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IMPERIAL RUSSIA'S MILITARY MANPOWER POLICY AND THE ISSUE OF JEWISH EQUALITY AT THE END OF THE 19th – THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURIES

Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to analyze the main factors that led, firstly, to the spread of universal military service among the Jews of the Russian Empire on general terms in 1874, and then to the attempt to remove them from the ranks of the armed forces of the state on the eve of World War I. **Research Methods.** In the article there have been used general scientific and historical methods for the historical reconstruction of the main trends in the policy evolution of the Ministry of War of the Russian Empire regarding the conscription of the Jews for a military service in the last quarter of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. In the article there have been used three purely historical methods, namely historical genetic, comparative historical and internal criticism of sources. The historical genetic method has been used in the attempt to trace the main trends in the development of the idea of a military duty in the Russian Empire. The comparative historical method has been used to identify the key features and consequences of the application of a general military service in the Russian Empire compared to Western European states. The internal criticism of sources has been used to analyze the archival materials. **The scientific novelty** of the obtained results consists in detemining of the main reasons for the evolution of the leadership policy of the Russian Empire regarding the service of the Jews in the armed forces of the Empire from conscription on general terms to an attempt to eliminate the Jewish soldiers from the armed forces of the state completely. **The Conclusions.** The extension of near-universal conscription among the Jewish population as part of the 1874 military reform was a promising sign for supporters of the Jewish equality in the Russian Empire. At the same time, the initiators of the military reform hoped that military service could become an effective means for integration of this distinct national minority into the Russian society. However, the introduction of an inclusive manpower policy in the armed forces of the Russian Empire did not lead to the integration of the Jews and other national minorities into the dominant society. Furthermore, the Russian government eventually initiated an attempt to remove the Jews from service in the armed forces on the eve of World War I and found an overwhelming support for such reform among high-ranking military officials.*

Key words: *Jews, Russian Empire, military manpower policy, near-universal conscription, equal rights.*

КАДРОВА ПОЛІТИКА РОСІЙСЬКОЇ ІМПЕРАТОРСЬКОЇ АРМІЇ ТА ПИТАННЯ ЄВРЕЙСЬКОЇ РІВНОСТІ НАПРИКІНЦІ ХІХ – ПОЧАТКУ ХХ ст.

Анотація. Мета статті – проаналізувати основні чинники, що привели спершу до поширення на євреїв Російської імперії універсального військового обов'язку на загальних умовах у 1874 р., а потім до спроби усунути їх із лав збройних сил держави напередодні Першої світової війни. **Методи дослідження.** У цій статті використано загальнонаукові та історичні методи, які автор залучив для реконструкції основних тенденцій в еволюції політики Військового міністерства Російської імперії щодо призову євреїв на військову службу в останній чверті ХІХ та на початку ХХ ст. У статті також використано три суто історичні методи, а саме історико-генетичний, порівняльно-історичний та метод внутрішньої критики джерел. Історико-генетичний метод вжито для здійснення спроби простежити основні тенденції у розвитку ідеї військового обов'язку в Російській імперії. Порівняльно-історичний був застосований для виявлення ключових особливостей та наслідків застосування загальної військової повинності в Російській імперії порівняно із західноєвропейськими державами. Метод внутрішньої критики джерел послугував для аналізу архівних матеріалів. **Наукова новизна отриманих результатів** полягає у встановленні основних причин еволюції політики керівництва Російської імперії щодо служби євреїв у збройних силах від призову на загальних умовах до спроби повного усунення єврейських солдатів зі збройних сил держави. **Висновки.** Поширення загальної військової повинності на єврейське населення у рамках військової реформи 1874 р. могло бути сприйняте як обнадійливий сигнал прихильниками єврейського рівноправ'я в Російській імперії. Водночас ініціатори військової реформи сподівалися, що військова служба може стати ефективним засобом інтеграції цієї відособленої національної меншини в російське суспільство. Однак запровадження інклюзивної кадрової політики у збройних силах Російської імперії не призвело до інтеграції євреїв та інших національних меншин у панівне суспільство. Зрештою, напередодні Першої світової війни російський уряд ініціював спробу усунути євреїв зі служби в збройних силах і знайшов підтримку такої реформи серед абсолютної більшості вищих офіцерів.

