The work of the Pinsker Orphans Relief Fund of London, 1921–39

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The town of Pinsk lies on two great rivers in Western Russia, intersected by railway routes along which the trade of the booming Russian economy flowed in the early part of the twentieth century. In 1931 no fewer than 24,000 of its population of 32,000 were Jewish, constituting 75 per cent of the total, slightly higher than the pre-1914 percentage. Most industries were in the hands of Jews, especially the tanneries, liquor manufactories, breweries, corn mills and saw mills. The Pinsk Jews played an important part also in the lumber and fish trade.1 Pinsk in addition had a vibrant Jewish culture before the First World War. Its suburb of Karlin was a Hasidic stronghold and the town was one of the centres of the nascent Zionist movement.2

In 1915 Pinsk was occupied by the German army, its inhabitants scattered and Jewish family life disrupted. After 1918, as the army of the new Polish state pushed the Russian Bolshevik regime out of large areas of Poland, there was a wave of pogroms in the central and northern provinces of Poland with heavy Jewish casualties in the towns of Pinsk, Lida and Vilna. On 5 April 1919 the local Polish military commander ordered the shooting of thirty-four Jews in Pinsk who had attended a meeting to arrange the distribution of food for Passover, maliciously accusing them of being a secret Communist cell.3

Emergency conditions returned to Pinsk when the Bolshevik army captured the town for a second time from 26 July to 26 September 1920. Business and commerce came to a standstill and the supply of funds from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint) abruptly

1 Isaac Landman (ed.) The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (New York 1969) 8:537.
3 Jerzy Tomaszewski, 'Pinsk, Saturday 5 April 1919' Polin 1 (1986) 227-51. Following the incident on 5 April 1919, four women and a larger number of men were put in prison, tortured and severely beaten. Two of the female prisoners went insane, one vanished without trace and only one woman was able to rejoin the Jewish community in Pinsk. Boris D. Bogen, Born a Jew (New York 1930) 176-7.
halted. The Bolshevik commissars requisitioned houses, goods and furniture, and people went hungry, lacking even bread. Yet worse sufferings were to befall the Jews of Pinsk when the White Guard, under the control of Bulak Balakhovich, seized the town (26–9 September 1920), acting as an advance unit of the returning Polish forces. On the night of 26 September the White Guard ransacked Pinsk and killed four or five Jews. More Jewish inhabitants of Pinsk and its neighbouring towns were robbed, raped and murdered by the reactionary brigands during the next two days. Normal conditions did not return until the Peace of Riga in March 1921, when Pinsk became part of the Polish state.4

The plight of Jews in Poland after the First World War was desperate. In Pinsk the ‘Jewish Community has issued an appeal stating that nearly all our co-religionists in the town were starving. Epidemics were ravaging [raging] in most Jewish houses, and large numbers of Jews were dying daily from hunger and infectious diseases’.5 The philanthropist Otto Schiff quoted from a report of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the summer of 1919: ‘In Poland the suffering is intense. There are children’s institutions without a morsel of food, and there are hospitals unused because of the lack of doctors and nurses and of medicines, although there is an enormous lot of disease. A great percentage of people have been kept alive on soup made of water, potatoes, and a little salt . . . Our representatives cried like children when they came face to face with this terrible condition of starvation and typhus. In the children’s institutions visited, the children looked like skeletons’.6

The upheavals to Jewish family life caused by the First World War, combined with the massacres in Poland and on a wider scale in the Ukraine in 1917–21, created tens of thousands of orphans by 1918. There were possibly as many as 200,000 or 300,000 Jewish orphans in Eastern Europe by 1921, who either returned to their place of origin or sought refuge in a more hospitable town.7

On returning to Pinsk in 1917, Alexander Bobrow (1893–1993), a graduate of a yeshivah and an industrial chemist, found children living in ruined buildings and, with the help of a few friends, opened a home for them in a disused Talmud Torah.8 After the War, Eliyohu Holtzman, a wealthy businessman, was the driving force behind the establishment of the main Jewish

5 Jewish Chronicle (hereafter JC) 30 May 1919.
6 JC 1 August 1919.
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orphanage in Pinsk, and philanthropists established two more orphanages. One was founded by Bundists and the other took in children from the villages and small towns surrounding Pinsk. When the Bundists closed their orphanage after a scandal, some of the children were sent to a third orphanage, and had to sleep on mattresses on the floor for a time as there was a shortage of beds.9 By 1919 there were three orphanages in Pinsk with 500 children. In addition, the Joint fed 314 local poor families and supplied meals to refugees, opening a soup kitchen which fed 2,400 children daily, dwindling to 1,000 by the middle of 1921, when such aid was suspended in order to concentrate on ensuring the wellbeing of the orphans.10

How did the children come to enter the orphanages in Pinsk? We know something of the individual circumstances of families both from interviews with former orphans and from a series of short biographical sketches of children selected for adoption overseas. The mother of one family that had fled from Pinsk died from typhus during the First World War and the rest of the family had to subsist on meagre rations of bread and water, partly because of the Allied blockade. A one-year-old baby girl then died of hunger; and the father, who seemed to the children to be asleep in bed, was found to have perished from lack of food and heating in the severe winter. After the war the four surviving girls were led back to Pinsk by a twelve-year-old girl, but found that the family home had been destroyed and their aunts had vanished. These were never heard of again, although they dimly recollected that another aunt had settled in London. The girls sought shelter in a synagogue, and representatives of an orphanage who called there were overheard to say of the four sisters: ‘We have hundreds of children waiting to go into the orphanage. We have to pick out the worst ones.’ They offered to take the two younger girls, claiming that they were ‘half dead anyway’ – uttered with a shrug to imply that even these might not survive.11

In another case from Pinsk the father, a blacksmith, had joined a labour detachment, cut down trees for the Russian army and died prematurely. His wife died of a broken heart, while a fifteen-year-old son conscripted into the Russian army suffered severe frostbite and had both legs amputated, resulting also in his early death. Of the five surviving children the eldest girl brought up her younger sisters until she died of tuberculosis, whereupon the three youngest children entered the orphanage.12

It was common for a father to be killed or reported missing during the war leaving a mother who was unable to manage and swiftly succumbed. The children were sometimes cared for by grandparents or close relatives,

9 Interview with Mr G.
10 JFC 13 May 1983. Shohat (see n. 4) 233-5.
11 Interview with Mrs F.
12 Interview with Mrs C.
but were mostly taken into an orphanage. Friedl and Aaron Klampert and the Dorfman children entered the orphanage for this reason. The A. family from the shtetl of Lelin near Pinsk had five children, but one boy died of influenza after the War and the parents of typhus in 1920. For two years the grandfather struggled to bring up the four surviving children, but then entrusted them to the orphanage. So undermined was their health that two eventually contracted tuberculosis and died as young adults. The parents of Mordecai and Chaya Zucker died of typhus during the War, and those of Moshe Lev in hospital, possibly from a similar outbreak. The death of parents from starvation was another factor that propelled their children into the orphanage. In the case of the Piekov family, both the father and mother had died of hunger, while in another case the father died suddenly coming out of court and the mother then perished from hunger.

