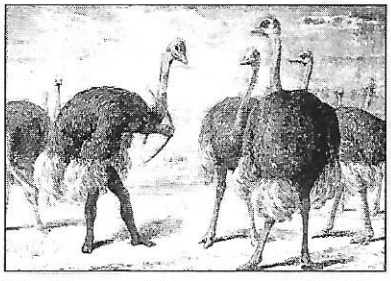
Chapter Two

Emigrant Journey

Joseph Jaffee, c.1890

Plungyan house, Kovno, Lithuania, c.1840



Plucking ostriches was one of Joffe Marks' first jobs in his new home

Plungyan[1] in 1881 is a small *shtetl*[2] – a Russian, Lithuanian or Polish town occuped mainly by Yiddish-speaking Jews – with over 3 000 inhabitants, 172 buildings, and six wooden synagogues peppered around a vibrant commercial centre, where horse trading is an important part of the economy. Half of the community is made up of Jews, some of them small merchants, others Hebrew scholars and rabbis, and others noted eccentrics. But most Jews here are landless and poor, living in overcrowded, dirty conditions. Many are dependent on the charity of others.

Surrounded by forests and divided by the Babrungas River, Plungyan is a picturesque town on the western fringe of the Samogitian Upland, believed by historians to have been settled by Jews from Babylonia in the ninth and tenth centuries and then later by the Khazars, Jews who in 964 lost their kingdom to the Russian princes. Some Jews arrived as individual merchants, trading between warring factions in the ongoing conflicts between Slavs, Tartars and other feudal tribes. Within the forests, under the rule of the ducal estates, the *shtetl* was born. In these early medieval times, the Jews were welcomed and for many centuries were protected – until the seventeenth century brought the Cossack assaults. From this time onwards, the *shtetl* communities lived in constant fear of religious persecution.

I imagine Joffe Marks, tall and thin, with brown-grey eyes and still with the name of his birth – Max (Moshe) Jaffee – departing for Riga, the port town on the Baltic Sea. He knows that this is where people leave for America and England. For some years now, he has heard the *shtetl* gossip about those who left seeking riches, freedom, land, peace and a break from the misery of generations of abject poverty. The stories of emigrants are told by the letter readers and then brought back to the small wooden homes of those whose family members have departed. Over the years, Joffe Marks has known many heads of households who have left Plungyan for distant shores. He recalls Abraham Jowell who left Plungyan in 1880 to find security and a new life by setting himself up as a *smous*[3] – Dutch for 'pedlar' – in Namaqualand (Northern Cape), calling on stock farmers, *trekboers* (itinerant Afrikaans-speaking farmers) and mission stations.

It is a summer's day in Plungyan, perfect for a leave-taking ceremony, but this is not to happen. The graves of Joffe Marks' ancestors will not be

visited, as was the custom of the day, nor will he receive the customary blessing from Rabbi Yehuda Lief Ziv, for Joffe Marks is leaving his birthplace to escape the cruelty of his stepmother, Sarah Golum. He leaves the small, pokey room in his father's wooden house overlooking the market square silently and without fanfare, simply saying goodbye to his older siblings Pera and Herman. All he carries with him is a small leather suitcase filled with modest belongings.

His leaving would have taken place unceremoniously, without the blessing of his family. Usually, when departing villagers left on their immigrant journey, there were set rituals and ceremonies: reading from the Torah on the Sabbath, then a visit to the family grave site, the last taste of knotted *chalah* baked by a loved one, the kissing of the *mezuzah*, and then finally the long journey to a coastal town where negotiations with shipping merchants determined an unknown destiny. Years later, when Joffe Marks had sufficient money to send for his brother Herman and his family, they too would probably have departed only after following these formal rituals.