Ключові слова: євреї, Російська імперія, політика комплектування збройних сил, загальна військова повинність, громадянське рівноправ'я.

The Problem Statement. The Russian Empire extended near-universal conscription to the majority of the male population in 1874. At the same time, the extension of military duty to the majority of the population of the empire, unlike in many Western European countries, did not lead to the granting of additional rights to conscripts, since this reform did not foresee any connection between their rights and duties. Despite this, the introduction of staffing of the Russian Empire armed forces exclusively by means of conscription had far-reaching consequences, since the universal nature of military service required implementation of the declared principle of equality for all male subjects in their performance of this duty without the possibility of substitution (*Ustav o voynskoy povinnosti*, 1874). Moreover, this principle was extended to the entire male population of some national minorities (Sanborn, 2003, p. 21), which led to the conscription of the Jews into the armed forces of the Russian Empire on general terms in 1874. The recruitment of the Jews to serve in the armed forces of the Russian Empire on equal terms immediately became one of the reasons for an intense debate about the Jewish equality, since publications with accusations of the Jewish draft evasion and refutations of these accusations began to appear in the press almost immediately after the introduction of near-universal conscription among the Jewish population of the empire. Eventually, the senior leadership of the Russian Imperial Army even tried to exclude the Jews from the army on the eve of World War I. Thus, there was a dramatic evolution of the policy of the Ministry of War of the Russian Empire regarding the involvement of the Jews in the armed forces in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries under

the influence of a change in the views of high-ranking military officials and the leadership of the Empire: from hopes of integrating the Jews by means of a military service on the Western European model to an attempt to eliminate them from the armed forces, despite all the possible consequences of such a policy.

The Review of Recent Publications and Researches. At the beginning of the 1990s, Western and Israeli researchers of the history of Eastern European Jewry gained access to archival materials on the territory of the former USSR and in Eastern Europe in general. They used this opportunity to elucidate previously little-studied pages of the Jewish history in Eastern Europe. John Klier, Shaul Stampfer, and other researchers started a new era in the study of Jewish history based on the source materials now available in Eastern European archives. New researchers of the Jewish history from Western and post-Soviet countries were also able to take advantage of the new opportunities. In particular, Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern was the first to do the research on the service of Jews in the armed forces of the Russian Empire in detail (Petrovskii-Shtern, 2003). Semion Goldin analyzed the attitude of the armed forces of the Empire towards the Jewish population during World War I (Gol'din, 2018). Other researchers of the history of the Russian Empire also took advantage of access to the archives. The main feature of our research is an attempt to fit the events and phenomena related to the spread of general military conscription among the Jews in the Russian Empire, and subsequent attempts to remove them from the army, in a more general context of modernization and nation-building in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century. Because of this, the publications of researchers who studied the emergence of modern states and the impact of a general military conscription on modern states and societies were also used in this article (Kaspersen & Strandsbjerg, 2017; Krebs, 2006).

The Purpose of the Research is to identify the main phenomena that led first to the spread of a universal military service among the Jews of the Russian Empire on general terms in 1874, and then to the attempt to remove them from the ranks of the armed forces of the state on the eve of World War I.

The Results of the Research. Dmytro Miliutin and other military professionals initiated the introduction of general military conscription in the Russian Empire to modernize the armed forces of the state by borrowing the idea of universal military conscription as a new military technology without a clear connection with the ideas of the nation-state and the armed nation, which were interconnected in Western European countries. This reform was fully applied to the Jews in 1874, albeit in the following decades the War Ministry's policy towards this minority underwent a dramatic evolution from conscription on equal terms to the introduction of separate rules for the recruitment of the Jews and later even to an attempt to eliminate them from the armed forces altogether. The large-scale challenges that faced the armed forces of the empire and the regime in general at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries had a decisive influence on this evolution of views on the place of the Jews in the Empire's armed forces.

