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James Osborne's fine analysis of Italian workers in Paterson and Gertrude Dubrovsky's narrative of Jewish settlement in Farmingdale are best evaluated within larger contexts: there are certain things we need to know in order to appreciate their contributions more fully.

For example, the general and popular literature informs us that Italian immigrants were poor peasant-farmers who had worked the soil for centuries; how, then, and why, did these poor farmers come to work in silk factories in Paterson, New Jersey? Moreover, how did poor Italian farmers learn about, or become involved in, movements such as socialism and anarcho-syndicalism? And why the great fear of anarcho-syndicalism among the American populace? Finally, why do we have an image of the Jew as a nonfarmer? Was it simply because he was "forbidden" to own land in eastern Europe? If so, then why didn't more Jews go to the land in America—or at least try to? Why were they one of the most urban of America's immigrant peoples?

Unfortunately, much of our popular thinking on immigration takes its cue from Emma Lazarus's poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to be free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

A more realistic picture introduces us to something very different. It is best to think in terms of an "Atlantic Economy," a large, potentially integrated economic unit which included the United States, Canada, the countries of northern and western Europe, and, after 1880, the countries of southern and eastern Europe—Poland, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Italy. More and more, this Atlantic economy was exchanging raw materials, capital, and labor, the factors necessary for production. Areas or countries with surpluses were supplying areas and countries lacking in these items. Europe, like the United States, was a changing, transitional society. Industry in its modern form, together with large-scale urban growth and constant migration, was permanently altering the lives of millions of Europeans.

Italy, for example, in those provinces so well fed by the waters of alpine rivers, had developed a viable textile industry as early as 1800. Although outranked in size by cottons and woolens, the silk industry had established itself in Lombardy near Como and in Piedmont near Turin and Mondovi; it is estimated that as early as 1787 the silk indus-
try employed more than 16,000 workers. Throughout the nineteenth century other industries, especially primary and secondary metal manufacture, had joined textiles to make northern Italy a major industrial center of Europe. By 1900 the people of northern Italy had become familiar with industrial work in its many forms, so much so that large segments had performed industrial work for two or more generations. Thus, unlike their southern neighbors, who had little industrial experience and even less accessibility to local industrial opportunities, many of the inhabitants of northern Italy could no longer be classified as peasant-farmers or rural villagers; rather, for the purposes of analysis, they must be treated as an early urban industrial work force.

Moreover, during the nineteenth century northern Italian workers had already experienced all the blessings and evils of an incipient industrial economy: periods of unemployment; recurring episodes of partial or irregular employment; constant fluctuations in the business cycle; long hours of work; insufficient wages; unsafe working conditions; lack of social supports during sickness, layoff, and injury; and, in their view, an oppressive government and a ruling class indifferent to the plight of the workingman. Under these circumstances northern Italian workers were very receptive to movements such as socialism and, especially, anarcho-syndicalism, which proposed to alleviate these conditions. It would have been helpful had Mr. Osborne given us this background, for the “Italian” workers who staffed the silk mills of Paterson were northern Italians, many of whom had worked in textile mills prior to their arrival in America. (In fact, many were probably second- or even third-generation mill workers.) Subject to great irregularity of employment after 1860 due to silkworm disease and greater competition from the Orient, the insecure silkworkers of northern Italy were easily recruited for the silk mills of the United States (and France).

The importance of origins and previous industrial experience cannot be underestimated. Unlike the southern Italians or Sicilians, northern Italians were usually permanent immigrants, arriving with families and with little or no intention of returning to Italy. Hence, they were always concerned with improving their working conditions in America and were likely to become involved in movements to improve these conditions. (In contrast, the southern Italians, unless they had decided to stay in America permanently, were unlikely to become involved in any movements to improve their working conditions: they had come only to find work and money to return to Italy better men; strikes and other agitations interfered with their aims and hence were unattractive to them.) Finally, northern Italians brought with them their particular way of dealing with the insecure and unfavorable working conditions
of an industrializing society—anarcho-syndicalism.