Smous selling to Boer farmers, c.1890

Nurse Margaret Redfearn, who cared for Joffe Marks during the last years of his life in Sandown, Johannesburg, once asked him why he left Russia so early. 'He said that it was his stepmother. She was cruel to him,' she recalls. Nurse Margaret also remembers being told by a close family friend, Rosy Frankel, that Joffe Marks' father, Joseph, was a rabbi and that the two were often in conflict. (Some members of the family deny that Joseph was a rabbi. According to scholars, the name Jaffee – sometimes spelt Joffe, Yofe, or Yaffe and derived from the Hebrew word *yaffe*, meaning 'beautiful' – indicates that the family comes from a long line of rabbis. When trying to resolve this issue, I am told that 'they all looked like rabbis in those days', and I find no records to substantiate the claim that Joseph was a rabbi at the Kovno historical archives.)

But even if he was not the son of a rabbi, Joffe Marks' youth would have been dominated by the ritual and regulation of Jewish religious orthodoxy. In the *shtetl*, this was reinforced by a closed, economically backward, depressed and underprivileged minority community. The routines of Jewish life in the *shtetl* would have

penetrated his entire being. This tiring, impoverished life was dominated by the Rabbinate, whose members maintained the discipline of religious ritual. By the time Joffe Marks left Plungyan, this world view was beginning to be challenged by the youth who were, in increasing numbers, settling in other countries or in the slums of large cities such as Warsaw, Vilna and Minsk in the hope of escaping the grinding poverty of the *shtetl*. Here they would become artisans and proletarians, with many joining the socialist Bund (General Jewish Workers' Union)[4] in an attempt to improve their working conditions. This proletarian youth would have been influenced by the Haskala[5], or Enlightenment, which brought new secular cultural and intellectual movements to bear upon the old Jewish customs and traditions.

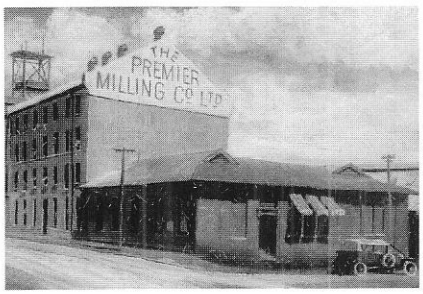
In Riga Joffe Marks may have been exposed to new secular ideas but, because he had no education, it is unlikely that these movements would have had any major impact on him – unlike his brother and peers, who would have been taught at *cheder*[6] to read and write in Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian as well as study the Torah. It is known that Joffe Marks had learning difficulties – probably a form of what is today known as dyslexia – but these would have gone unrecognised and prevented him from learning to read and write. This may have been the reason why he withdrew from what he must have found a tiring and frustrating process of formal learning. Joffe Marks may not have fitted well into this society, where prestige, authority and respect depended on the level of religious learning, and religious studies were seen as a pathway to God.

It was in Riga, in order to avoid conscription in Russia, that Max Jaffee changed his name to Joffe Marks. Stories passed down through the family – as well as his own testimony – recall that it was in the port town of Riga, on the Baltic Sea, that he obtained his first job driving a baker's cart. In Riga, too, he probably came across the myriad shipping agents assigned to assist with formal immigration, and here he probably also heard many of the accounts of life in South Africa that reached Lithuania. Stories emanating from letters or returned emigrants may well have been heard by the young Joffe Marks in Riga. One story suggests that he heard of the restrictions placed on immigrants to the USA, and decided then to go to South Africa. In those days, tales in the *shtetl* told of a land blessed with endless resources, giving those who arrived there the opportunity to trade between towns and villages. Farmers who owned land were, by nature, giving and kind, especially to the all-important Jewish *smous*, who played such a vital role in bringing necessities

to inland farming communities where, in return, they received accommodation, food and money.

It was very common for stories of prosperity in South Africa to reach Eastern Europe, and the Jewish press often reported on Barney Barnato[7], the Jewish mining magnate from the East End of London, and Sammy Marks[8], a Lithuanian Jew and the first mining magnate of the Transvaal, whose life stories contributed to the belief that everybody prospered in South Africa. Little, of course, was reported about the difficulties and poverty encountered by the majority of immigrants.

Joffe Marks' own testimony documents his first adventures after having landed in Port Elizabeth[9]. Friendly with Joseph Langley Levy[10], editor of the *Sunday Times* from 1910, it appears that Levy interviewed him about his building of a modern mill. Although no record remains of this interview, it is indeed quoted in Eric Rosenthal's unpublished work on Joffe Marks, and is the only document where I am able to imagine his voice. It is soft and sometimes the distinctively Yiddish accent is difficult to understand.