In 1922 the central committee in charge of administering the three orphanages in Pinsk consisted of one representative from each orphanage and two delegates from the Zionist parties and radical political bodies. By 1924 only the main orphanage founded by Holtzman, with a Zionist and moderate religious orientation, remained. Between 1920 and 1928 the Joint channelled 2,380,000 dollars for child relief in Poland via the Polish Federation of Jewish Child Care in Warsaw, which in turn distributed these funds to the local organizations, such as the central committee in Pinsk. After 1921 general relief work was gradually abandoned in Poland and, as Boris Bogen wrote in his memoirs, ‘for the bread program we substituted a plan of construction to include the care of children, medical activities, a loan fund, and the subvention of trade schools’.

At the principal Pinsk orphanage Holtzman was ably assisted by Zeev Lev, who had formerly been employed as a bank clerk but who gradually worked his way up to the position of secretary of the Central Administrative unit of the Jewish orphanages in Pinsk. Earlier, Aaron Dubrovsky, a social worker, brilliant teacher and notable platform orator, had been manager of the orphanages. He had achieved some renown in the Tarbut school movement in Russia, which was secular in outlook but Zionist in orientation and which used Hebrew as its language of instruction. Dubrovsky was a successful manager of the orphanages at Pinsk, where he coped with the perpetual

13 Abraham Isenberg Papers in the possession of the author. List of children with biographical summaries sent by the Central Management of the Jewish Orphanages in Pinsk to the Pinsker Relief Fund in London with a letter on 20 August 1923.
14 Interview with Mrs A.
15 Biographical summaries (see n. 13).
17 Boris D. Bogen (see n. 3) 247 and 248. Joseph C. Hyman, Twenty-five Years of American Aid to Jews Overseas: A Record of the Joint Distribution Committee (New York 1939).
crisis in their ailing finances by drastically curtailing the number of children under their care.\textsuperscript{18} This shrinkage can be seen by comparing the Joint’s total of 1483 orphans in Pinsk on 28 October 1921, with group photographs of the children taken in 1924 and 1925 at the Holtzman orphanage (the sole one remaining), which indicate that their numbers had declined to 78 and 100 children respectively. The returns for 1921 showed that there were 371 full orphans, 344 children without a mother and 768 children whose father had died. Of these children, 408 were in orphanages and 210 were waiting to be adopted.\textsuperscript{19}

Both the Joint and the Federation of Ukrainian Jews in London, a high-powered body of Anglo-Jewish notables, were of the opinion that it was impracticable and too costly to remove large numbers of orphans from the Ukraine and its contiguous areas in Poland for adoption overseas. A. M. Kaizer in London wrote to Isaac Ochberg in Cape Town on 24 February 1921 to report that Boris Bogen ‘says that for over a year the Joint Distribution Committee has been considering the problem of the orphans and it has come to the conclusion that it will cost considerably less to maintain the orphans on the spot than to take them out of the Ukraine and settle them elsewhere.’ A contrary view was held by Canadian Jewry, who formed a Jewish War Orphans Committee in October 1920 to bring 200 orphans from the Polish Ukraine for adoption.\textsuperscript{20} The South Africans were advised that ‘Should your Committee, however, wish to follow the example of the Canadian War Orphans Relief Committee, before proceeding to Europe you should first be in possession of guarantees from a great number of prospective foster parents (1) as to their willingness to adopt an orphan or more [and] (2) as to their financial ability to maintain and educate the orphans.’\textsuperscript{21} This last was no doubt a policy adopted by the London-based Pinsker Relief Fund and in part by the South Africans, when they decided to settle orphans from Eastern Europe in their respective countries.

Isaac Ochberg, a Ukrainian property magnate and shipowner, proposed that the Cape Jewish Orphanage should bear the expense with the assistance of the wider South African Jewish community and make the necessary

\textsuperscript{18} Abraham Isenberg Papers. Letter from the Central Management of the Jewish Orphanages in Pinsk to the Pinsker Relief Fund in London, 20 August 1923.

\textsuperscript{19} Joint Distribution Committee Papers, return from Pinsk, 28 October 1921.

\textsuperscript{20} Joint Distribution Committee Papers 19/21 File 88, letter from Solomon Lowenstein to Herbert H. Lehman, 11 October 1921. ‘Many of those present at the [inaugural] conference believed that immediate steps should be undertaken to secure the consent of the government to raise this number to 500, 750 or 1000.’

\textsuperscript{21} Jewish Museum Cape Town. Letter from A. M. Kaizer of the Federation of Ukrainian Jews to Isaac Ochberg of the Cape Jewish Orphanage, 24 February 1921. See also Joint Distribution Committee Papers, Child Care file 1921-2, letter enclosing statement from J. D. C. New York to J. D. C. Vienna, 13 October 1921 on the Canadian mission.
Plate 1  A New Year greetings card sent to supporters by the Pinsk orphanage in 1925.
arrangements for bringing a number of war orphans from Eastern Europe to South Africa. At his own expense he toured the Jewish orphanages of the Polish border region and the Ukraine in the summer of 1921. According to the official history of the Cape Jewish Orphanage: ‘In the end [Ochberg] decided to choose eight children from each institution, to make up the total of 200 for which he had sufficient funds. Since the Union government had laid down that any children coming must be in good health, this demanded very careful selection. Only full orphans, that is, those who had lost both parents were accepted, and then only if they were reasonably intelligent. Those suffering from mental defects were immediately eliminated and, in the words of one worker, “the cream of each orphanage picked”. Of the 200 orphans, the surviving records show that at least twenty-two originated in Pinsk and the rest from other towns and orphanages. Mrs Lockitch’s reminiscences about the fear of ‘wild animals’ and ‘cannibals’ in South Africa are corroborated by one of the Pinsk orphans who settled in London. Having only the haziest notion of conditions in South Africa, one lady remembered telling the orphanage staff: ‘They are cannibals. I do not want to go there.’ Due to the lack of cooperation from the Polish authorities, many children travelled by cattle-truck to an assembly point in Warsaw where they were delayed by an outbreak of trachoma, an infectious eye disease. After boarding ship in Danzig, the orphans under the control of Mr Ochberg arrived in Cape Town on 19 September 1921. Some of the children were housed in the orphanage in Cape Town, others in the orphanage in Johannesburg, while still others were adopted after a stay in South Africa.

