered to institute the system of "worker control," one where the major activities for workers were modelled after the social and welfare programs of the British settlement houses. Zubatov's philosophy, like that of the British Fabians (social fascists) he admired, was that the workers were interested only in improving their own personal conditions—the lowest-level view of self-interest.

Zubatov was born in Moscow in 1863 or 1864, and had a conventional middle-class education. His radical political work began in high school, and quickly led to his role as a police informer. In 1885, Zubatov became a member of Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), the group responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. Most of Zubatov's undercover work in the 1880s took place during his tenure as manager of a "self-education" bookstore owned by his future wife, Alexandra Nikolaevna Mikhina. The bookstore was a meeting place for leftist intellectuals and a major source of illegal literature. In fact, Zubatov's favorite works were those of Fabian Society founder Sidney Webb, Fabian sociologist Werner-Sombart, and German Fabian recruit Eduard Bernstein, the socialist reformer whom Zubatov regarded as a chief ally "against the hideous Russian Social Democracy," Lenin's group. (Zubatov had Bernstein's chief work translated into Russian for this purpose.) In line with his Fabian views, Zubatov criticized the label of "police socialism" for his philosophy, preferring to use the term "progressive socialism."

Zubatov methodically began his task of subverting revolutionary political movements into anti-industrial trade unions. First he initiated photographic files and the registration of suspects, and trained his police staff, initially 250 officers, in counterinsurgency methods. Then, going after the revolutionary center of the groups, Zubatov devised what his critics called "the art of brainwashing," to capture leadership for his countergangs. (In fact, Zubatov's new methods were roundly attacked by the traditionalists in the Russian police forces, who opposed them, until they saw the useful results.)

Based on his undercover intelligence work, Zubatov would stage the arrest of radical leaders at a clandestine meeting. Once he had them in jail, he would try to break their morale by isolating them. Zubatov would then interview them individually, confronting the person with minute details of his revolutionary activities. Leading the prisoner to believe that there was no hope for continuing his revolutionary work, Zubatov would then sympathetically offer to let him continue "humanitarian" work on the side of the government. If the revolutionaries "confessed" and converted to police socialism and trade unionism, Zubatov agreed to pardon them, release them, and, in fact, to protect them, as long as they would organize for him.

Zubatov personally spent hours with his recruits in jail, discussing his political philosophy. He gave them Bernstein and Webb as primers to learn the rhetoric of his brand of socialism. As he reported happily to his superiors, he "began to give those arrested the most stunning illegal books on the labor question, since these books completely demolish all conspiratorial activity. The results are excellent. They themselves confessed to me that they illuminate a new world for them. The past is explained by their lack of education. And this education takes place in the prisons. . . . What have we come to!"

Zubatov's prisoners were equally enthusiastic. One of his recruits, Gregory Gershuni (discussed below), commented, "The prisoners begin to look upon themselves as persons who hold the fate of Russia in their hands and can lead the revolution in any direction at their own discretion." Gershuni explained that Zubatov presented "a theory of a democratic people's monarchy, which stands above classes and class struggle, which mitigates class antagonisms, which establishes social peace, national welfare, and the general happiness."

A Russian historian commented on Zubatov's method: "Whole hours, even days, over endless tea, in tobacco smoke, he carried on his 'conversations' with the prisoners, who were led one at a time into the Okhrana, where they sat in a soft chair in the chief's cabinet and, on occasions when the disputes stretched out too long, were fed supper, which was brought from a neighboring inn at the treasury's expense."

Zubatov had the most success with what he called "green youths." These tend "to renounce their views just as soon as one managed to convince them of the opposite," he said. To

make it easier for them, Zubatov did not ask his recruits to betray their comrades; he wanted only their ideological commitment.