Newtown Mill, 1912

I picture Joffe Marks narrating his own story as part of an interview by Levy soon after the opening of the Newtown Mill in 1912. He is in a private booth at the Café Royal, one of Johannesburg's smartest restaurants. Dressed in a grey suit, bow tie attached to a full rounded collar, he looks most elegant. He places his hat on the seat beside him. Arriving a little before Langley Levy, he orders a whiskey and looks through the frosted glass over to the cast-iron pillars that support the building opposite and shelter a horse-drawn tram. In the busy street, he sees the recently laid tram lines, the coaches of which are reserved for 'Whites Only'. From time to time, a bicycle flashes past. Langley Levy arrives and they order pea soup, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. Levy is animated and tells Marks that he has been covering the story of the arrival of Indian statesman G.K. Gokhale, who had been invited by Mohandas Gandhi to tour the Union.

Before Joffe Marks begins his own story, he tells Levy of his memories of 16 August 1908 when 3 000 Indians gathered at

the Hamidia Mosque in Newtown to burn their registration certificates in the hope of repealing the Asiatic Act, a discriminatory law requiring Indians to register their fingerprints and carry identification certificates. Joffe Marks then begins his own story...

> *I came from Riga on a boat carrying timber from the Baltic to South Africa. I was only 17 and I worked my passage, but I had the name of a friend of my father in Port Elizabeth, who had sometimes written to my people and it was in the hopes of finding work through him that I came ashore there.*

In those days, a trip on a steamer took three to four weeks. From the material I have read, I know his journey must have been a hard and lonely experience and as squalid as the experience of all emigrants carried in steerage. Large shipping companies would take emigrants mainly to Cape Town and mostly via London, where after 1885 they would have rested at the London Shelter. On this particular journey, Joffe Marks would have had no contact with other emigrants – except Baltic ship workers, with whom he may not have even been able to communicate as he spoke only Yiddish and Russian.

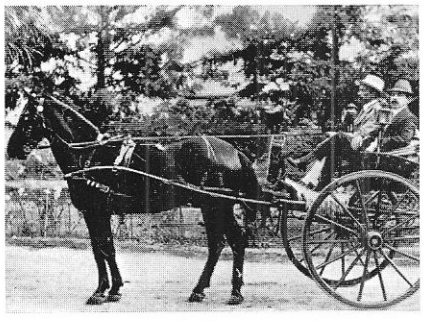
Joffe Marks faces the fear and anxiety of an uncertain future in his adoptive home. As the boat approaches Port Elizabeth, I picture him looking out onto a barren, treeless hillside bordered by bright, white buildings and surrounded by sand dunes. On the far side, he sees the large concrete structure of the Port Elizabeth Steam Milling Company, the country's first milling company, built two years before Marks' arrival in South Africa. This impressive building catches his eye.

Once in the harbour town, used previously by Portuguese sailors and settled in 1820 by the British as its chief port in the colony, he would have walked through a bustling town with over 22 000 residents, well-developed streets and public buildings that look out onto a main thoroughfare.

I imagine him excited by this hustle and bustle. He would have watched the ostrich feathers being loaded off the trains, seen the wool being heaved onto cargo ships and perhaps had some inkling that this port was the main outlet for diamonds, wool and feathers from the interior of the Cape.

Behind the main street in Port Elizabeth stood The Hill, previously an arid plain and now an 'eligible suburb' peppered with a number of buildings, streets and squares. It was here that Joffe Marks found Moshe – also an immigrant from Plungyan – and where he began his first job. His story continues.