The Pinsker Relief Fund was established in London in 1921 by landsleit (fellow countrymen) who had long been settled in the East End. These immigrants had detailed knowledge of the recent problems faced by their kinsmen and friends in Pinsk from correspondence with their relatives, visits to their home towns or villages after the First World War, and news in the Yiddish press. The Zilberman family, who lived first in Brighton and later moved to London, and who actively participated in the work of the Fund and helped make other members aware of postwar conditions in Pinsk, had lost a talented son, Moshe, in the Pinsk pogrom of 1919.

At first the society failed to flourish because many Pinsker landsleit were not convinced that it had a useful function to perform. What galvanized the

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22 Rosenthal (see n. 7) 11-15.
23 Jewish Museum, Cape Town. Handwritten list of orphans and typewritten list 2 Cape Town, referring to the contingent of pogrom orphans who arrived on the Edinburgh Castle on 19 September 1921.
24 Rosenthal (see n. 7) 15 and interview with Mrs C.
25 Rosenthal (see n. 7) 16-18. The Argus 16 October 1971, article on the Berkman family.
26 Interview with Mrs H.
27 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Circular of the Pinsker Relief Fund c. 1922.
society into action was a disastrous fire in 1921 which resulted in the destruction of a great part of the town. The pre-industrial shtetlekh (small towns) and villages in Poland, in which many of the buildings were constructed of wood, were frequently ravaged by fires, compelling the young and more vigorous sections of the population to leave. The Abraham Isenberg Papers include a letter of appeal, which from internal evidence seems to date from the autumn of 1921, addressed to the president of a synagogue. ‘In the name of the Pinsker Relief Fund [of London], we come to you with a special warm request’, it began, ‘that you should be so kind [as] to ask your congregants tomorrow before Kol Nidre that they should come to help the Pinsker citizens, who have lost all their belongings in a fire. You have surely heard of the great calamity which has happened in the Jewish town of Pinsk.’ The appeal ended by stating that if anyone had any old clothes to spare for these unfortunate inhabitants, they should inform the Jews’ Temporary Shelter. Arrangements would be made by the Fund for a collection from their homes. A receipt records that on 6 July 1921 Saoul Lourie (Saul Lurie), a prominent figure in the Fund, gave Mr Pushkin £1 18s to send two boxes of clothes to Pinsk. By March 1922, and perhaps even earlier, money was being transferred to Pinsk by the Pinsker Relief Fund. It is clear from the original name of the London organization that the widespread impoverishment of the inhabitants of Pinsk as a result of the War, the pogroms and the fire was what initially motivated the London Fund rather than the needs of the orphans alone.

The founder and the first treasurer of the Pinsker Relief Fund, together with Mrs Marsha Pushkin, was Abraham Isenberg, an Orthodox businessman, a Zionist and Mizrach supporter, a man imbued with vision but somewhat unworldly. A figure of a similar stamp, David Solomons, at first helped his wife in her corset-making business, but later established D. Solomons & Sons and imported Palestinian products, such as lokshen and matzah from Zelavensky, halva and sweets from Lieber & Co, and other goods from Lemonstein & Shulman at a meagre profit. He was an avid reader of the works of Sholom Aleichem and Sholem Asch. Other solid citizens included H. Vysove, a traditionalist but non-Orthodox furrier, who served as joint vice-chairman of the society with Solomons. Mr Datlow, the second treasurer of the society, was a manufacturer of fur coats and collars in the City. Mr Niditch, the owner of a sawmill and well known for his charitable acts, was not religious. Leopold Davidoff, the secretary of the society, was respected in Jewish friendly-society circles. Mr Pushkin, who

29 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Receipt from S. Lourie for Mr Pushkin, 6 July 1921 and letter from J. Landau to A. Isenberg, 15 March 1922.
30 Interview with Henry Solomons, the founder of Marella Pickles, about his father.
31 Interview with Michael Cooper.
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was not as involved in the work of the society as was his wife, was a self-educated master tailor, steeped in Yiddish classics, who in his youth had been a member of the Bund, the Jewish socialist movement, in Pinsk. When the Tsar was overthrown he attended a rally in the Albert Hall in support of Kerensky. A more active member of the committee was Mr Pomerantz, an itinerant bookseller, who helped give the society a progressive ethos.

Women sat on the committee of the Pinsker society and participated in its work on equal terms with the men. Although the titular posts in the society were reserved for men, there were eleven female members on the committee, perhaps the most formidable being Marsha Pushkin. The immigrant women of the East End adhered to many of the modes of conduct emerging from their traditional roles as folk healers (feldsherkehs), leaders of less knowledgeable women in prayers in the synagogues (fir-zogerin), letter-writers for their illiterate sisters and interrupters of the Reading of the Law to redress communal wrongs. This was the source of some influence and power, quite apart from the prestige accruing from their economic activities. Marsha Pushkin was a member both of a bikkur cholim association, a society for visiting the sick, and of a society for providing dowries for poor brides. But after the First World War Jewish women annexed fresh fields of activity: the Pinsker society was one, but other women in London busied themselves with helping relatives in Poland to surmount the new immigration regulations, and their family circles acted as clearing houses for the necessary information. The roles of men and women in the Pinsker society were to a certain extent sexually demarcated, the men chiefly collecting the funds for the organization, often through traditional channels at synagogues and family functions, while the women mainly sought homes in which to place the orphans.