Once Zubatov had perfected his technique with the socialist intellectuals, he targetted the worker-intellectuals, but somewhat differently. With them, he stressed how their labor goals could be best met by the government itself, if only the workers would stay away from the socialist organizers. He told them, in fact, that the revolutionaries were just “using” them, and would abandon them once they had attained power. “Political struggle is a pastime for the high and mighty,” he said. In a memo to the chief of the Special Section of the Department of Police, L.A. Rataev, Zubatov described his method of organizing workers (as opposed to the political-intellectuals):

“At the interrogations I separate the anti-government elements from the masses with brilliant success—I can say honestly speaking. In the Russian movement and perhaps also in the Jewish one, I am successfully convincing the public that the workers’ movement is one thing, and the social democratic one is another. There a kopek is the goal—here, ideological theory. The worker must aspire to civil equality with the so-called ‘privileged’ classes. . . . The social democrats, ignoring his immediate interests, call upon him to help the privileged classes in attaining their interests (to complete the revolution), promising every blessing to him after this. It is apparent that only the stupidity and ignorance of the workers make them unable to see this.”

The ‘Zubatovshchina’ Police Unions

Once Zubatov had recruited a core leadership, he set up “independent” unions—that is, independent of politics—to fight for economic demands, better working conditions, and to establish cooperative loan societies, self-help programs, and communal lodgings. He even supplied free legal services to help workers formulate their complaints to the authorities. To counter the worker educational movement initiated by Witte (in ten years, Witte had increased the number of trade schools from 8 to more than 100, and had set up hundreds of night schools for basic literacy, based on science and technology). Zubatov set up classes for workers and tea-rooms for social activities. His particular aim in these efforts was to widen the gap between workers and intellectuals.

The first of Zubatov’s unions was the Society of Machine Workers in Moscow, an organization that stressed mutual help and “consciousness.” The society was self-administered (or, to use more modern language, locally controlled) and soon became so successful that Zubatov was vindicated among his peers.

The Zubatov strike weapon was used to curb the Westernizing industrialists. For example, two of Zubatov’s first protégés staged a strike against a textile mill. Then Zubatov’s local police chief tried to intimidate the factory owners into concessions in the name of law and order, while the Okhrana contrib-

uted 250 rubles a week to the strike fund. Zubatov would place anonymous articles in the press to play up his “union,” as well as signed articles commissioned from like-thinking political and academic commentators.

The particular industrialist targetted in the textile strike was M. Guzhon, a Frenchman who had founded the Moscow metallurgical plant in 1883, that by 1900, was supplying 85% of Moscow’s metals. Guzhon organized other industrialists to petition Finance Minister Witte for help. Witte intervened to prevent Guzhon’s deportation, and then tried to have that “sworn anarchist Zubatov” removed from power. But, as was usual, Witte’s bitter enemy, Interior Minister von Plehve, defended Zubatov, stating that Zubatov’s “reform activity is the most sure medicine against disorders and revolution.”

Zubatov particularly singled out foreign industrialists like Guzhon, for Witte’s industrialization program at the time centered around the use of foreign capital for the vast development programs planned. In fact, Witte had put Russia on the gold standard in 1897, to make such finance arrangements possible, and it was just at this time that Zubatov’s campaign got off the ground.

The success of Zubatov in molding his unionists in the Fabian image can be seen in the banners that the workers carried in the strikes. In Odessa, in 1905, for example, among Zubatov’s unions’ slogans were: “Down With the Socialists” and “We Don’t Need Politics.”

In 1902, Zubatov’s unions were successful enough to hold a peaceful 50,000-person demonstration at the statue of Alexander II at the Kremlin, in praise of autocracy, to show the ruling forces that they were loyal subjects. (Police helped by preventing political agitators from joining the crowd.) In that year, Zubatov was promoted to the St. Petersburg Okhrana. There Witte’s faction was stronger, and Witte, with some help from legitimate worker groups, had been able to stifle the growth of Zubatov’s unions. In St. Petersburg, Zubatov recruited Georgii Gapon, a young anarchist priest, who took over the St. Petersburg Zubatov unions in 1903, and became (along with other Zubatov recruits) the central figure in the St. Petersburg strikes that led up to Bloody Sunday in January 1905, where hundreds of protesters were killed and injured as they marched, unarmed, on the Tsar’s palace.