> *Since I could speak only Russian and Yiddish, I had found some difficulty in locating Moshe, but finally discovered that he occupied a small house somewhere on the Hill. Instead of his being a man of wealth, as we had imagined in Lithuania, he turned out to be struggling as a small produce dealer, with a wife and a family of children to support. Nonetheless, they were all friendly and, knowing I had less than five shillings in my pocket, very readily offered me accommodation for the night. Then Moshe came to me and said, 'Here are five sovereigns. They should give you a start. Go find yourself lodgings, and I'll look round and see if I can find work for you.'*



Ostrich-feather dealer, Oudtshoorn, c.1880

After a short time, it was learnt that an ostrich-feather buyer, an acquaintance of Moshe, needed a driver for his Cape cart. Fortunately for Joffe Marks, the ostrich-feather business was booming and it is here that he first showed great entrepreneurial potential and initiative.

> *I drove the Cape cart for Moshe's friend for quite a time, and soon got to know the neighbouring districts and their roads. Sometimes I was sent out on my own account. I remember the occasion when my boss told me to collect some sacks of feathers from a certain farm not far from Uitenhage. Towards evening, on the way back, I encountered an old farmer with a team of oxen pulling a wagon with a load of Boer tobacco. It was getting late and we decided to spend the night together on the roadside.*

Joffe Marks decided, without authority, to buy the farmer's entire load on behalf of his employer, who also traded in tobacco leaf from Oudtshoorn and other districts. He continues: 'So I told the old farmer, "This is how much we are prepared to pay you. Bring the tobacco to my boss's place and he'll take it over".'

Back in Port Elizabeth, Joffe told his employer what he had done and was amazed at his boss's fury. 'I took you on to collect stuff, not to buy it!', the man roared. 'I am not interested in this tobacco!' Worse still, Marks' employer refused to finance the transaction. Joffe Marks was apparently undeterred. Carrying some samples to another dealer in town, he enquired: 'How much are you prepared to offer me for this load?' And before the day was over, he had sold the goods at a profit to a competitor. He never returned to his original employer.

> *After this, I worked on an ostrich farm where, during the clipping season, I worked twenty hours a day. To keep myself going, I developed the smoking habit. Once, exhausted, I fell asleep with a cigarette and set my bed alight – this incident lead to the end of my job. Soon after this, I managed to save and buy my own cart and donkeys. With these, I trekked from farm to farm in a quest for tobacco and feathers. That is how I started.*

I imagine Joffe Marks being shown how to pluck the feathers from an ostrich. Wedging the bird into a small wooden stall, he is told how to avoid the furious and potentially lethal kicks of the giant birds and how to place the stocking over its head to fool it into submission. He learns the difference between the more valuable white feathers and the larger black feathers. As he starts plucking, he is surprised how calm the birds become. Now into the rhythm of plucking, he is amused by the sight of the small coloured girl, in an attempt to keep them warm, sitting on ostrich eggs under the canopy of trees close by. He is also entertained by ostriches in the pen opposite as they eat stones and then begin a frenzied mating dance by ruffling their feathers and writhing their necks.

Oudtshoorn, a town west of Port Elizabeth and nestled in desert scrub, blossomed during the last decades of the nineteenth century into a prosperous

ostrich-farming community supplying the ladies of Edwardian England with bobbing plumage for opera gowns, hats and horses. The town became known as the 'Jerusalem of Africa', a place where Scots, Jews from the *shletl* and Afrikaners either formed part of the new land-owning elite or made their living as traders or farmhands in a properous industry that was to prove almost as important to the economy of the country as diamonds.

Joffe Marks, as a farmhand, would undoubtedly have noticed and admired the large feather palaces of the 'feather kings' and come to realise that some of the most prosperous ostrich landowners were also from the Pale of Settlement.[11] The prosperity of the community was, however, only to last until 1914 when the feather industry collapsed, leaving farmers and traders ruined.

Joffe Marks' work with the ostrich farmers marked the beginning of his career as a *smous* and the formation of his first friendship with a man known only as Jacobson. The trading partnership they formed was the first of many Joffe Marks was to make in his lifetime. Even though the partnership lasted only until 1888, Joffe Marks later employed Jacobson's son, Emmanuel, as a salesman, securing contracts with maize farmers for the Premier Milling Company in the 1920s.

One afternoon, Marks and Jacobson heard from the postmaster in a village where they were trading that many prospectors were beginning to make their fortunes as a result of the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand.