A certain measure of tension existed between the men and the women in the Pinsker society about women’s enhanced role, expressed in ambivalence towards the women and anxieties about their sexual emancipation. Jumping forward in time to a concert given by the Pinsker orphans at the People’s Palace in the East End in 1926, one young girl sang:

\begin{align*}
\text{Heint untzer damen} & \quad \text{Today our women,} \\
\text{Ze pitchen sich,} & \quad \text{They paint themselves,} \\
\text{Un schmiren sich,} & \quad \text{And smear themselves,} \\
\text{Un drein sich arum,} & \quad \text{And whirl themselves around,} \\
\text{Mit yinger lattes.} & \quad \text{With young fellows.} \end{align*}

32 Interviews with Mrs Hilda Weisfeld and Dr Isidore Pushkin.
33 Interview with Mrs C.
34 Interviews with Mrs Hilda Weisfeld and Dr Isidore Pushkin.
35 Interview with Mrs E.
The Pinsker society was run by a group of small businessmen and petty intellectuals, assisted by their wives and a sprinkling of working-class men and women. All were distinct in character from the upper-middle-class Anglo-Jewish elite who administered the communal charitable institutions. Yetta Franks, for instance, whose husband was a presser, was one of the outstanding committee members. On the whole the men tended towards a modernizing Zionist ethic. Saoul Lourie, who was connected with the Lurias, a wealthy family of industrialists owning forests, banks and a matchbox factory in Pinsk, consented to become one vice-president of the Pinsker society. Dr George Halperin, a banker with the Jewish Colonial Trust, the Zionist bank, was another. Despite his business activities, which involved building up of one of the biggest plywood companies in Britain, Saoul Lourie’s position as vice-president of the Fund was no sinecure, for records show him to have been busily engaged in forwarding money and clothes to Pinsk. On 11 November 1925, for instance, he noted: ‘Received from Mr Isenberg the sum of Twenty Pounds (£20) to be remitted to the Orphan House in Pinsk’.

Some of the most dynamic and affluent families in the East End were those of the money-lenders, from whose ranks many of the professional men in the Anglo-Jewish community eventually came. One such family with marked upward social mobility were the Feldmans. Abraham Isenberg was friendly with Israel Feldman Senior, an old-fashioned gentleman dressed in a frock-coat. His close ties to many families in Pinsk are clear from the correspondence of the Central Management of the Jewish Orphanages at Pinsk. He has been described as ‘humane, wise, and pleasant’, and was known as Israel Feldman the Pinsker to distinguish him from his nephew Dr Israel Feldman. Through the ever conciliatory Israel Feldman Senior, Abraham Isenberg secured the patronage of the former’s son, Dr William Moses Feldman, who also agreed to serve as the honorary president of the society, and of his brother Moshe Feldman. Dr Feldman, a doctor in the East End and a consultant paediatrician at an annexe of the London Hospital, was a remarkable personality who wrote on bio-mathematics and child development in general and specifically on Jewish children, contributing a Yiddish manual on the rearing of children. Abraham Isenberg persuaded Moshe

36 Jehuda Reinharz (see n. 2) 22 and 163. Chaim Weizmann coached Saoul Lourie at the same gymnasium, a couple of years after he was admitted, and he remained a friend of Weizmann.

37 Interview with Dr Isidore Pushkin.

38 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Receipt of S. Lourie to A. Isenberg, 11 November 1925.

39 Interview with Michael Cooper. Mrs Esther Isenberg stayed with the Feldman family when she first came to England in the 1880s.

40 For Dr William Feldman, see Rev. S. Levy (ed.) Jewish Year Book 1927 (London 1927) 355.
Feldman, a travel agent and money-changer whom some thought charged excessive commission to immigrants buying ships’ tickets on credit for other members of their family, to become chairman of the Pinsker Relief Fund at its inception. Although his wealth could not equal that of the patrons of the Jews’ Temporary Shelter, such as Herman Landau and Ernest Schiff, Moshe Feldman’s family was better established and slightly higher in social standing than other Pinsker committee members.

After 1922 there was an increasing emphasis on helping the orphan children of Pinsk, which led to a personality and policy clash from which Abraham Isenberg, the treasurer, eventually emerged as the victor. This was perhaps exacerbated by some class friction – Moshe Feldman has been described as a person who was highly conscious of status. After a reshuffle of the leadership, the Fund’s name was changed to the Pinsker Orphans’ Relief Fund by 1926, which seems to indicate a clarification of its aims. Isenberg became chairman, while Moshe Feldman stepped into a position without authority as president. Among the committee members Isenberg had good reason to empathize with the plight of the orphan children in Pinsk, for when only a child his father had died and his mother had left him to be brought up by his grandparents. When an approach was made from Pinsk in 1923 for the London organization to sponsor the adoption of a group of orphan children, the committee responded positively. It was surely Isenberg’s growing influence which ensured that the policy of settling orphan children in England was pursued with fresh energy and determination.

To Isenberg’s chagrin he failed to enlist the support of Dayan Asher Feldman, younger brother of Israel Feldman the Pinsker, for the aims of the society, despite hints of the sympathy of the London Beth Din for the work of the organization. The Dayan refused to have anything to do with the Pinsker Fund and tried in general to distance himself from foreign East European immigrants, probably sharing the views of establishment figures in the Federation of Ukrainian Jews that the distress of foreign Jews should be relieved by monetary means rather than by bringing orphans for settlement in this country. The Anglo-Jewish elite who controlled the Jews’ Temporary Shelter likewise kept their social distance from the committee of the Pinsker society, whom they no doubt regarded as foreign and lower-class. Yet although none of them deigned to become patrons of the Pinsker

42 From 1922 the treasurer’s notepaper for the Fund was headed by the words ‘there are hundreds of Orphans . . . entirely destitute’. Abraham Isenberg Papers. Letter from the Pinsker Relief Fund to Mr Frankel, 16 June 1922.
43 Interview with Michael Cooper.
society and its existence was ignored in the minute books of the Shelter, at a lower level there was cooperation, for the official address of the Pinsker society on its headed notepaper was that of the Shelter at 82 Leman Street, Whitechapel. The secretary of the Shelter made all arrangements with the shipping company for the orphans to travel to England and from time to time clothes were collected and stored at the Shelter for the Pinsker Fund. As a token of their appreciation for this assistance the committee of the Pinsker Fund made a presentation of £6 3s to the staff of the Shelter. On 14 October 1926 Mr Mundy the secretary wrote to Isenberg stating that ‘Mr [Otto] Schiff likewise thanks you most sincerely for the kind promise to try and make members of the Shelter at the General Meeting of the Pinsker Relief Fund’.44 This is perhaps yet another illustration of the lack of direct contact between the honorary officers of the two bodies.