When Zubatov left Moscow, a degree of rapprochement was reached between the socialists and the industrialists, and with Witte’s guidance, an industry-wide printers’ strike was settled on the basis that the workers and owners had compatible interests.

Nietzschean ‘Morality’

Zubatov’s “morality,” was Nietzschean: terrorism, assassination, and “outrages,” which he deemed necessary to build the proper “character.” A fellow member of the Narodnaya Volya group, Michael Rafalovich Gotz, who later co-founded the Socialist Revolutionaries and was a leader of its assassination squad, a Zubatov-directed group called the Battle Organi-

zation, described Zubatov's morality as follows: "One day Zubatov read me a work of his in which he outlined his own theory of *nравственность* (morality). Everything in this view depended upon the development of a strong willpower, for which it was necessary, quite deliberately, to perform a series of outrages such as one can hardly even mention in print. One had to perform these outrages fully understanding their significance, but forcing oneself to act contrary to one's accepted moral standards, and thus to exercise one's willpower to the utmost."

The "morality" that Zubatov imbued in his recruits, was the idea that because their organizing activities were good and necessary for the workers, this justified deceit and extreme measures against the opposition, including assassination of opponents in power, or even traitors within the group itself. Such "morality" is not unique to Zubatov, or to the revolutionaries he recruited, but it affected large numbers of individuals who came in contact with Zubatovism and carried this "morality" into their future political work. (The Jabotinsky terrorist group in Palestine—the Irgun—years later, for example, used exactly this method of training recruits to commit "outrages" in order to develop willpower.)

Later, Zubatov added Zionism to his morality: the idea that Jews should leave Russia and settle in their "homeland."

The Jewish Question

Some of Zubatov's most successful work was in seizing control over the Jewish radicals, and directing them toward Zionism. In 1898, Zubatov sent flying squadrons into the Pale of Settlement, the areas of Russia and Poland to which the Jewish population was restricted, and carried out mass arrests of radical leaders. By that time, it was clear that the urban Jewish workers and the Jewish intellectuals were prime recruits for real political activity, and Zubatov wanted to channel this potential away from the increasingly successful Jewish Workers Bund, which had been founded in 1895.

Zubatov brought the arrested Jewish radicals back to Moscow and put them in solitary confinement. Although he found the Bund organizers hard to break, Zubatov was able to recruit enough Jewish leaders to form the "Jewish Independent Labor Party," directed specifically at sabotaging the then pro-Leninist Bund. The Jewish Independent Labor Party rejected political ideas that were "foreign" to its economic aims. Its 1901 program stated:

"The party deliberately sets for itself no political goals, and deals with political problems only to the degree that they affect the daily interests of workers. . . . In its economic and political activities the party unites workers of all political views, as well as those who hold no views whatever."

Zubatov's Jewish strategy was to promote the blood-and-soil mentality of Zionism. Zubatov was the first among the Russians to encourage Zionism, and, in fact, he arranged for the first legal Zionist congress to take place in Russia, in Minsk in 1902—a key factor in getting the still unfamiliar

Zionist movement publicized among Russian and Polish Jews. Zubatov briefed his colleague Leonid Rataev, chief of the special section of the police, on the Jewish question as follows:

"Summarizing all this, I'll say one thing: It's necessary to encourage the Jews. After that one can twist them around one's finger. Thanks to their solidarity, the slightest attention to them is instantly transmitted to all corners, and everyone learns about it. Bring the crowd to heat by your attention and the masses will follow you, and thanks to their unity, they themselves will betray the revolutionaries. . . .

