



Book Reviews



Shores of Refuge: A Hundred Years of Jewish Emigration. Ronald Sanders. Henry Holt & Company, 115 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011. 648 pages. \$27.95.

Reviewed by Arnold Ages

One hundred years ago 80 percent of the Jewish population of the world lived in Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. A century later only Russia contains a significant number of Jewish residents while the United States and Israel are now the two greatest Jewish population centers.

The demographic change which produced this shift was occasioned by two factors—the Holocaust, and the more than two million Jews who emigrated from Eastern Europe to these shores between 1881 and approximately 1924 when exclusionary immigration statutes arrested the flow.

Ronald Sanders has, in his new and thoughtful book, excavated the story of this huge wave of Jewish emigration to a depth that has hitherto not been reached.

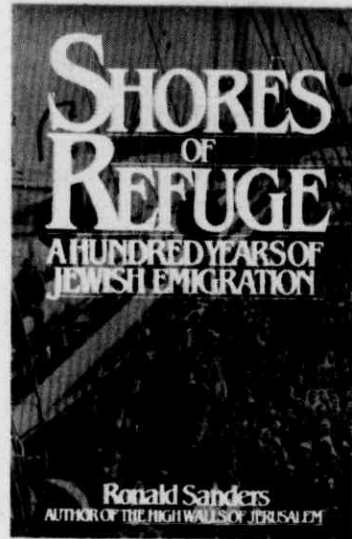
He has accomplished this by dint of prodigious research into contemporary archival records from Europe, personal journals and diaries belonging to immigrants, Yiddish novels

and newspapers and belletristic works, including poetry—all of which mirrored the travail of European Jewry during its several emigration waves.

Accordingly, Sander's essay is much more than an inquiry into population movements; it is a study of an age-old prejudice against Jews, how that prejudice activated their flight from countries of long domicile, and how various agencies in Europe and America sought to alleviate the plight of those on the run.

The author points out with some irony that on the eve of the assassination of Czar Alexander II on March 1, 1881, the Jews of Russia believed that they had reached the highest point in their condominium with the Russian people and its rulers. Alas that idea turned out to be a delusion as anti-Semitic agitation exploded in paroxysms of pogromist hatred against Jews in Odessa and Yelizavetgrad.

Within months a trickle of Jews seeking respite from government-sponsored violence against them swelled into a flood tide as they arrived in the Galician city of Brody, a transit point from which they went to German ports—to America. Sanders chronicles the chaos that characterized the first attempts to organize these re-



fugees and provides poignant eye-witness testimony to those turbulent days.

It is the integration of those personal memoirs that adds a special dimension to Sander's reconstruction of what was in many ways a mundane phenomenon. The recollections of Abraham Cahan (later to become editor of the *Forwartz*), Emma Goldman (the radical activist) and Emma Lazarus (the poet of the immigrant) in addition to the more humble testimonies of scores of other people enhances immeasurably the human aspect of the drama.

Sander's book is a powerful corrective to the idea that there was but one Jewish emigration: in fact, there were several. Between 1881 and 1902 anti-Semitic elements forced the flight of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Russia, the Ukraine and Rumania. After 1902 events such as the Kishinev massacres, the Bolshevik Revolution and the Ukrainian Holocaust (Sander's word) precipitated new Jewish emigration.

In his survey of these frenetic population movements the author explores in detail, which is occasionally excessive, the activities of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and counterparts in France and Germany. The first of these groups ably bore the brunt of the emigrant wave as it washed up against Castle Garden, New York's port of entry before Ellis Island.

There is little in the Sanders volume which is controversial—except for the latter section in which he deals with Jewish refugee problems before and during World War II. Unlike many of the researchers who have studied the question, Sanders rejects the argument that the Roosevelt administration was callous in its attitudes toward Jewish emigration during the grim years of 1933-1945.

He argues that while there was some indifference, Roosevelt himself took positive steps to alleviate the travail of European Jewry (the creation of the War Refugee Board, for example) but in the final analysis the president was forced to heed the advice of people like Anthony Eden, the British minister, who forbade interrupting the war effort on behalf of specific rescue attempts of Jews.

Sanders' overview of a hundred years of Jewish emigration deserves a special place in every Jewish and general library.

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