

Worry was stamped on the faces of the tired Chassidim convening late into the night, as they rejected strategy after strategy devised by some of the finest and sharpest minds on the Lubavitch *askanus* scene.

This was far from the first time they had gathered to discuss communal issues, yet this was the first to throw them into a frantic frenzy, as they willed themselves to devise a feasible plan to end the current crisis. They craved rest, but sleep at this point was a fantasy.

Antisemitism was nothing new in Russia of old. It was ingrained into the children of the motherland from the moment of birth, following them through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Was it any surprise, then, that the interior minister would eventually report the constant stream of complaints of Jewish theft, violence, and treachery to the mighty Czarina Yaketrina?

Solely on account of the efforts of the above mentioned activists, was the Czarina persuaded to not take the incriminating reports at face value. Instead he sent a government official to evaluate the Jewish community nationwide.

This would have been reason to celebrate a sound victory over evil with a dance and *lchaim*, had the appointed official not been a rabid antisemite intent on driving the country's Jewish residents from its borders.

The dark news of Minister Drazvin's appointment reached the *askanim* through R' DovBer Moshe, an old friend of the minister. He had hoped his good relationship with and past favors done for Drazvin would stand him in good stead to request of him a fair report. Yet all of his pleading fell on deaf ears.

The Chassidim were in crisis. The future of Russian Jewry rested on their worn shoulders. At the moment of truth, there was only one place to turn: the Alter Rebbe.

The Alter Rebbe requested that the projected itinerary of Drazvin's travels be obtained. The Alter Rebbe also instructed that the well connected Chassidim press forward their activity on all available paths.

As to the all too real threat of a mass Jewish expulsion, the Rebbe quoted the *possuk* "אל יתהלל חוגר כמפתח" [let not one who has yet to be victorious in battle, rejoice as if he has already won¹] and added, "לה' הישועה" - Hashem will help.

With much effort, the timetable of Drazvin's planned cross country travels was obtained and forwarded to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe's advice to two prominent Lubavitch businessmen, R' Shmaryahu Zalman and R' Nosson, was this: Trail the minister throughout the country, making business contact with the local officials Drazvin intends to meet.

The hope was that by staying close to Drazvin, details would emerge of Drazvin's shady dealings and his bribe-taking,

evidence enough to render his study of Jewish society invalid to the Czarina.

And so, the Chassidim worked tirelessly to learn bits of information that the evil minister would have much preferred remain classified. Pebbles of facts and figures slowly piled into a mountain of incriminating evidence, which was eventually presented to the royalty in a file prepared—as per the Rebbe's instructions—by the Chassidim R' Moshe Maizlish and R' Moshe Vilenker.

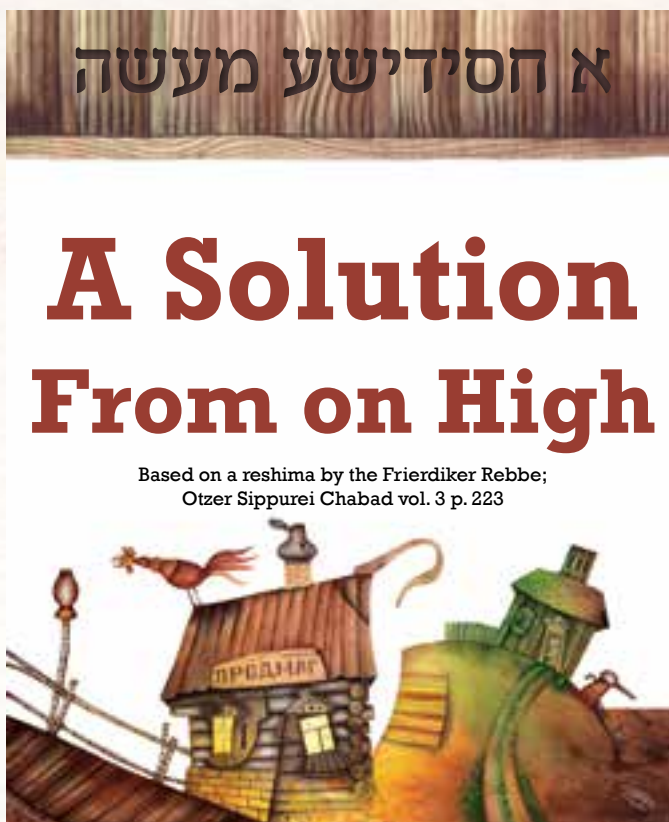
During the course of the affair the old Czarina died. Rule of the country was bequeathed to her son Paul, who quite uncharacteristically of the period, appointed

government officials by virtue of their honesty and expertise, as opposed to their corruption and inexperience.

These political developments paved the way for the Chassidim's file on Drazvin to reach the right hands at the right time. This led to the ultimate relocation of Drazvin's malicious biased report to a new home, deep in the fiery furnaces of the Czar's luxury residence, keeping them safely irrelevant.

It was then that the chassidim understood the Alter Rebbe's original words:

"אל יתהלל חוגר כמפתח, ולה' הישועה".



1. Melachim I, 20:11