"Inside Jewry such a great internal ferment is taking place, a reformation (for us not only harmless but, owing to the circumstances of the time, also advantageous). . . . [I]t is necessary to support Zionism and in general to play upon nationalistic aspirations."

Zubatov followed his own advice to the letter. He encouraged the use of Yiddish, instead of Russian, which the revolutionary groups were encouraging in their program to de-ghettoize the Jewish workers, and bring them into the socialist mainstream. He fought to get his groups to establish Yiddish-language magazines, to enforce the separation between Jewish and non-Jewish workers.

In fact, it is likely that Zubatov's work, both the independent groups and his provocateurs within the revolutionary movement, were responsible for the turn the Bund took at the 1903 Russian Social Democratic Labor Party conference, when the Bund split from Lenin. This Zubatov-fostered ethnic Jewish nationalism, combined with the Okhrana's sponsorship of provocateurs to carry out terrorist assassinations, helped determine the fate of East European Jewry in two world wars, and haunts the Mideast to this day.

Zubatov successfully recruited the metal craftsmen, bookbinders, bristle makers, and joiners away from the Bund and into his Jewish independent party. (He offered the bristle workers union, one of the most militant, because its workers were able to travel as part of their job, 20,000 rubles to publish a "legal" journal.) The Bund fought back, calling the societies "dupes" and "police agents," and saying that no true revolutionary could "have dealings with such scum." But the Zubatov groups were so successful in places like Minsk (the largest Jewish industrial center), Vilna, and Odessa, cities with a large Jewish working class, that in some cases the Bund was forced to modify its principled political position against police socialism and economism, and adopt the traditional liberal view that, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion" on the matter.

In Odessa, Zubatov's leading agent was Dr. Khunya Shayevich, a Zionist converted to Zubatovism at the Zubatov-organized 1902 Zionist conference. With the Okhrana's backing, the Odessa branch of the Jewish Independent Labor Party became the largest organized-labor movement in Russia. Shayevich was known as the first successful mass labor organizer in Russia. He had a fail-proof method: He would call



Manya Vilbushewitz was one of Zubatov's prize recruits. She was a top trade union organizer for Zubatov's police trade unions, an opponent of the Bund, a self-admitted terrorist, and, later, a leading Zionist organizer in Palestine.

strikes, which, with Okhrana support, the workers invariably won, thus motivating them to stick with the Zubatov party.

The Vilbushewitz Case

Zubatov's main collaborator on the Zionist strategy was a young woman from a middle-class Jewish family, one of his most ardent recruits, whose interest in Zubatov was both personal and political. Manya Vilbushewitz (1879-1961) was an intelligent, rebellious young woman, who dropped out of school to work as a carpenter, and organize workers. After her arrest in 1900, when she was 20 years old, Zubatov recruited her in jail. She spent a year in the Moscow jail, and for eight months of that time, she was engaged in all-day, intense political discussions with Zubatov. She would visit him in his office, which looked like a library, lined with shelves full of books in different languages, on philosophy, utopianism, and his kind of trade unionism, and they would talk about philosophy. She was allowed to take and read whatever books she wished.

It is evident from Manya's letters, and confirmed by Bund sources in New York in the 1970s, that Vilbushewitz was emotionally, and probably romantically, involved with her mentor. As one 80-year-old Bundist delicately put it, "there was more to their relationship than police to agent." Bund activists described Vilbushewitz as highly emotional and an

inveterate liar, and said that one shouldn't believe anything written about her, unless it was written by the anti-Zubatov left. Although Vilbushewitz speaks about Zubatov with more affection than regret, later in her life, she does not admit to being his lover. Her acknowledged first love, however, was another Zubatov recruit, Gregory Gershuni, who was responsible for setting up the terrorist Battle Organization, and organizing a bomb factory. Zubatov called Gershuni an "artist in terror." The same Gershuni was also a good friend of the young Vladimir Jabotinsky.⁴

Vilbushewitz was an extremely effective organizer for police socialism, "non-aligned" unions, and Zionism. In St. Petersburg, she credits herself with organizing Father Gapon to understand that improving the lives of workers did not have to be in opposition to the regime. She had many talks with Gapon about Zubatov's brand of union organizing.