The introduction of near-universal military service in the Russian Empire was the most important part of the 1874 military reform and a promising sign for supporters of the Jewish emancipation. A large part of the Jewish elite and the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia believed that the service of Jewish conscripts in the armed forces under the same conditions as any other citizen would be a crucial step towards obtaining equal rights for the Jews. At least, they hoped to rely on the Jewish military service as a strong argument in discussions on the Jewish equality. At the same time, high-ranking military officials considered military service as a tool for the integration of different national minorities.

For the Jewish leaders, the adoption of near-universal conscription in the Russian Empire looked like a military decision to pursue more inclusive policies and a signal about state readiness for the integration of the Jews into the dominant society. The continued existence of the Pale of Settlement and other special laws regarding the Jews created certain complications for the military service of representatives of this minority. A relaxation of these restrictions on the Jewish conscripts might have seemed quite likely. However, in reality, mass conscription of the Jews for military service only meant that the army was forced to deal with a condition that certain soldiers were not allowed to reside legally in some parts of the empire (State Archive of the Russian Federation, f. 102, inventory 76-a, case 884, photocopy in *Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People*, HM2/9972.10.).

The stark difference between the views of military officials and the Jewish leaders on the goals of the military reform regarding the Jews can be explained by a lack of awareness of national minorities about the reasons for drastic changes in imperial policy. In St. Petersburg the Jewish leaders were much better informed about government policies than the rest of the population. However, they had limited influence on the formation of these policies and needed to draw conclusions and make corresponding decisions based on incomplete data and in an uncertain environment. According to Ronald Krebs, uncertainty is a characteristic feature of the relationship between a strong central government and weak national minorities in general. To examine this relationship, R. Krebs suggests an explanatory model where the behaviour of national minorities depends on changes in the military's participation policy. R. Krebs considers this model to be the most suitable for analyzing the behaviour of minorities in democratic societies (Krebs, 2006, p. 38). However, its general principles may be useful for explaining the reaction of minorities to the extension of near-universal conscription to their representatives or, in this case, for interpreting the behaviour of Jewish leaders in the Russian Empire after the 1874 reform.

Modern general military service originated in France at the end of the eighteenth century. Other European and some non-European countries – including the Russian Empire – adopted this manpower policy in the form of near-universal military service, in the following century. In Western countries, the acceptance of general military service was closely linked to the granting of citizenship to a larger part of the population based on the fulfillment of their military duties. According to Morris Janowitz, “It was only in the West that military service, in the mass conscript armies of the nineteenth century, was seen as compatible with the duties and rights of citizenship” (Janowitz, 1976, p. 187). In European countries, the emancipation of the Jewish population was an integral part of the aforementioned transformations. In the Russian Empire, however, only non-privileged groups were forced to bear the burden of military service until 1874, and the introduction of near-universal conscription did not entail changes in their rights.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, major reforms in the Russian Empire led to the adaptation of Western European practices not only in the military but also in the economic, legal, and other spheres of life. Among the adherents of Western European experience was the new social group of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia. It emerged as a result of the state policy aimed at integrating the Jews into the dominant society by weaving them into the imperial system of higher education and a special system of education for the Jews. The Russian-Jewish intelligentsia participated in the discussion of the Jewish issue in the Russian Empire actively and spread their ideas through the newly-born Russian-Jewish press. The Russian-Jewish intelligentsia sought to imitate the Western experience and derived their ideas about

the Jewish emancipation from Western European thought. Therefore, intelligentsia found appeals for equal rights for the Jews based on military service to be a good way to obtain the support of Russian officials and society.