Anarchist ideas, growing out of the doctrines of Pierre Joseph Proudhon, had been introduced into Italy by French émigrés following the Revolution of 1848. The Russian, Mikhail Bakunin, another spiritual father of the movement, had resided in Italy after Unification and had consciously worked to establish Italy as a center of anarchism. In the 1870s Italian labor groups with anarchist sympathies had broken off from Marx's socialist International Workingmen's Association, had consolidated with French, Spanish and Belgian groups, and in 1881 had formed the Anarchist International (which, did, indeed, hold international meetings regularly thereafter, many of which were attended by Paterson's Italian anarchists). By 1914 Italy and Spain had the strongest anarchist movements, as evidenced by the formation of the Unione Anarchica Italiana and the Unione Sindacale Italiana, which remained active until the time of Mussolini.

Anarcho-syndicalism advocated a stateless industrial society devoid of property and class distinctions. Ideally, unions were to be the main instrument of revolutionary struggle, but "syndicates" of workers and professional leaders were to take over factories and all means of production. Only a minority of anarchosyndicalists advocated violence or terrorism. These believed that one significant act by an individual could bring about great change for all. Accordingly, between 1894 and 1901, the industrializing world witnessed anarchist assassinations of presidents and monarchs considered oppressive or unsympathetic to workingmen: Sadi Carnot, president of France; Elizabeth, empress of Austria; Humbert I, king of Italy, and William McKinley, president of the United States. In America, at least, these acts of terrorism, often with the help of a highly charged press, left an indelible image of the bearded, bomb-throwing southern and eastern European anarchist, hell-bent on destroying the United States of America. No matter if terrorists constituted a minority of the movement; terrorists, anarchists, and Italians all fused into one. (So identified with anarchism did the bearded Italian become that socialists, to distinguish themselves from anarchists, were forbidden to wear beards.) Indeed, the image was so engrained that it survived into the 1920s and, many would argue, was responsible for lynchings of Italians in the South as well as for the eventual executions in 1927 of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

Given the American association of anarchosyndicalism with both terrorism and Italians, it could be argued that the great aversion to, and fear of, Italians on the part of Paterson's older ethnic and native-American populations was due primarily to this association. After all, as Mr. Osborne points out, it was an Italian from Paterson, Gaetano
Bresci, very active in the anarchist movement, who assassinated King Humbert I of Italy (allegedly because he resented the congratulatory letter sent by Humbert to General Bava-Beccaris, who had suppressed a workers’ strike in Milan, killing 80 and wounding 450 in the process.)

Unlike the Gompers form of trade unionism, which was to triumph in the end, anarcho-syndicalism was seen as distinctly un-American and anti-American. While trade unionism was a supporter of industrial capitalism, anarcho-syndicalism attacked it. While trade unionism never questioned the way in which wealth was made in America (but only demanded more of that wealth for the working masses), anarcho-syndicalism challenged the American economic system, advocating the abolition of property and private ownership. Thus, it would be well to speculate about whether the Italians in Paterson would have received the same treatment had they not been associated with anarcho-syndicalism. What if the American mind had associated them with trade unionism instead? Would the strike of 1914 have developed the way it did? Would traditional supporters of Paterson strikers, such as the politicians and police, have been there for the Italians as they had been for the Irish, Germans, and others in previous strikes? Perhaps the extreme anti-Italian feelings generated by the Paterson strike are very much tied up with the issue of anarcho-syndicalism and the accompanying violent, terrorist, un-American image which haunted the Italians in America. While Mr. Osborne hints at all this, he could rightfully have been more explicit, for the extreme anti-Italian feeling was very real, and it hit at emotions and fears deep within the American psyche; and, some would argue, many of these fears have yet to be eliminated.