Vilbushewitz also credited herself with convincing Zubatov that the Zionists were valuable allies in his cause. She gloated in one report to Zubatov: "Congratulate me with a great victory I did not expect so soon. [She is referring to a Labor Zionist meeting in Minsk in 1901.] Now all the Zionists are our assistants. It only remains to discover how to make use of their services."

It did not take long for Zubatov to find work for the Zionists. The Labor Zionists (Poale Zion) picked up the Zubatov program and began recruiting Jews around legal economism. The party published such Zubatovisms as: "We do not demand that everyone sacrifice his daily interests; everyone is entitled to his own views about religion and other subjects. We only demand the unity of the Jewish working masses in helping to carry out the great holy Zionist idea."

Legalism and Terrorism

Vilbushewitz's career is similar to that of the 1960s middle-class youth turned radical, turned terrorist, turned liberal.

4. Gershuni knew Vladimir Jabotinsky, the Zionist-fascist, in the early 1900s, when Jabotinsky was a well-known journalist in Russia. Jabotinsky's acquaintance with Zionism, according to his own account, began in a 1902 Okhrana police sweep in Odessa, which landed him in jail for seven weeks. The police censors said they needed that time to translate Jabotinsky's Italian newspaper articles, to see if they were seditious. In jail, he met many young Jewish revolutionaries of the Zubatov-Zionist type. There were nightly "lectures," and after three of them, he says, he became a Zionist. Jabotinsky then became involved in organizing for Jewish "self-defense," after the 1903 Kishinev pogrom. It was in this period, that he began operating in the center of the Okhrana-sponsored Zionist activities, supported, as a correspondent, by the newspapers of the Russian aristocracy.

When looking back at his military experience, and the difficulty he had in explaining his role as a leader to fellow Jews, Jabotinsky wrote of Gershuni in 1938: "In my young days in Russia, I was told by my late friend Gershuni, the Jewish revolutionary who organized a number of terrorist operations in old Russia, that he too suffered from this attitude. What was understood without explanations by his Russian contemporaries—that his job was to send the bomb throwers and not to throw bombs himself—was incomprehensible to his Jewish friends; and he always read in their eyes the silent reproach, 'And what about you?'"

According to her best friend and biographer, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, the wife of Itzhak Ben-Zvi, the second President of Israel, Vilbushewitz made a fundamental change after the bloody 1903 Kishinev pogrom (which, of course, was carried out with the blessing and aid of the Okhrana). Ben-Zvi writes: “She was rededicated to only one purpose: defending her people.”

Vilbushewitz described her change in a book called *The Plough Women*, about Palestinian Jewish women pioneers. “I left Russia for Germany as the emissary of a socialist terrorist group which had been organized for the purpose of assassinating the Tsarist Minister von Plehve,” she wrote. This must have been in late 1903, giving her very little time to make the transition from police socialism to police terrorism! The money for this venture was supplied by a “rich German Jew,” she explained.

She then says that she left Germany suddenly after she got a cable from her brother Nachum to come to Palestine, because he was sick and needed her help. Later, the brother told her this was a ruse to get her to stop her dangerous activities. Unfortunately, she says, her two comrades were betrayed and caught, shortly after her departure for Palestine. She claims that an agent named Azev turned them in. (Yevno Azev was one of the Okhrana’s most notorious agents. In it for the money, not ideology, Azev masterminded many assassinations, and then turned in the perpetrators, always escaping himself. He led the Battle Organization, the assassination wing of the Social Revolutionaries.)