The committee of the Pinsker Relief Fund decided in 1922 that certain of its members should regularly visit Pinsker landsleit in London to request weekly contributions to the Fund. Despite difficulties when the society was first formed, its membership rose rapidly from 204 in April 1925 to 406 in October 1926.45 The secretary of the Pinsker society, Leopold Davidoff, worked part-time for a variety of Jewish organizations including friendly societies, was extremely busy and would dash to appointments at 9 o’clock in the evening with Isenberg. In the 1920s there was no such thing as cheque-book charity among the new immigrants, with donations being solicited through the post. One respondent reports that people kept a Pinsker charity box in their homes during the 1920s,46 the collector trudging from house to house in the East End to collect the weekly contributions. The first honorary secretary of the Fund, I. Bregman, wrote to Isenberg on 22 June 1922 asking him to accept his resignation, since although he had been prevailed on to accept the position of collector, he felt it was too onerous and ‘I should have to forego my living’.47 From April 1925 until October 1926 the collector was Mr Morgenstern, remembered as being ‘a jolly, fat man’. He was paid a commission of £48 175 3d by the Pinsker Fund and reimbursed £5 9d for money he had spent on fares.48

45 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Circular of the Pinsker Relief Fund £. 1922 and annual report April 1925 to October 1926.
47 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Letter of Mr I. Bregman to Mr A. Isenberg, 8 June 1922.
48 Interview with Henry Solomons and Pinsker Orphans’ Relief Fund annual report April 1925 to October 1926.
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The balance sheet of the Pinsker society for 15 April 1925 to 1 October 1926 shows how the income of the society, totalling £655 8s 3d, was collected. Members contributed £228 9s 11d, the bulk of which must have been amassed through the efforts of the collector. Leading members of the society, such as Israel Feldman, Datlow and Polatnick, collected money at simchas, weddings and engagements, and one woman, Mrs Caplan, a member of the committee, raised £5 18s 6d by these means. The committee wrote on 16 June to a Mr Frankel that ‘Mr Isenberg and Mr Feldman our honoured committee members, who were instructed to be present at your simcha, will convey to you all our best wishes. Naturally with your kind permission we shall make an appeal for the Pinsker orphans knowing that your celebration will be attended by many Pinsker landsleit . . . We hope and we expect from you Mr Frankel that not only will you allow our delegates to make a collection but you yourself will participate in this collection which will be successful.’49 There was also a yearly ball at Monickendam’s which, together with an auction, raised £141 2s 10d. The fact that such a ball took place with mixed dancing shows how quickly the former immigrants from Pinsk were assimilating to Anglo-Jewish norms. On 10 June 1926 fifty of the orphan children who had been brought to London from Pinsk provided entertainment at the People’s Palace, giving a concert which boosted the financial resources of the society by another £108 10s 3d.50

In Pinsk, meanwhile, on 18 July 1923, the secretary of the Holtzman orphanage, Zeev Lev, wrote to London to explain the parlous financial state of the orphanage, outlining the main sources of financial support and showing how much of the orphanage’s expenditure was earmarked for necessities like food and clothing. The background to the letter is the French occupation of the Ruhr, the industrial centre of Germany, in early 1923, the collapse of the German economy and European hyperinflation.

We confirm herewith the receipt of the £50 which we received from your Relief Centre. This money we have spent specifically on food. It is not a pleasant task to tell you news like we are passing on to you now about the level of our newly created difficult financial position due to the upheaval caused by the new [foreign] currency boom. In May our monthly budget reached 700 dollars equal to about 35 million marks and in June 700 dollars or 105 million marks . . . 15% [of our budget] we receive from your Relief Centre and [50% from] the American one [that is, the Joint]. The remaining 35% we have to obtain ourselves. In May this reached a figure of 12 million and at today’s rate 40 million marks. Despite our greatest efforts, we could not have covered 35% equaling

49 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Letter from the Pinsker Relief Fund to Mr Frankel, 16 June 1922.
50 Pinsker Orphans’ Relief Fund annual report April 1925 to October 1926.
12 million [marks] and certainly not the cost of the additional increases. As we have indicated to you, the receipts from the Joint also do not cover their normal 50% [contribution], and now as declared by the Joint, the Joint will only remain active till the 1st of January [1924]. Such luck we have! We cannot recover from the War situation ... In order to escape from the situation it is absolutely necessary to buy up [food] products for the next three months—August, September, October. For this purpose, it would be easiest if you were to subsidise us with a once only subsidy of £100 for the next three months... If you could obtain this... from your landsleit, please request from them something towards the winter as well and for the children to have shoes made, also socks and for some children dresses and suits.51

Some financial aid from America failed to reach the orphanages in Pinsk, endangering their existence. But in this case the crisis was met by an appeal to the business people of Pinsk and its surroundings. One undated broadsheet, published probably in 1922 or 1923, mentioned that ‘For this purpose [the raising of emergency funds] was organized orphans’ week in Pinsk and to you Jewish business people we turn for your help to fulfil your obligations towards the orphans’.52 A group of wealthy Jewish ladies also regularly visited the children in the orphanage. Later the committee in charge of the orphanage promoted concerts to raise money and encouraged children to participate in shows under adult direction in the town’s Yiddish theatre. One lady remembers forming part of a human pyramid in a gymnastic display and playing the mandolin in these entertainments.53

Partly because the finances of the orphanage were always teetering on the brink of disaster, and partly because government intervention in the 1920s squeezed Jews out of the labour market in Poland, the heads of the Holtzman orphanage were determined in 1923 to cut costs, mainly by drastically reducing the number of children in this last remaining orphanage.

The diet and clothing of children in the orphanages at Pinsk in the early 1920s, like those of most Jews in Poland, as well as their health and educational provision, suggests that prospects were so bleak that the children were motivated to seek better opportunities overseas. Those in the Holtzman orphanage were given four slices of bread without butter in the morning, which were supposed to last the rest of the day, although some could not resist finishing everything at breakfast. They also had vegetable

52 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Broadsheet in Yiddish and Polish addressed to the Jewish business community in Pinsk c. 1922 or 1923.
53 Interview with Mrs A.
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soup twice a day, but there was no fish or meat.\(^54\) One woman who left the orphanage in 1926 recollects that for breakfast the children were handed a slice of black bread and margarine with black tea. After school, at 2.30, they lunched on barley soup with a bone if they were lucky, but with no meat or potatoes, and at 6.30 ate an evening meal of herring, black bread and tea. On Friday night they dined on \textit{hallah} and a small piece of meat and potato, and on Sabbath they consumed a vegetable cholent without meat. The same woman remembers being frequently hungry in the orphanage, but also recalls the joy of going on special expeditions in the summer to orchards where she could gorge herself on as much fruit as she liked.\(^55\) Another former resident recollects that the children were so hungry that some raided the dustbins for scraps of food. Three or four contracted typhus or dysentery as a result of foraging and died.\(^56\)