> *When the boom started on the Witwatersrand in 1886, my partner and I sold up all we had in Port Elizabeth. We had one horse wagon and one donkey wagon, and these we loaded up with anything that farmers and miners might need – trousers, shirts, whips, cases of brandy, tools, nails, trinkets and so on.*
>
> *We eventually reached the northern Orange Free State between Parys and Vereeniging. This was one of the Boer republics. Arriving at the border during the evening we met some of the Transvaal police who were stopping all* Uitlanders *[foreigners] and making them pay duty on the goods they had with them. Without delay, they searched the contents of the wagon and cart and then calculated the amount due to the Republican treasury. We had no money, so we tried to sell them some shirts and other things they might find useful, but they*

needed nothing, so there was nothing for it but to try to re-cross the drift on horseback. I found my partner camping out and feeling very blue. 'Never mind,' I said, 'I shall try again to deal with those chaps, but I must sweeten them up first.' Carrying a couple of bottles of brandy in my coat pocket, I returned to the border post.

'Let's have a drink together', I suggested. That did the trick. They were immediately interested and we sat down in the sand on the banks of the Vaal River. All that we had available were some mugs and tins, into which I poured the neat brandy. I never drank mine, but most of the police were soon fast asleep. By that time, my partner had brought the wagon across the bridge and we drove away as fast as we could, expecting every minute to be chased. Nothing, however, happened, and we safely reached Ferreira's Camp [later known as Johannesburg].

Many years later, while living on his large estate some 38 kilometres outside Johannesburg, Joffe Marks was asked by one of his farm managers: 'Now what do you consider your greatest achievement during your astonishing business career?'. 'I'll have to think about that', said Joffe Marks, 'and I'll tell you tomorrow.' The next day, he said to the farm manager: 'You asked me what gave me the greatest pleasure. It was something that I'll never accomplish again. When the gold boom started on the Witwatersrand, my partner and I made the fastest donkey-wagon trip from Port Elizabeth to Johannesburg on record. I shall never do anything like that again.'

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1 Plungyan (Lithuanian name: Plunge; Russian name: Plungyany) was one of the first Jewish communities in Lithuania, with Jewish gravestones dating back to the sixteenth century. In 1897 the Jewish population of Plungyan was 2 502, making up 55 per cent of the general population. In 1939, there were 1 800 Jews in Plungyan – from a total population of only 5 000. A survivor wrote:

'[The] Germans occupied Plungyan. Before the Russian army retreated from Plungyan, they organised a group of Leftist Jews to provide a kind of rear guard to help the Russians. When the Germans entered the town, the Lithuanians informed on those Jews. About 40 young Jews were quickly arrested and the Germans proceeded to "experiment" on them in a manner which I cannot describe. After my liberation, I was told the story of a Christian named Adamovicius who considered himself a Communist. He showed me a knucklebone he had saved from one of these martyrs... With the German occupation came random murders and robberies of Jews. Men above the age of sixteen were separated from the women and the children and locked into barracks from where they were herded off to labour... On 5 July 1941, a German selected 30 of the prettiest women to "work" and they never returned. When the day of their murder arrived, the men were ordered to dig pits; they were told that these were trenches to protect them from the Russians. Once the pits were ready, the men were taken out of the barracks and butchered. After the killing of the men, the Germans set up a ghetto for the remaining women and children, assuring them

that they could continue to live as long as they worked. Not so – they were butchered six weeks later. Thus were all the Jews in Plungyan killed.' (Rabbi Ephraim Oshry *The Annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry*, The Judaica Press Inc: Brooklyn, New York. 1995.)

In the nineteenth century, Plungyan was an important economic centre with many Jews involved in commerce and trade and, at this time, there were a large number of vibrant Jewish religious, political, cultural and sports organisations. It was a humble town whose citizens were not particularly wealthy.

Plungyan is about 250 kilometres from Vilnius, which during the mid-nineteenth century was known at the 'Jerusalem of the North', with 90 synagogues playing a central role in the cultural and religious life of Eastern European Jews. Joffe Marks' family was dispersed throughout Lithuania in various *shtetlakh* in and around Vilnius and Kovno.