In 1905, Vilbushewitz left Palestine for Paris to see the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA), which was patronized by Baron de Hirsch, to get money for the collective she had founded in Palestine. However, while in Paris, a Jewish comrade from Russia asked her help in raising money for arms for Jewish self-defense in Russia (a euphemism for the assassination squads, because very little of this money went into protecting pogrom victims). “I collected 200,000 francs for that purpose—50,000 from Baron Edmond de Rothschild—and helped him further to smuggle arms into Russia,” Vilbushewitz wrote. Then, she says, she took part in the self-defense work, organizing a national group “to exact vengeance from the leaders of Russian anti-Semitism.” She worked for three months with “The Group of Vengeance.” One of the group shot Krushevan, the Okhrana-allied newspaper editor, who had organized the Kishinev pogrom in 1903. Then, the entire group—except for Vilbushewitz and the assassin—was arrested. (The same traitor turned them all in, she says.)

During this operation, she admits to shooting and killing a suspected Jewish informer at point-blank range with a silencer, in order to protect her colleagues and the arms cache. The body was dismembered and shipped in a box to a nonexistent Siberian address.

Vilbushewitz was despised by the anti-Zionist Bund for her police agency; and in 1921, she was tried and convicted

in a Bund People’s Court in New York City for her crimes. The Bund’s philosophy, in contrast to Zionism, was “heresim”: Jews, like the rest of the population should pursue justice and equality as citizens of Russia, without seeking a nation of their own somewhere else.

In 1906, she returned to Palestine, but by 1907, she was travelling again, this time to the United States, where she met Judah Magnes and Henrietta Szold, who were both later involved with her in a pro-Arab peace group in Israel. From there, she went to South America to look at Jewish farms, and then back to Palestine.

Vilbushewitz settled in Palestine later in 1907, and married Yisrael Shochat, also a Russian Zionist activist. She and her husband organized Hashomer (The Watchman), the Jewish self-defense group that used the rationale of “local control” to oust Arabs from their traditional employment as watchmen for the Jewish agricultural settlements. This added fuel to the first Jewish-Arab conflicts, which were thoroughly manipulated by the British, who ruled Palestine, after they had ousted the Turks in December 1917.

In 1920, Hashomer disbanded to become part of the Haganah, although the initial founders kept it going as an underground group. Shochat and another Zubatov radical, Pinchas Rutenberg (who had worked closely with Father Gapon in St. Petersburg), were among the chief leaders of the Haganah. Shochat went on to become a legal adviser to the Minister of Police in the State of Israel; Rutenberg, along with Jabotinsky, set up armed self-defense groups in Palestine, just after World War I.

Vilbushewitz and her husband went to Constantinople for two years before World War I, where he, along with David Ben-Gurion and Itzhak Ben-Zvi, both later Presidents of Israel, went to study Turkish law, in order to aid the Jewish settlements in Turkish-ruled Palestine. (They expected that Turkey would continue to rule Palestine, even after the war.) In December 1914, Manya Vilbushewitz, back in Palestine, was arrested by the Turks for smuggling arms, and sent into exile near the Turkish-Russian border, along with her husband.

Later, in British-ruled Palestine, Vilbushewitz embraced socialism as a “substitute for the religious enthusiasm which had made these [early Palestine] settlements possible,” and studied forms of collectivism that might work for the new settlements. She worked tirelessly and selflessly to promote the Israeli kibbutz (collective) system, to aid new settlers, and to smuggle arms for Jewish defense. (Her daughter, at age 70, stated publicly that she was an “orphan,” because her parents were never at home when she was growing up.) In 1924, Vilbushewitz was arrested, and later released, as a suspect in the assassination of an anti-Zionist, Orthodox Jewish leader, Jacob Israel der Haan. Der Haan, also a popular journalist and poet, was murdered, allegedly because of his peace overtures to Arab Palestinians, and it was generally acknowledged that the top level of the Haganah had ordered his assassination.