In sum, the Paterson Italians’ previous work experiences in the textile mills of their own country, their previous exposure in Italy to socialism and anarcho-syndicalism, their status as true immigrants rather than migrant-laborers, and their association in the American mind with all things violent, conspiratorial, and anti-American—all help to explain more fully their role in the Paterson strike of 1914. Moreover, the same applies to the Jews, the second largest immigrant group to participate in the strike. Preliminary research indicates that many were eastern Europeans who, in the course of their wanderings throughout an industrializing Europe, had immigrated to Paterson via the silk mills of France (Lyons, for example). Like their northern Italian counterparts, in other words, the Jewish mill workers had also had previous industrial experiences and had also encountered the new ideologies and doctrines of socialism and anarcho-syndicalism; and they, too, were
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permanent immigrants determined to better their lot in America.

Dr. Dubrovsky’s narrative of the Jewish farming community in Farmingdale would have benefited from the inclusion of more background information; as presented, it lacks an adequate context within which we can place all that she is telling us. The role of Jews in eastern European agriculture, the Jewish farm movement, and the Jewish colonization effort all have long and rich histories, of which the experience in the United States and, in particular, in Farmingdale, are only part. There is, however, no mention of this rich Jewish farm heritage in Dr. Dubrovsky’s paper, nor is there sufficient analysis of the ideological and political pressures, originating within eastern Europe, which shaped the Jewish farm movement. The Farmingdale Jews are presented as deliberately choosing farming occupations rather than the traditional roles of artisan and merchant which had been characteristic of Jews in eastern Europe for centuries. Why was their choice so atypical? And why weren’t more Jews to be found in farming in eastern Europe? The usual answer, as suggested by Dr. Dubrovsky, is that Jews were “forbidden to own land.” Unfortunately, to accept this interpretation as the complete explanation is to deny the Jewish people the rich agricultural history which is theirs and to reduce the complexities of eastern European society and history to mere clichés.

Eastern European Jews came from a society which, unlike many others in Europe, remained rigidly stratified (some would say “feudal”) well into the late nineteenth century. Lords and peasants, noblemen and serfs shared a binding relationship which locked them into certain roles. The nobleman ruled, supervised wars and diplomacy, and most often owned large manor farms or estates—which were viable only because they were worked by an enslaved labor force. In such a society it was the sole function of the serf/peasant to work the land for his master. Indeed, to be a farmer in Poland or Russia meant, by definition, that one was a peasant—more specifically, a serf who was bound to his master through his relationship to the land.

The eastern European system of farming or land use was communal or village-centered. It was a system of open fields that allowed for no concept of the enclosed, isolated farms which were characteristic of North America and northern Europe. Land was scattered in plots and strips throughout the countryside, and pastures and forests were usually held in common; in exchange for working his master’s lands, the serf would be given certain pieces of land to farm for himself as well as rights or “servitudes” entitling him to use the common pastures, streams, and
forests. The land system, in other words, was a physical representation of peasant social structure, and it reflected the peasants' village network. Finally, it should be noted that owning land and farming it did not necessarily go together. Most farmers (peasants, serfs) did not own the land they farmed, and most landowners (noblemen, the state, the clergy) did no actual farming (it was, after all, beneath the nobleman's status to work with his hands in common labor). Happy was the Polish or Russian peasant who farmed land which he actually owned!

This system of land ownership and land use, together with the system of human relationships which it embodied, had been established in medieval times under the sanction and authority of the Church. To be part of the system was virtually impossible for persons or groups (such as the Jews, Germans, Tartars) who had not been involved in its original creation and the initial allotment of lands. The Jews were extraneous to eastern European serfdom and its system of landownership and land use because, as a group, they had entered the society after its consolidation. Moreover, because land use was communal and village-centered, only in unsettled territories was it possible for newcomers to establish the villages required by the eastern European system of land tenure. To be farmers, in the way that peasants were farmers, but without the original feudal sanction, the Jews must constitute their own villages and find available land in sufficient abundance to support the needs of these villages. (Such, in fact, was the aim of all Jewish colonization efforts, from the early nineteenth-century settlements of Kherson and Yekaterinoslav in the unsettled Russian steppe, to the late nineteenth-century plans of Baron de Hirsch for Jewish colonies in Argentina, and, perhaps of greatest significance, to the Zionist movement, which stressed agricultural settlement in Palestine.)