The Russian Empire experienced a serious transformation at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Great Reforms gave impetus to economic and social development. However, a whole series of challenges threatened the very existence of the empire. The Crimean War (1853 – 1856) demonstrated the vulnerability of the Russian Empire against the background of the rapid development of Western European countries that embarked on the path of industrialization, urbanization, and social transformation. The victorious wars of Prussia and the emergence of the German Empire only aggravated the fears of Russian high-ranking officers and bureaucrats. The Russian Empire relied on traditional elites and conservative ideology (Sanborn, 2003, p. 9). However, many military intellectuals embraced the idea that the survival of the empire required its transformation into a militarized national state with a national armed force even before the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (Sanborn, 2003, p. 10).

From the very beginning, representatives of the Jewish elites were willing to support the introduction of general military service. For them, it was a clear signal that the position of the Jews in the Russian Empire could be greatly improved. The Jewish elite of St. Petersburg made significant efforts to spread information about the benefits of general military service for the Jewish population of the Empire. Baron Joseph Gunzburg, the most influential Jewish leader in St. Petersburg, even published a special letter to the Jewish communities in the Pale (Nathans, 2002, p. 181). However, a series of events at the end of the 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s demonstrated that the Jewish leaders misinterpreted the desire of the government to conscript the Jews to serve in the army. The introduction of near-universal conscription and the participation of the Jews in military service under general military conditions did not pave the way for the emancipation of the Jews and granting them equal rights. The Jewish representatives had insufficient information about the reasons for the reform. They exercised a modest amount of influence during its preparation and were allowed to vote on the conditions of the Jews for joining military service (Petrovskii-Shtern, 2003, p. 177). A lack of access to information indicated the absence of political influence of the Jewish elite in the Russian Empire, similar to the situation of numerous national minorities in other states (Krebs, 2006, p. 30). It also was a primary reason why the Jewish leaders overestimated the significance of near-universal conscription.

One of the unfortunate consequences of the introduction of general military service for the Jews was that the reform deepened the split between the Jewish elites in St. Petersburg and a significant number of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, even before the pogrom crisis of the 1880s. In the summer of 1880, the contradictions intensified when the Russian-Jewish journal “*Rassvet*” which was founded by emerging predominantly secular, politically active, and culturally aware Russian-Jewish intelligentsia (Bechtel, 2003, p. 213), refused to recognize the allegations of mass Jewish evasion from military service based on official military statistics (Barsky, 1880, August 7). The inability of the Jewish magnates to react adequately to the pogrom crisis facilitated the confrontation between some members of the Russian-Jewish literary intelligentsia and the traditional Jewish elites in St. Petersburg (Frankel, 1984, p. 74). Eventually, these events led to disillusion and deeper divisions between the representatives of the Jewish minority in the Russian Empire. This happened as the result of the actual failure of the efforts aimed at achieving equal rights for the Jews. A new restrictive

policy of the tsarist government regarding the Jews from the 1880s precipitated conflicts within the circles of the Jewish elite as well.

The majority of the Jews lived in the Pale and had little incentive to support the introduction of universal conscription. Only a minor part of the Jewish population lived in large cities and was integrated into the dominant society. This small number of the Jews was largely integrated into Russian culture and society and enjoyed various rights that were inaccessible to the rest of the Jews. However, the main part of the Jewish population was artificially isolated from imperial centres, and their rights were severely restricted by special laws. This apparent difference in the realities of life led to a divergence of views on general military service. The Russian-Jewish intelligentsia and Jewish leaders in St. Petersburg and other large cities referred to the military reform and the service of the Jews in the army to justify the need for the emancipation of the Jews. At the same time, from the perspective of the majority of the Jews from the Pale, the new near-universal conscription was another unpleasant novelty of the government. While Jewish elites tried to achieve the removal of restrictions on the integration of the Jews and thus demonstrated behaviour of more inclusive minorities, the rest of the Jewish population presented a much larger spectrum of responses to the introduction of near-universal conscription (Krebs, 2006, pp. 36–37).