During World War II in Palestine, Vilbushewitz donned a nurse's uniform and commandeered an ambulance to smuggle both arms for Jewish defense, and Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe, who were prevented from legally entering Palestine by the British. Although totally devoted to Zionism, she was conflicted about settling the land at the expense of the Arab peasants and workers, and later she formed the Jewish Arab League to actively promote Jewish-Arab friendship, including trying to acquire land without displacing Arab Palestinians.

Zubatov's Downfall

The Zubatov labor policy in Russia ended abruptly as the societies and independent groups he nurtured took on a life of their own. Zubatov was dismissed from his position by an angry Interior Minister von Plehve in August 1903, after the success of mass strikes in Odessa and elsewhere that Summer. (Odessa's general strike brought the city to a standstill, with tens of thousands of workers striking.) Zubatov, according to reports, was involved in plots against von Plehve, and, a year later, the Battle Organization terrorists, under the direction of the Okhrana's Azev, succeeded in killing Plehve. Plehve's replacement was more in tune with Zubatov's methods, and he offered Zubatov his job back, but Zubatov declined the offer.



LYNDON LAROUCHE will be the featured guest on August 24, on "The LaRouche Show," the live, hour-long Internet program (interview, call-in, and conference call discussion), hosted by *EIR*'s Michele Steinberg, every Saturday, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Time).

<http://www.larouchepub.com/radio>

By 1905, during the mass-strike period, the Interior Ministry found itself arresting the very groups that the Okhrana had created. Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg, in January 1905, triggered an avalanche of social chaos throughout Russia. In St. Petersburg, Zubatov's most notorious recruit, Father Gapon, led a singing procession of workers and their families to the Winter Palace, to petition the Tsar for reforms. They were gunned down at point-blank range by the guards, killing and wounding hundreds. From that point on, Zubatovism was finished, and Russia descended to a new level of destabilization, as the British had planned.

In the wake of Bloody Sunday, the Interior Minister and high police officials resigned; Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich was assassinated by a terrorist—the son of a police officer; the universities were closed because of unrest; the Army and Navy suffered new defeats at the hands of the Japanese; the crew of the *Potemkin* mutinied; and there were peasant uprisings and general strikes throughout Russia.

In early October 1905, Count Witte wrote to Tsar Nicholas: "The present movement for freedom is not of new birth. Its roots are imbedded in centuries of Russian history. . . . 'Freedom' must become the slogan of the government. No other possibility for the salvation of the state exists. . . . The idea of civil liberty will triumph, if not through reform, then by the path of revolution. In the latter eventuality, the idea of freedom will rise again only from the ashes of the destroyed 1,000 year past. . . . The horrors of this Russian insurrection may surpass all records in the history of mankind. . . . The government must be ready to proceed along constitutional lines. . . . The government must either place itself at the head of the movement which has gripped the country or it must relinquish it to the elementary forces to tear it to pieces."

The situation worsened and strikes paralyzed the economy. In October 1905, Nicholas finally appointed Count Witte as Premier, and on Oct. 30, he issued a manifesto promising freedom of speech, conscience, and assembly; granted labor the right to organize; announced a fairly liberal suffrage law for elections to the Duma; and stated that no law could be decreed without the Duma's sanction.

Within 24 hours, the Black Hundreds, a fascist group openly sponsored by Russia's landed aristocracy, with the backing of the Okhrana, started a wave of pogroms and riots that struck 660 cities and towns over a period of 12 days. In the repression and bloodletting that followed, Witte himself became destabilized, and came close to a nervous breakdown, and Zubatov, who had never intended to bring down the Russian monarchy, became a forgotten man.

In the next years that led up to the Bolshevik Revolution, many of Zubatov's recruits—worker leaders—found their way back into the revolutionary movement in Russia and in Palestine. In 1917, when he heard of the abdication of the Tsar, Zubatov shot himself. But Zubatov's legacy lived on in the leaders he recruited to terrorism, and to the terrorist wing of Zionism, which also still lives.