The polarity between lord and peasant, and the system of land tenure and land use which accompanied it, had other ramifications for the Jewish people. Certain functions and roles, such as merchant and craftsman, were notoriously short of practitioners, a problem which had plagued Russian and Polish leaders from at least the twelfth century, if not before. The serf, as noted, could not perform these roles because he was owned by someone to work the land. It can also be argued that there were severe psychological restraints preventing the peasant from performing these roles: both before and after Emancipation in the nineteenth century, the peasant tended to see his potential self, in the best of all possible worlds, as an independent landowner, self-sufficient in providing for all his needs, especially food.

If the peasant was not inclined, for structural and psychological reasons, to perform the needed roles of merchant and artisan, neither was
the nobleman, who usually saw these functions either as unfitting or as threatening to his status. At several points in Polish history, for example, official edicts forbade nobles to engage in trade and artisan crafts (indigenous Christian burghers, on the other hand, were forbidden to own land lest their ownership of estates and serfs jeopardize the status and power of the nobility).

Given the structural rigidity of eastern European society, therefore, persons extraneous to the status system were always encouraged to fill the void and to perform those roles of artisan and merchant so necessary for economic health. Accordingly, Germans, Gypsies, Tartars, Armenians, Moslems, and, especially, Jews, all in search of livelihood, found their way to the territories of eastern Europe. Persecuted mightily following the Crusades and expelled from French and German provinces, the Jews gradually worked their way westward into Polish and Russian domains, encouraged to do so by the liberal decrees of Boleslaus the Pious and Casimir the Great in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Here they took up the trades which the Christian Poles and Russians were either unwilling or unable to perform. Thus, the Jews became the traditional performers of nonagricultural tasks in a society which, because of its rigid structural relationships—relationships tied to its system of land ownership and land use—was not prone to produce large numbers of indigenous members to perform these tasks.

The Jews, nonetheless, were by no means excluded from various agricultural tasks, nor were they universally forbidden to own land in eastern Europe. From the fourteenth century on, Jews were prime contributors to many areas of agriculture, particularly those which were distinct from the peasants' traditional form of diversified or "dirt" farming; these were "capital intensive and semiurban branches of agriculture [which] could be combined with commercial activities": viticulture (wine growing), apiculture (beekeeping), dairy farming, chicken farming, tobacco farming, and truck farming. From the time of Grand Duke Witold of Lithuania, who granted Jews extensive rights to own land to raise grapes, the Jews were the foremost winegrowers of eastern Europe. In Bessarabia they were 90 percent, and in Poland, the majority, of all tobacco farmers. In northern Poland and Lithuania Jews predominated as truck farmers, serving as the primary growers and suppliers of such items as cucumbers to towns and small cities within a radius of several hundred miles. Everywhere in eastern Europe, but primarily in suburban locations, Jews were the chief group employed in chicken farming, dairy farming and apiculture; ironic as it may seem, in many parts of eastern Europe these agricultural occupations were Jewish, not gentile, pursuits. (In this sense, one wonders how "atypical"
the Jews of Farmingdale really are as they set out to earn their livelihoods in chicken farming!)

The distinction between forms of agricultural activity is important for understanding the apparent paradox. Both before and after Emancipation, cash crops (sugar beets, wheat and other cereals) were grown mainly on large estates owned by nobles or the state but worked by peasant labor. When free or when allowed to have land of their own to farm, Christian peasants continued to be “dirt” or “diversified” farmers. They grew some wheat and other cereals, cabbage and beets and/or potatoes (and raised a few chickens and a cow, if fortunate) for their own consumption. (The Polish proverb, “Matthew has harvested, Matthew has eaten” is appropriate here.) The Jewish farmer, in contrast, usually produced one major crop (honey, wine, tobacco, chickens, eggs, milk, or cucumbers), not for his personal consumption, but for sale to others. Just as the Christian peasants tended to avoid crafts and merchant roles in favor of farming, so, too, did they tend to avoid capital-intensive, semiurban and purely commercial forms of agriculture, as these would not enable them to be self-sufficient and independent.