A report of the Joint Distribution Committee in January 1922 confirms the lack of food, heating and clothing in the institutions (apart from exceptional cases) and describes the children as filthy and lice-infested and as subsisting mostly on tea and bread.\(^57\) Mrs Lockitch, who was in an orphanage in Brest-Litovsk, remembered that after the First World War ‘we were suffering from a lack of coal, from lack of clothes, from lack of food and from lack of care’.\(^58\) Conditions in the Holtzman orphanage slowly improved in the 1920s, but were always spartan. All meals were eaten with spoons, so when one girl was provided with a knife and fork in Danzig on her way to Britain, she did not know how to use them.\(^59\) American aid was not always properly employed: tinned salmon was put in the soup and cooks were completely baffled by dehydrated products.\(^60\) More fortunate children could visit relatives in Pinsk on the Sabbath and be regaled with tasty morsels or more nutritious food, while others had friends or relatives on the staff who plied them with extra portions.\(^61\)

At first the children’s clothing was shoddy. The girls wore dresses made out of sacks and from unstitched aprons provided by the Red Cross.\(^62\) Mr Bobrow, a member of the orphanage staff, recalled that at Pinsk ‘We had neither beds, bedding, nor clothes. I remember our using flour bags to make aprons and other garments for the boys and girls.’\(^63\)

\(^{54}\) Interview with Mrs F.
\(^{55}\) Interview with Mrs A.
\(^{56}\) Interview with Mr G.
\(^{57}\) Joint Distribution Committee Papers. Report on the state of the Polish orphans, 1922.
\(^{58}\) Rosenthal (see n. 7) 15.
\(^{59}\) Interview with Mrs A.
\(^{60}\) Interview with Mrs C.
\(^{61}\) Interviews with Mrs B. and Mrs C.
\(^{62}\) Interviews with Mrs C. and Mrs A.
\(^{63}\) Rosenthal (see n. 7) 17.
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clothes with luxuries such as pyjamas and toothbrushes started to arrive from America and Britain, Mrs Katinsky, a dressmaker attached to the Holtzman orphanage, whose father had been killed by the Bolsheviks, altered the garments to make them fit the individual children. After a few years the dressmaker made a uniform brown dress for the girls, and each Passover the children were given a new outfit. During the winter the children wore boots when walking through the mostly unpaved streets of Pinsk, widely renowned for its mud (Pinsker blotter), while in the summer the children went about barefoot, although some were equipped with sandals the year before they left for England.\footnote{Interviews with Mrs A., B. and C.}

In 1922 the Joint reported cases of scarlet fever, diphtheria, influenza and typhus in orphanages, while in April 1926 it was estimated that 15 per cent of the 150,000 Jewish schoolchildren in Poland showed symptoms of tuberculosis, with 75,000 cases being registered among the total Polish Jewish population in 1925.\footnote{Joint Distribution Committee Papers. Reports on the state of the Polish orphans in January and March 1922. Hyman (see n. 17) 22–3. \textit{JC} 30 April 1926.} Treatment for tuberculosis was rudimentary, but one ex-resident recalls that the cook used to prepare chicken dishes for her sister who had contracted tuberculosis and been moved to an isolation unit.\footnote{Interview with Mrs A.}

When the Rayoner orphanage was closed in 1922 children with skin diseases such as scurvy and favus were separated from other children in the Holtzman orphanage and treated there. A few handicapped children also shared separate accommodation.\footnote{Interview with Mrs C.} One orphanage boasted outhouses with vapour baths used by the children once every three months. Otherwise, sick children were attended by a male \textit{feldsher}, a paramedic or healer practising a mixture of modern techniques such as prescribing aspirin and traditional ones such as applying cups and leeches, painting throats and giving enemas. One lady remembered that when the \textit{feldsher} gave the girls the traditional \textit{bunkas} (cups) treatment for bronchitis, the patients had to lie down while small glasses with lighted candles were placed on their backs. The heat treatment proved an effective remedy, even if brown burn stains were left for a time on their backs. In general children stayed in bed if they were ill, one girl recovering from rheumatic fever without any special medical attention. Another with a large boil on her nose was sent for a few weeks to a convalescent home in the mountains where the children bathed nude as was usual in Poland.\footnote{Interview with Mrs A. and D. Mackenzie Wallace, \textit{Russia} (London 1877) 1:104–8.} In June 1922 the committee administering the orphanages was prodded by the Joint to provide medical treatment for the children. But although the Joint implemented an effective health programme...
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for Jews throughout Poland, details of local measures have been difficult to ascertain.69

Most children attended Jewish schools where the language of instruction was either Hebrew or Yiddish, but some brighter pupils went to a Polish gymnasium. One woman remembers that her classmates at the gymnasium were daughters of the Polish gentry. At primary school the curriculum might consist of arithmetic, geography, Hebrew and Polish, while in one of the Jewish schools the children were taught everything in Hebrew, including arithmetic, and even did their physical training in Hebrew, receiving only the most meagre instruction in Polish.70 But increasingly in the interwar period, private Jewish primary schools in Poland became ‘bilingual in instruction: Polish–Hebrew or Polish–Yiddish’.71 Whereas girls received no religious education, and synagogue attendance in the Holtzman orphanage was not compulsory for any of the children, the boys in the orphanage were taught the rudiments of Judaism in a Talmud Torah, a religious school usually reserved for orphans.72 One of the pupils, Leibel Mattos, was commended for his ability to learn a page of Talmud at the age of ten years. After reaching the age of fourteen or fifteen the children were given a training in a trade, the boys learning tailoring or shoemaking (although one boy was apprenticed to a locksmith), and the girls dressmaking and millinery, a few no doubt finding positions in domestic service.73

Anti-Semitism in Poland did not abate in the interwar period. In 1922 a riot in Minsk in which four Jews were killed and six wounded arose out of a ritual murder accusation. Rioting also occurred in the towns of Radom, Olsham and Mlava, while blood-libel allegations were made against Jews in Warsaw, Lodz and Vilna. Anti-Jewish disturbances took place in Lvov and Cracow again in 1923.74 When Balakhovich captured Pinsk in September 1920 the terrified children in one orphanage were calmed by a helper who declared ‘The Almighty will keep us and save us – now you repeat it after me’.75 A woman recalls a hail of stones banging against the shutters on the windows of her Pinsk orphanage at Passover, and another recounts how an anti-Semitic group burst into the Holtzman orphanage one evening and

69 Joint Distribution Committee Papers, Report for June 1922. Bogen (see n. 3) 252.
70 Interviews with Mrs B. and Mr G.
72 Interviews with Mr G. and Mrs C.
73 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Biographical summaries (see n. 13) and interview with Mrs C.
74 JCP, August and 22 September 1922; 7 September 1923.
75 Rosenthal (see n. 7) 17.
entered her dormitory, whereupon one of the teachers asked them to go away since there were only children in the orphanage.  