2 A *shtetl* (plural: *shretlakh*) was a small town in Russia, Lithuania or Poland where the majority of the population was Jewish, speaking mainly Yiddish, and living according to the traditions of the Jewish calendar. In Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers* (p. 10), a portraitist describes a *shtetl* as 'a jumble of wooden houses clustered higgledy-piggledy about a market place... as crowded as a slum. The streets are as tortuous as a Talmudic argument. They are bent into question marks and folded into parentheses. They run into cul-de-sac like theory arrested of fact; they ooze off into lanes, alleys, back yards. At the centre is the market place with its shops, booths, tables, stands, butchers' blocks. Hither come daily around, except during winter, the peasants and peasant women from many miles around, bringing their livestock and vegetables, their fish and hides, their wagonloads of grain, melons, parsley, radishes and garlic. They buy, in exchange, the city produce which Jews import, dry goods, hats, shoes, boots, lamps, oil, spades and shirts. The tumult of the market place is one of the wonders of the world.'

3 The Dutch word *smous* (pedlar) was the name given to early Jewish immigrants to southern Africa. The somewhat universal image of Jews as pedlars created a negative stereotype that has persisted in the collective unconsciousness and in historical writing and literature. Recent research by Gwynne Shire has shown that few Jews were, in fact, unskilled hawkers. Many were tailors, shoemakers, builders, butchers, watchmakers, engineers, and carpenters, and research shows that pedlars formed a very small minority of these groups. The image of the Jewish *smous*, as it was recycled in South Africa, is particularly offensive and the author and publishers in no way wish to reinforce this stereotype. It is however a fact that Joffe Marks did start his adult career as a pedlar and even used the word *smous* to refer to his past. Rob Nixon, in his book *Dreambirds: The Natural History of a Fantasy* (pp. 67–68) addresses this issue:

'Being a feather buyer appeared a more respectable profession, but all it entailed was walking from farm to farm as a *loper-Jode* – a foot-slogging Jew. Through his labour, the foot-slogging Jew of these early days bequeathed a neologism to the Yiddish language: *shmoyzer* – a transliteration from the local Dutch word *smous* – the term for travelling pedlar. The *smous* or *shmoyzer* schlepped his way from one remote Afrikaner farm to the next. He traded in much more than feathers, carrying a leather bag of goods for barter slung over his buckled back. In that dusty wilderness, money possessed an uncertain reality, but goods were goods. The *smous* and *boer* often swapped them directly without the need for cash.'

4 The Bund was the General Jewish Workers' Union of Russia, Poland and Lithuania and was founded in 1897, playing an important role in Russia up to 1917. It was the first Jewish organisation to divide the community along class lines and use Yiddish as a language of agitation and propaganda. For more information, see 'Lithuania's Diaspora: The Johannesburg Jewish Workers' Club 1928–1948' by Taffy Adler, published in the *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol 6 No 1, October 1979.

5 The Haskala, or Enlightenment movement, of the eighteenth century attempted to move Judaism away from its traditonal Talmudic observance and towards a more secular emancipated life.

6 *Cheder* provides schooling for young boys, where they learn more about Judaism.

7 Barney Barnato, a Jew from the East End of London, arrived in the Cape in 1874 and met up with his brother, Harry, in Kimberley, heart of the country's burgeoning diamond-mining industry. In 1874, the brothers established Barnato Brothers, dealers in diamonds and brokers in mining property. Claims were bought in the Kimberley mine about two years later. Some years later, after having established Barnato