In addition to engaging solely or primarily in capital-intensive and semiurban forms of agriculture, Jews were also involved in eastern European agriculture in at least three other ways: as administrators and lease-holders of agricultural assets; as capitalist farmers, that is, owners of vast estates or “agribusinesses”; and as owners of small vegetable gardens and orchards which provided secondary or supplementary incomes and food supplies to the family economy. From the fourteenth century on in Poland and Lithuania, Jews served as leaseholders or operators of distilleries and grain mills, and as administrators of estates for absentee landlords. Oftentimes, earnings accumulated from such operations found their way into large farming enterprises where Jews provided capital and administrative acumen. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Russia, many Jews who had made fortunes in banking also invested in capitalist farming; the same was true in Galicia, Slovakia, and Rumania, where “the class of Jewish capitalist owners or tenants of agricultural lands or assets had become quite large by 1900, and was directly concerned with farming.” Galicia in particular, was an interesting case, because here Jewish agriculturalists and farmers were common, ranging from large landowners—mostly absentee merchants, bankers, and industrialists (in 1902, 438 of the 2,430 largest land and forest owners were Jews who held approximately seven-hundred fifty thousand acres), to tenants and agents of agricultural assets and to farmhands and small landholders. The majority of Galicia’s Jewish agriculturalists were small landowners who were also village shopkeepers.
They rented out part of their holdings to peasant neighbors and grew fodder and vegetables on the remainder. This same situation prevailed in Rumania (Bukovina and Bessarabia) before 1914.

Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, but definitely by the nineteenth century, the eastern European economy underwent auspicious changes: the population increased dramatically; the serfs were freed, and there was an attempt to give them landholdings; and industry received sporadic encouragement or appeared despite restraints. The traditional land and village system was threatened. Even without increased harassment and anti-Semitic outbursts, it was increasingly difficult for the Jew to earn a decent living. The peasant, too, often found himself in a predicament; there was too little land for too many people—and how could one be self-sufficient and independent without land?

The belief, so strongly held by the peasantry, that one should be self-sufficient and independent by means of farming cannot be taken lightly, for it had serious repercussions for the Jews: perhaps more than any other single factor, it gave rise to the widespread notion that the Jew, because he was not self-sufficient in providing his own food, was a "parasite." And from this pressure would emerge not only major swells of anti-Semitism, but also much of the impetus, from Jew and gentile alike, to "normalize" the Jew’s occupational structure; that is, to make it resemble the occupational structure of the larger Christian population by introducing more Jews to agriculture, principally through colonization.

There were innumerable plans for Jewish agricultural settlement proposed by Jewish and non-Jewish leaders, as well as by the Russian and Polish governments. The most famous were the Zionist movement, the projects of Baron Maurice de Hirsch in the United States and Argentina, and the Birobidzhan scheme in the Soviet Far East; these, of course, combined colonization with emigration. Less well known, but equally important, were the efforts at colonization within eastern Europe itself. In Russia (excluding the Ukraine) by 1913 there were a total of thirty-eight Jewish villages representing seven thousand farms and forty-two thousand people. Although these suffered greatly during World War I and the subsequent revolution and civil war, they were reestablished with the help of Jewish organizations, so much so that by 1924 many more villages had appeared. Within the Ukraine, by 1927, there were thirty-five thousand Jews in forty-eight villages farming a total of two hundred fifty thousand acres. Here diversified agriculture predominated; everything from grains and fodder to livestock, fruits and vegetables was grown; dairy co-ops flourished. In the late 1920s the government allotted more land for Jewish settlement, with the result
that three districts—Kalinindorf, Nay-Zlatopol, Stalindorf—housed the largest single concentration of Jewish farmers in Europe. In time, these Jewish farm communities supported their own newspapers, Yiddish theaters, and schools, and continued to form new villages as prosperity and population warranted.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were 258 Jewish settlements, representing six thousand farms and thirty-six thousand people, in the western provinces of Russia (Belorussia or White Russia, as it was called, which included Lithuania and Volhynia). By 1929 there were nine thousand Jewish farm families in Belorussia with fifty-eight thousand five hundred members and one hundred seventy thousand acres; the numbers increased during the Great Depression when everyone, Jews and gentiles, turned to the land for survival. The colonization effort in these western provinces was not so successful as that of the Ukraine, but only because of poorer soil conditions and a less favorable climate. Rather than diversified agriculture, Jews in Belorussia tended to specialize in dairy farming, fodder crops, orchards, and truck farms.