In general, therefore, Jewish children in the orphanages in Pinsk were shoddily clothed, underfed and under-nourished, undermining their health and making them susceptible to infectious disease. Facilities for treatment started to improve only slowly after 1922. Violent anti-Semitic incidents subsided from 1921, but children in orphanages were harassed from time to time and frightened that force would be used against them. As a result, children were eager to be given the chance to start a new life overseas.

On 18 July 1923 Zeev Lev, the secretary of the Holtzman orphanage, wrote to the Pinsker Fund in London to ask whether its members had reached a decision on the project to bring a group of thirty orphans to England. The committee shortly afterwards agreed to this plan, and a month later the secretary of the orphanage wrote enclosing the names of thirty-one children and four adults who wished to settle in England. Most of the adults were associated with the administration of the orphanage, but were keen to find a place of refuge in this country because of the depressed economy in Pinsk and the endemic anti-Semitism. Confirming this, the Board of Deputies was informed ‘that they were up against a condition of things in Poland at the present time which was unprecedented in Jewish history . . . They had to deal with pogroms and burnings and robberies, but they had never had to encounter a problem of this kind, which was a sort of creeping paralysis which was coming over the whole of Polish Jewry and which was caused by the economic condition of the country.’ Due to ‘the staggering inflation’ the heads of the Holtzman orphanage were determined on a bold course of action. The second letter from Zeev Lev ended by saying that ‘If the . . . [four adults] mentioned above are unable to make this journey, then the children will go without them. We mainly care for the children. They should be brought over and become established . . . in London.’

76 Interviews with Mrs A. and Mrs H.
79 J.C. 23 April 1926. See also J. Cohen Lask’s comments on the shtetl of Kolo: ‘The Jews in the streets and markets are like skeletons. They have lost both their courage and vitality. The Jewish shops, too, are empty. There is a government monopoly of certain goods, such as sugar and tobacco, and these are supplied exclusively to Christian traders. Then, again, there are a number of agitators who, either by argument or by force, prevent customers from entering shops owned by Jews.’ He reported, however, that in Lodz, the Manchester of Poland, and in Warsaw and Vilna conditions were better than in the smaller towns. J.C. 24 August 1923.
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The majority of the children selected for adoption overseas were orphans without family or friends in Pinsk, while others had poor relations who could do little to assist them. The women associated with the Pinsker Fund played a vital role in placing the orphans in new homes in London. Photographs of the children taken in Pinsk were handed to prospective parents to encourage them to take an orphan into their home. The daughter of Marsha Pushkin remembers going with her mother on visits to families in the East End, not all of which had connections with Pinsk, to plead with them to adopt an orphan. She reported how difficult it was to find enough families willing to open their homes. Four young orphan girls were brought to England in 1924 by their aunt Mrs Franks, a dynamic woman who told anyone who would listen about the cold and hunger endured by the orphans of Pinsk. She and Mr Solomons pleaded with families in the East End to adopt an orphan. Another woman who placed a number of the children in homes was Mrs Frumkin, the wife of the wine merchant.

The first group of nineteen children came to Britain in 1924 followed by a larger party of thirty-four orphans in 1926. A photograph taken on board ship survives of the first batch of children and the medical cards of the second group, so we know that a total of fifty-three children were assisted by the Pinsker society in finding homes in this country. On the first occasion the children were accompanied by staff from the orphanage on the train to Danzig before sailing for England. The medical cards show that at Danzig the children were vaccinated and had to go through a cleansing station to make certain they and their underwear were not carrying lice. As their outer clothing was poor by West European standards, additional clothing was provided after their arrival in Britain. Members of the Pinsker society were requested to prepare parcels of clothing for the thirty-four children who came over in 1926 for collection by the society’s representatives. Henry Solomons claims to have seen the arrival of orphan girls with shaven heads at the London Docks in 1924 when he was a young boy, and one of the girls

81 Ibid.
82 Interview with Mrs Hilda Weisfeld.
83 Interview with Mrs F.
84 Interviews with Mrs A., B. and Mrs E. Abraham Isenberg Papers. Collection of 34 vaccination certificates, 9 April 1926. See also Don Gussow, Chaia Sonia (New York 1981) 200. When Gussow passed through Danzig in 1920 he was told by a public health assistant: ‘After you take your shower and have been medicated, you will be given new underwear and new clothes. Your clothes but not your underwear will be thoroughly deloused, cleaned, and medicated and then returned to you. Your underwear will be destroyed – burnt.’ Mrs A. recalls that her underwear, which she had skillfully embroidered, was returned to her.
85 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Letter of Leopold Davidoff to Abraham Isenberg 22 June 1926.
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recalls that they wore hats in an attempt to conceal their shaven state. The bulk of the cost of travel in 1926 was advanced to the Pinsker Fund by the secretary of the Jews’ Temporary Shelter, although it was promptly repaid. It appears that £184 2s 7d was needed to bring the thirty-four orphans from Pinsk to London on 13 April 1926, or approximately £5 8s per head. While the ships’ passages amounted £181 15s, hiring two motor vans to convey the children from the docks came to £1 8s and transporting their luggage to another 11s, incidental expenses such as cables totalling another 8s 7d.86

The children from the orphanage were selected by their prospective families before they left Pinsk and, after a brief rest, met them at the Jews’ Temporary Shelter. ‘Adoption’ is used in a loose sense here, as there was no legal process involved in this country until the Adoption of Children Act 1926. One lady recalls how she was introduced to her new family by an older girl from the orphanage: ‘Das is deyr Mama, ge zu er un zug Mama’ (‘This is your mother, go to her and say mother’). She was then handed a banana which she did not know how to eat.87 The orphans and adoptive parents came from varied backgrounds, and children were often selected merely because of a supposed affinity visible on the photograph. Certain families with whom orphans were boarded were found not to be suitable. The family of one young girl had neither the room nor the financial resources to keep her and she had to sleep on a settee. She was soon moved to another family, but they were equally unsatisfactory because they could not speak Yiddish and she had to sleep in the back room of a dry-cleaning shop where she was terrified by the presence of a guard dog. She was saved by a woman from the Pinsker society, probably Mrs Pushkin, who travelled with her to Brighton and placed her with a more congenial family.88