The creation of the new statute was supervised by the State Council under the supervision of two special commissions summoned for this purpose (Baumann, 1986, p. 33). The Commission on Personal Service considered a whole series of issues about the introduction of individual service obligations, including the conscription of the Jews, which was one of the most controversial. The reformers wanted to apply the principle of personal military duty, and there was already existing practice of Jewish military service in the Russian Empire for almost half a century. Therefore, the exemption of the Jews from military service altogether did not find many supporters. Despite this, the idea of the admission of the Jews to the officer corps met serious opposition.

Although high-ranking military officials initially did not propose any technical obstacles to limit career opportunities for the Jews, some ideological reservations barred their admission to the officer corps. The most important one was the unequal status of the Jews in the state (Petrovskii-Shtern, 2003, pp. 177–179). Russian high officials carried out reforms with a caution to not undermine the old order. Therefore, the extension of general military duty to the majority of the population did not lead to the granting of additional rights for conscripts (Sanborn, 2003, p. 203). Confrontation between the War Ministry and the Ministry for Internal Affairs (hereafter MVD) was the main reason for such an outcome. The War Ministry sought to enlarge the number of available conscripts, and the MVD was determined to ensure the preservation of the old order (Sanborn, 2003, p. 96).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Count Sergei Uvarov officially declared Orthodoxy one of the foundations of the Russian autocracy as part of his famous formula ‘Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality’ (Bartal, 2006, p. 95). The admission of the Jews to the officer corps meant to violate this doctrine and spark concerns that it would undermine discipline in the army (Petrovskii-Shtern, 2003, p. 179). Military officials expressed fears that Jewish officers would not be able to command the lower ranks that mostly belonged to the Christian denominations efficiently (Klier, 1995, pp. 336–337). Therefore, the conversion to Orthodoxy was sufficient for removing all obstacles for a candidate to obtain officer rank. Thus, the Jews could still become officers if they renounced the faith of their ancestors, at least until the end of the nineteenth century. The popularization of various racial theories

led to a change of attitude towards the converted Jews. Russian high-ranking officials began to consider the Jews not in religious, but in racial categories (Gol'din, 2018, pp. 35–36). The converts were banned from attending military schools in 1904 (Russian State Military Historical Archive, f. 1, op. 1, d. 64758, photocopy in CAHJP, HM2/8280.17). Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jews were deprived of all opportunities for career growth in the Russian military.

The idea that the Jews were prone to evade military service existed even before the extension of universal conscription to this minority. That is why, the development of measures to prevent the Jews from evading military service was an important point of consideration for the drafters of the new statute. The representatives of Jewish communities and adherents of Jewish equality were able to convince the commission not to create special rules for the conscription of the Jews in the first version of the statute enacted in 1874. Nevertheless, they were added during the following years. The main purpose of these rules was to prevent the Jews from avoiding military service by imposing a peculiar form of collective responsibility on them. For example, new rules stipulated that the shortage of Jewish conscripts was to be compensated exclusively at the expense of the Jewish population (Petrovskii-Shtern, 2003, pp. 180–181). The necessity of such measures was justified by new statistical data that allegedly showed that the Jews evaded military service on a massive scale.

The Russian-Jewish intelligentsia and the Jewish elites of St. Petersburg not only propagated the idea of near-universal conscription among the Jews but also appealed to the Jewish population not to avoid military service. The Russian-Jewish intelligentsia was also forced to refute accusations that the Jews avoided military service on a massive scale in their periodicals. The accusers heavily relied upon military statistics to prove their allegations. For a short period even Russian-Jewish intelligentsia became convinced in the existence of the phenomenon of mass evasions of the Jews and at the end of the 1870s called on the Jews not to avoid military service since at that time faith in statistics as a new objective science was too great (“Russkii evrei”, 1879, September 23). The Russian-Jewish intellectuals started to make significant efforts to refute these allegations only in 1880 (Barsky, 1880, August 7). The whole book was published in 1886 with a detailed analysis of the military statistics to which the accusers referred (Rabinovich, 1886). Supporters of the Jewish equality thoroughly analyzed all the inaccuracies and manipulations of the statistics to deny the aforementioned allegations vigorously. However, these efforts did not yield the desired results. Military intellectuals did not pay serious attention to the arguments of the adherents of Jewish equality about the misinterpretation of the military statistics until 1911 when the military ministry tried to substantiate the need for the removal of the Jews from the armed forces of the Russian Empire (Russian State Historical Archive, fund 400, inventory 19, case 37, pp. 41–53, photocopy in CAHJP, HM 2/8279.6).