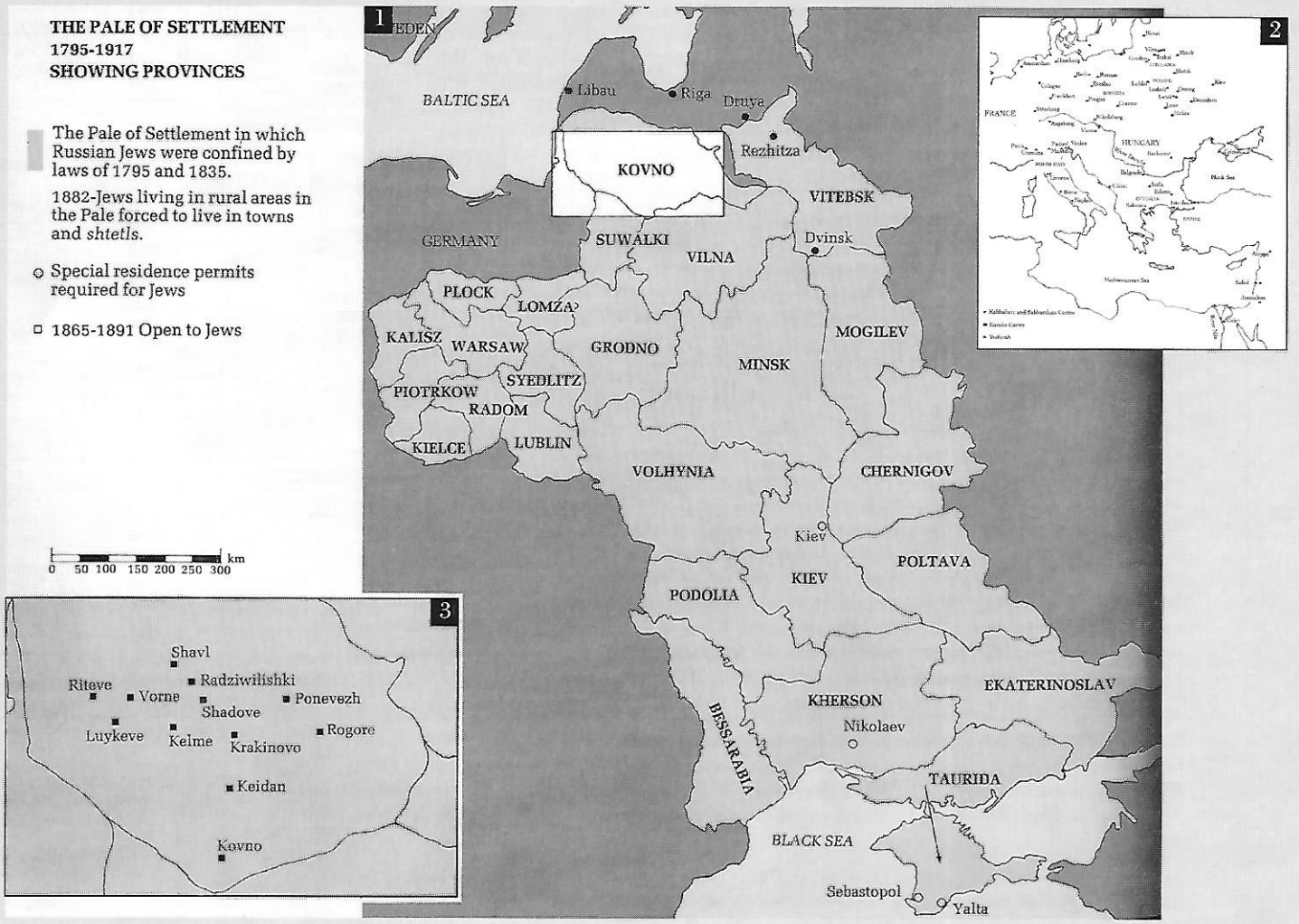
Diamond Mining Company, Barney Barnato became the dominant financial magnate of the diamond industry. After a struggle for supremancy of the industry with Cecil John Rhodes of De Beers, the two companies amalgamated in 1888 to form De Beers Consolidated Mines. Barnato became a Member of Parliament in the Cape, erected the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 1889, and founded the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment (JCI) Company, which was to become one of South Africa's most important mining and financial houses. In 1897, due to stress, he threw himself overboard on a voyage to England.