Some adoptive parents had no children of their own and treated the children entrusted to them as though they were their own children. One young girl brought up by a childless couple to this day does not know her original surname or have any detailed knowledge of her real parents. At school the children rapidly acquired the rudiments of English and the girls learned trades such as dressmaking and millinery.89 But one boy died from tuberculosis despite the efforts of his adoptive parents to save him, and another was deported to Poland amid accusations of theft on the one side and of exploitation on the other, even though Abraham Isenberg interceded with Clement Attlee and George Lansbury, the local MPs.90 Many of the orphan children,

86 Interview with Henry Solomons. Abraham Isenberg Papers. Letters of Mr A. Mundy to A. Isenberg 17 March, 7 May and 24 June 1926.
87 Interview with Mrs E.
88 Interview with Mrs E.
89 Interview with Mrs C.
90 Interview with Michael Cooper.
as well as the families which emigrated with them from Pinsk, prospered in England, and the second generation can boast a number of successful businessmen, professionals and academics and people active in the media.

Sadly, personalities and policies clashed on the committee of the Pinsker society in 1926. A power struggle led by a group of members supported by the secretary Leopold Davidoff, who had been trounced in the election at the annual general meeting, led Isenberg to send a letter of resignation to the Yiddish press, drawing attention to the fact that ‘In Pinsk there are still left many orphans . . . who also wish to be adopted in good Jewish homes in London’. He held out the hope of ‘saving them’ and arranging for them to come to London, but the dissension had so weakened the Pinsker society that no more orphans were rescued.\(^91\) Owing to the shortage of accommodation in the orphanage in Pinsk in 1928 most children aged between one and six years were boarded with poor Jewish families for payment in Pinsk. There they sometimes acquired bad habits which could not be corrected later. Instead of trying to settle more orphans in England, the Pinsker society supported the orphanage’s plans to build an extension to the existing building to enable up to 400 orphans to be accommodated.\(^92\)

The adoptive parents invested both emotionally and financially in the children they had taken under their wing. Some wished the children to integrate into the Anglo-Jewish community undisturbed by the sweet and painful memories of Pinsk so did not want their adopted children to mix with other children from Pinsk.\(^93\) The opposing faction in the Pinsker society held that the children should retain their corporate identity by forming a special Pinsker orphans group. The story was leaked to the Yiddish press where it briefly became front-page news and provoked a scandal.\(^94\) Although the Pinsker society lingered on into the 1930s, its leading members assumed the role of an after-care committee, watching over the welfare of their protégés and assisting one girl financially when she studied millinery. In the mid-1930s the Young Pinsker society was still active, holding dances and sending parcels of clothes to Pinsk.\(^95\) Eliyohu Holtzman and Zeev Lev visited England before the Second World War to find out how their former charges were adjusting to life in this country. Both these caring individuals perished in the Holocaust. Inevitably, as the orphans married and moved out of the East End they gradually lost touch with each other and this story was forgotten.\(^96\)

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91 Abraham Isenberg Papers. Resignation letter of Mr A. Isenberg and a letter sent by him to the Yiddish press in 1926 or 1927.
92 The Jewish Post 14 September 1928 and The Jewish Times 21 September 1928.
93 Interview with Mrs A.
94 Interview with Mr G.
95 Interview with Mrs C.
96 Interview with Mrs F.
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Even though the Hebrew-speaking school in Pinsk attended by some of the orphans had a strong Zionist orientation and some of the children belonged to the youth movement and enthusiastically drilled in khaki uniform, none went directly from the orphanage to Palestine as pioneers. Some ex–orphans migrated to Israel as adults, however, one woman journeying there by way of Siberia and Tashkent in the 1930s. In the early 1920s a group of ten or twelve children from the Holtzmann orphanage went to Warsaw to prepare for the journey to Palestine, but because of a factional dispute between the different Zionist parties the orphans from Pinsk were asked deliberately difficult questions and weeded out as ‘politically unsound’, returning reluctantly to the orphanage.97 In 1923 South African Jews assisted in the transfer of 250 children from the pogrom–stricken areas of the Ukraine to Palestine.98 Yet although fifty places in South Africa remained for Jewish orphans, the Soviet authorities were reluctant to let them go.

In summary, therefore, the First World War and its aftermath created large numbers of Jewish war orphans in Pinsk, not mostly the direct victims of pogroms. Like the many landsmenschafn in the United States that sent aid missions to their home towns and villages in Eastern Europe, the London-based Pinsker Relief Fund tried, after the great 1921 conflagration in the town, to assist its inhabitants generally. As the Joint Distribution Committee gradually cut its relief funds in Poland and inflation undermined communal institutions in Central Europe, the London Pinsker Fund concentrated in 1924 and 1926 on bringing groups of orphans to England, following the example of committees in Canada and South Africa. This coincided with the need of the Pinsk orphanage drastically to curtail numbers because of the upsurge in inflation in 1923 which continued for a few years. The American landsmenschafn were suspicious of the upper-class philanthropists who controlled the Joint Distribution Committee and despatched their own missions to Poland, just as there was distrust between the London Pinsker Fund and the more established Anglo–Jewish communal bodies.99 In the early 1920s the Pinsker landsmanshaft in the United States sent a Mr Julius Klug and a Mr Davitch with funds and clothing to distribute among the needy of Pinsk. They were also instructed to bring twenty–eight families from Pinsk to settle in America, but neither the Pinsker body nor any other landsmanschaft helped orphans settle in the United States.100

97 Interviews with Mrs A. and Mr G.
98 Rand Daily Mail 18 June 1923.
100 B. Hoffman (ed.) Toyzen yor Pinsk: geshikhte fun der shtot, der yidisher yisev, institutsyes, sotsyale bavegungen, perzenlekheyytn, gezelschaftskeh tuer, Pinsk iher der velt (‘A thousand years of Pinsk: history of the city, its Jewish community, institutions, social movements, personalities, community leaders, Pinsk around the world’) (New York 1941).
Committee took the flawed decision that it was cheaper to leave large groups of orphans in their impoverished and endangered communities in Eastern Europe, even though groups in Canada, South Africa and Britain showed that an alternative policy could be followed on a wider scale. The Pinsker Fund and like-minded bodies in Canada and South Africa showed that the older generation of Eastern European Jews indeed retained ties to their places of origin, at least until the Holocaust, a connection which merits more detailed investigation.

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