The Russian-Jewish intellectuals used the military service of the Jews as an argument, drawing attention to their loyalty and willingness to sacrifice their lives for the homeland despite their deeply unequal status in the Russian Empire. Such reference to military service was a common strategy of the communal leaders of national minorities campaigning for the rights of the latter to obtain first-class citizenship (Krebs, 2006, p. 18). Military service provided a powerful argument that created rhetorical coercion forcing opponents to acknowledge the differences between declared principles and the real situation of respective communities. According to Krebs, “...a generalizable mechanism of rhetorical coercion that shows how political contestants can rhetorically box their opponents into a corner,

leaving the latter without the rhetorical resources with which to deny the former's claims" (Krebs, 2006, p. 13).

In the Russian Empire the leaders of the Jewish community had serious reasons to consider military service as a useful rhetorical instrument in the struggle for Jewish equality. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the government initiated a series of decisive reforms to implement Western ideas and approaches to create institutions that already functioned abroad. The idea about the direct correlation between military service and first-class citizenship was transferred from Western European thought. The arguments of the opponents of Jewish equality in the Russian Empire reveal that this idea infiltrated their discourse as well. According to the opponents of Jewish equality, the allegations that the Jews escaped conscription into the army on a massive scale undermined their image as loyal military servants and must have justified the unequal status of the Jews. The attempts to remove the Jews from service in the armed forces and the opposition to these initiatives by the adherents of Jewish equality indicate the existence of a notion about the same correlation between military service and equal rights. Ultimately, the Jewish population was obliged to bear the military burden without obtaining any additional rights. Supporters of the Jewish equality retained rhetorical points, but at the same time, the Jewish population of the empire received another push for radicalization.

According to the new draft statute, the Jews performed military service along with the main part of the population, despite their unequal status in the Russian Empire. The initiators of the military reform decided to recruit the Jews and some other national minorities for practical and ideological reasons. They hoped that the expansion of a recruitment pool would more evenly distribute military duty to the population of the empire and provide troops only with suitable recruits. At the same time, Dmitrii Miliutin and some other high-ranking officials took the view that military service could become an effective means for integrating national minorities into Russian society. According to Miliutin, "General obligatory participation in military service, uniting in the ranks of the army men of all estates and all parts of Russia, presents the best means for the weakening of tribal differences among the people, the correct unification of all the forces of the state, and their direction towards a single, common goal" (RGIA, f. 906, op.1, d. 28, pp. 35–36, quoted in Baumann, 1986, p. 31).

Military officials who supported the military reform did not question Miliutin's views on this issue. Joshua Sanborn in his research on the birth of mass politics in the Russian Empire stresses that these officers sought to imitate the Western European model of the army both in form and content and, therefore, supported the idea of creating a militarized multiethnic nation (Sanborn, 2003, p. 11). Such desire stemmed from the conviction, which became widespread in the military circles of the Russian Empire, that it was necessary to transform each soldier into a motivated fighter. It was envisaged that this new soldier would show initiative on the battlefield under the new conditions of the second half of the nineteenth century – a rapid development of new weapons and the improvements in tactics and strategies (Zaionchkovskii, 1952, p. 50). Mihail Dragomirov, one of the most influential Russian military theorists of this period, believed that every soldier should have a well-developed sense of duty, know his functions, and be ready to perform them in case of need. This sense of duty was based on the rule of law. The law was supposed to oblige soldiers to fulfill their duties while, at the same time, protecting them from the arbitrariness of officers. The sense of duty and observance of clear rules had to guide the life of each unit in the armed forces, not cruel discipline and a developed system of punishment (Dragomirov, 1879, p. 36).