8 Lithuanian-born Samuel 'Sammy' Marks arrived in South Africa in 1868, having spent some time in England. After receiving credit facilities from the Jewish community of Cape Town, he bought a horse and cart and went to Kimberley, where – after the discovery of diamonds here – he set up a trading store and started work on his own claims. In 1881, together with his brother-in-law, Isaac Lewis, he purchased a number of farms along the Vaal – a site that would eventually become that of the iron and steel works and the founding of the Union Steel Corporation. Marks' primary interests were land, agriculture, coal and manufacturing, which anticipated the large consumer market following the discovery of gold on the Rand. He formed the first factories and distillery on a farm, Hatherley, east of Pretoria. Marks attempted to prevent the outbreak of the South African War and was instrumental in the peace process. In 1904, he became a supporter of *Het Volk* and joined the South African Party at the time of Union, becoming a Senator. He remained involved in a range of humanitarian and Jewish causes until the end of his life. He was a practising Jew with little formal education. He was also fluent in Afrikaans, but never quite managed to conquer either written or spoken English. Attempts to form other industries were hampered by the interests of mining capital.

9 At the time of Joffe Marks' arrival in South Africa, there were two British colonies and two independent Boer republics. Joffe Marks landed in British-controlled Port Elizabeth (part of the Cape Colony) and then moved to the South African Republic of the Transvaal, which at the time was being propelled out of a struggling peasant economy with the discovery of gold on the main reef of the Witwatersrand in 1886. By the 1920s, South Africa was becoming an industrialised society, which was already highly segregated.

10 Joseph Langley Levy was a Jew from Liverpool who, after much experience as a journalist in England for the *Liverpool Review*, *Daily Express* and *The Standard and Evening News* came to South Africa to edit the *Sunday Times* from 1910 to 1942. He had wide intellectual interests – including Jewish and South African history – and was a member of the Public Library Committee. Langley Levy became a close friend of Joffe Marks and visited him regularly when he lived on his country estate, Northdene. The Rosenthal manuscript 'Joffe Marks and His Story' refers to an interview by Levy with Joffe Marks in the *Sunday Times* shortly after the erection of the Newtown Mill. I have, however, been unable to trace this article.

11 The Pale of Settlement, comprising an area on the western extremes of the Russian Empire, forced Jews and other minorities into a specific territory. It constituted only four per cent of the land within the Empire but neverless held 94 per cent of its Jewish population, leading to overpopulation, poverty and restricted economic opportunities.



1. Lithuania 2. Europe 3. Kovno 4. Diaspora

On the Move

Following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, pogroms broke out in the south of Lithuania, and random attacks against Jews became a feature of Russian repression over the following 25 years. These circumstances contributed to the general sense of panic in Lithuania and increased the numbers of Jews fleeing oppression. Pogroms put an end to the hope that Jews would live lives equal to all other Russian citizens. Jews developed a number of responses to this ongoing oppression. Zionist groupings argued that Jews should have their own national state; the Bund, made up of Socialists, argued that Jews should be integrated into society and join the struggle of the working class; some Jews returned to the closed world of the *shtetl* while many with no hope for the future made plans to emigrate.

The majority of the five million Russian Jews living in Lithuania were confined to the Pale of Settlement ('beyond the pale'), which had been defined as early as 1835. Daily life in the Pale of Settlement in the 1880s became increasingly difficult. New laws promulgated in 1882 restricted Jews to even more narrowly defined areas and curtailed property ownership. To aggravate the situation further, in an increasingly stagnant economy with high levels of unemployment, occupations in the commercial sector were becoming scarce.

Emigration during this period was further stimulated by restrictions on the right of Jews to own, rent or manage property as well as restrictions on domicile, which forbade Jews from settling in rural villages. In 1827, Tsar Nicholas I, hoping to convert Jews to the Orthodox Church, ended the exemption that male Jews had from military service and they were now conscripted into the army from the age of 12 years. Jews were kept in the lowest military ranks, and in addition, barred from the practice and dietary laws of their faith while in the army. Many young Jewish men such as Joffe Marks changed their names to avoid induction into the Russian army.

Conditions deteriorated further when the liberal education policy was amended during the 1880s: the Jewish quota was limited to ten per cent for secondary school, while university quotas were restricted to less than five per cent. This had a huge effect on a community that valued education and study highly, and saw these as some of the ways of escaping grinding poverty.