In Poland the first serious attempts at Jewish farm settlement began in the early part of the nineteenth century, often under the auspices of wealthy Jewish leaders and enlightened members of the Polish nobility. By the mid-nineteenth century at least thirty thousand Jews had been established in agricultural villages in central Poland; several of these villages earned national reputations as model farming communities. In the 1920s more Jews turned to agriculture, but usually as tenants in suburban areas, rather than in villages.

Baron de Hirsch encouraged the Jews of Galicia to go into agriculture and to form marketing and dairy co-ops. Toward this end he provided many incentives, including the subsidy of agricultural and industrial schools and apprenticeships, as well as the offer of loans. By 1921 the census reported forty-eight thousand Jews partially subsisting from agriculture in Galicia. During the depression more Galician Jews went into farming. The ICA, a Jewish agricultural organization, opened a central agency in Lvov to help them, and a local organization, YILAG (Yidishe Landvirt Shoftlikhe Gezelschaft), was founded to provide credit facilities and agricultural education. By 1933, consequently, there were eight Jewish farming co-ops and twelve dairy co-ops in Galicia.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Dubrovsky makes no mention of the background material needed for understanding the Jewish farm movement; surely, the Jews who chose to move into farming in Farmingdale were part of a long tradition with counterparts in every country of eastern Europe as well as South America and Palestine. We are left, however, with more questions than answers, and, judging from Dr. Dubrovsky’s
presentation, we would never know of the Jews’ contributions to eastern European agriculture or have an understanding of the complex structural and cultural conditions of Slavic society which gave rise to the ideology behind the Jewish farm movement, including colonization. No one, perhaps, can speak with more authority on these issues than Baron Maurice de Hirsch, who devoted much of his time, money and energy to the cause of Jewish farm settlement. Writing in the August 1891 issue of *Forum* magazine, Baron de Hirsch summarized the beliefs and attitudes which contributed to the Jewish farm movement:

In the lands where Jews have been permitted to acquire landed property, where they have found opportunity to devote themselves to agriculture, they have proved themselves excellent farmers. For example, in Hungary they form a very large part of the tillers of the soil; and this fact is acknowledged to such an extent that the high Catholic clergy in Hungary almost exclusively have Jews as tenants on mortmain properties, and almost all large landholders give preference to the Jews on account of their industry, their rectitude, and their dexterity. These are facts that can not be hid, and that have force; so that the anti-Semitic movement, which for a long time flourished in Hungary, must expire. It will expire because every one sees that so important a factor in the productive activity of the country—especially in agriculture—can not be spared. My own personal experience, too, has led me to recognize that the Jews have very good ability in agriculture. I have seen this personally in the Jewish agricultural colonies of Turkey; and the reports from the expedition that I have sent to the Argentine Republic plainly show the same fact. These convictions led me to my activity to better the unhappy lot of the poor downtrodden Jews; and my efforts shall show that the Jews have not lost the agricultural qualities that their forefathers possessed. I shall try to make for them a new home in different lands, where, as free farmers, on their own soil, they can make themselves useful to the country.

Notes

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Ethnic Heritage.

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