These ideas were rather innovative for the realities of the Russian army, imbued with the culture of violence. Before the reform, military and civilian officials regarded the armed forces as the main penitentiary institution for young criminals (Petrovskii-Shtern, 2003, p. 176). The statute on universal military service abolished such practice in 1874. However, even during the post-reform period, the training of young officers continued to be based on the hierarchical structure underpinned by a system of violence. As a result, these new officers recreated the same system in military units (Sanborn, 2003, p. 169).

Researchers put forward three main hypothetical causes of liberalization of manpower policy in the armed forces: when there is a consensus on the growth of external threats, when there is a transition to professional armed forces, or when the society becomes more tolerant toward various minorities (Krebs, 2005, pp. 529–564). In the case of the Russian Empire, the emergence of an external threat became crucial for the development and introduction of universal military service and its application to Jews. Robert Baumann asserts that “Prussia’s rapid defeat of France in 1870 and the consolidation of German power spurred Russia to a renewed commitment to military modernization and gave Miliutin the leverage he needed to establish universal military service” (Baumann, 1986, p. 33). Thus, Russian military high-ranking officials had serious reasons for the introduction of universal military service.

At the beginning of the 1880s, the imperial government initiated a new policy towards the Jews. It introduced new restrictions on the Jews in the spheres of education, trade, land use, etc. The restrictions in the military sphere were less extensive and were adopted gradually. First, the Jews lost any opportunity for career growth within the armed forces. The general course of state policy to limit the rights of the Jews inevitably influenced the life of the armed forces, even though the War Ministry preferred to stick to its policy (Petrovskii-Shtern, 2003, p. 178). However, the attempts to discharge the Jews from this burdensome duty signaled the worsening of the situation for Jews.

In 1912 – 1913, the mobilization department of the War Ministry surveyed fifty senior officers to gather their opinions about the complete removal of the Jews from the army. This survey showed that the majority of high-ranking officers were fully convinced that it was a necessary measure. These officers expressed a wide range of opinions on this issue, but most of them favoured a complete removal of the Jews from the armed forces. At the end of the survey, its organizers summarized, “So, in conclusion, the Jews are physically unfit for military service and, therefore, unwanted in the army; they are harmful to the army because of their moral qualities; most importantly, in [their] military capability in military affairs [they] are unsuitable and because of [their] harmful, exaggerating political activity in the army [they] are inadmissible. That is why, all the interviewed senior executives, in total 50 people, in their conclusions unanimously recognized [that] to have the Jews in the ranks of the Army as harmful and [it is] desirable to dismiss them from troops, but not all of them recognize the feasibility of this desire” (RSHA, f. 400, in. 19, c. 37, p. 229, photocopy in CAHJP, HM 2/8279.6). In the end, Nicholas II personally supported this point of view as well (Gol’din, 2018, p. 39).

The Conclusions. Such a radical shift of opinions regarding the military service of the Jews illustrates a fundamental transformation of the state policy towards the Jewish population of the empire in forty years. The application of universal military service to Jews marked the state’s desire to integrate them into imperial structures. The attempt to remove the Jews from the armed forces forty years later shows the reverse trend to exclude the Jews from one of the most important state institutions and the dominant society in general. This

radical shift of opinions had multiple reasons, one of which could be the apparent failure of the attempt to assimilate the Jews through military service. Such failure could encourage military officials to change their initial opinions about the necessity of the Jews in the army.

Government attempts to completely remove the Jews from service in the armed forces of the empire on the eve of World War I was a radical intrusion of the state into military manpower policy. It demonstrated that their service in the army was at the heart of the dispute between the adherents and opponents of the Jewish equality in the Russian Empire. To sum up, the military service of Jewish conscripts did not provide the Jews an opportunity to receive equal rights in the Russian Empire, but it became an obstacle to the imposition of additional restrictive measures aimed at them.

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