

Letter to Editor from Meyer Hart

DENIAL FROM COTOPAXI.

An Unknown Correspondent Accuses the Denver Relief Committee of Misrepresentation.

To be Taken With a "Grain of Salt."

The following communication concerns the denial of the reports of Moscow, Witkowski, Krause and Lohs, of this city, in their report to the Denver Relief Committee, published in the Tribune, of the 11th inst. It is with regard to the clothing, property and business interests, it is had, and the financial position of the colonists, in the absence of even a general statement, wherein the report is the great fault and where they should have mentioned a case which applied to every one of their sympathies and their generosity.

Corvair, February 4, 1883.

To the Editor of THE TRIBUNE:

Having read in your issue of yesterday an article on the Cotopaxi colony of Russia, I take the liberty of asking you to publish the following in regard to the colony, for the truth of which you are respectfully referred to any citizen of the place. The report published is at great variance with the actual facts, and a great injury to the people of Cotopaxi, especially Mr. Julius Schwab, its late manager of the colony.

To begin with, the report gives the arrival of the colony number, etc. which is correct. It then says Mr. Schwab was his clerk and subsequently its manager, which is correct. It then says that most of the funds had been exhausted, and consequently Mr. Schwab is responsible for the cost of houses, supplies and disbursements of all funds. Mr. Schwab is merely acting under his (Salts) order. The houses are not composed of rough staves, but are built of inch plank, double with a layer of tar paper between the planks. Each house is well built and finished with a number eight cook stove with all the necessary cooking utensils, and by far superior to the houses of other farmers in this vicinity. There are but six of the houses built in Cotopaxi (the colonists' recent, owing to the severe frosts in West mountain valley) two of which leases have been given for forty-nine years, and the others may be had by the mere asking for them.

In regard to them being in actual need of a danger of starvation, it is absolutely untrue. They have at the least calculation \$1,000 between them and the cost of living to the largest family is but \$15 per month, and on the best they have economy money to live on for six months. They also have a stock among themselves which possesses \$50, to be used in case of need of any of the colonists, and as some of them have made a demand on it, they are sure they could not have wanted very badly. There are several of them also who have money coming to them from storekeepers here, also from the mining company, for work performed in January. It was only day before yesterday (Tuesday) when they were paid about \$200 for December work by the mining company. No doubt the committee sent from Denver meant well by their efforts, but they have actually done more harm than good. Their only source from which they obtained their information being from the colonists themselves, who when they saw the prospect of obtaining a few provisions without cost they naturally made their case look as bad as possible. When they heard the committee was coming from Denver, they refused to work, claiming they were sick and unable to do so. I do not want to take up too much of your valuable space, so will not trouble you with anything further, and trust you will publish what I have already written.

M. H.

Respectfully,
Meyer Hart,
Cotopaxi, Colo., February 12, 1883.

In the article of THE DENVER TRIBUNE, published on Sunday, the 11th inst., my name was used to corroborate a report made by the John, Witkowski and Krause committee, from Denver, concerning the Russian refugees. Such authority has never been given by me to that committee, as I do not know sufficient about the transactions or business of Mr. Salts' with the Russian colonists to corroborate any reports pro or con.

GABRIEL H. RUMBER,
Justice of the Peace.

Sent 8 February 1883,
Published in Denver Tribune,
13 February, 1883.

Annotated by
Miles Saltiel

Acknowledgements and sources

This covers a set of documents intended to enable students of the Cotopaxi pioneers to examine the primary and secondary documents regarding the colony. They are provided with annotations, cross references and an index. In addition the "Cotopaxi Papers" include a summary of findings and a collection of quantitative material, including demographic and financial data, plus a paper on mining employment and a paper on historiography. These are identified and acknowledged as follows:

Document	Principal providers of source material
CP-1 Summary of findings	As below
CP-2 Quantitative material	Generally as below plus Adam Fagin and Leah Klocek, Denver, Colorado, on behalf of author; and Jenny Moore Lowe, Cañon City, Colorado as published at http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/cotopaxi/land.html ; and http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/cotopaxi/family-names.html
CP-3 Schwarz. 29 July 1882	Andrew Eason, at that time of Bristol, England; and Rivka Schiller, New York City, on behalf of author.
CP-4 Tuska. c5 August 1882	Professor Adam Rovner, University of Denver, Colorado, in correspondence with author.
CP-5 Saltiel. 19 October 1882	As CP-4
CP-6 Schwarz. 23 October, 1882	Moshe Shaltiel, Miami, Florida, in correspondence with author.
CP-7 Saltiel, 27 December 1882	Author
CP-8 Kohn and Wirkowski. 5 January 1883	Leah Klocek, Denver, Colorado, on behalf of author.
CP-9 Meyer Hart. 8 February 1883	As CP-6
CP-10 Henry. 15 February 1883	As CP-8
CP-11 Schwarz, 2 March 1883	As CP-8
CP-12 Nussbaum, 13 March 1883	As CP-8
CP-13 Roberts. 1941	As CP-6
CP-14 Satt. 1950	Published by Nelson Moore, Cotopaxi Colorado, at http://www.cotopaxi-colony.com/flora-jane-satt-thesis.htm
CP-15 Shpall, 1950	As CP-8
CP-16 Gulliford. 1953	As CP-6
CP-17 The Bardine Assignment	Jenny Moore Lowe, Cañon City, Colorado, in correspondence with author.
CP-18 Historiography	As above, plus Yehuda Aharon Horwitz and Stephanie Ginensky, Jerusalem, Israel.
Index to CP-3 to CP-16	Compiled by Nic Nicholas, London, England.

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Publication information on back cover.

1 DENIAL FROM COTOPAXI.

3 An Unknown Correspondent Accuses the Denver Relief Committee of Misrepresentation

5 To be Taken With a "Grain of Salt."

7 The following communications concerning the Jewish refugees from Cotopaxi are given in denial
8 of the reports of Messrs. Witkowski, Strauss and Kohn, of this city. They come from parties
9 unknown to THE TRIBUNE. The gentlemen named are well known in Denver as above reproach
10 as to veracity and business integrity. It is hardly probable that in the absence of even a selfish
11 motive they should have misrepresented a case which applied so strongly to their sympathy and
12 their generosity.

14 COTOPAXI, February, 8, 1883.

16 To the Editor of THE TRIBUNE:

18 Having read in your issue of yesterday an article on the Cotopaxi colony of Russian refugees,
19 given by Messrs. Witkowski and Kohn, I take the liberty of asking you to publish the following
20 facts in regard to the colony, for the truth of which you are respectfully referred 'to any citizen'
21 of this place. The report published is at great variance with the actual facts, and a great injustice
22 to the people of Cotopaxi generally, especially Mr. Julius Schwarz, the late manager of the
23 colony.

25 To begin with, the report gives the date of arrival of the colony, its number, etc., which is correct.
26 It then says Mr. Schwarz was its clerk and subsequently its manager; this is true, but Mr. Schwarz
27 was not appointed its manager until August 2, at which time most of the funds had been
28 exhausted, and consequently Mr Schwarz is by no means responsible for the cost of houses,
29 supplies, etc., as Mr. E. H. Saltiel had the sole charge and disbursement of all funds, Mr. Schwarz
30 merely acting under his (Saltiel's) orders.

Generally

MH can be identified as Meyer Hart, the 18-year-old son of E S Hart who kept the general store in Cotopaxi.

The *Denver Tribune* was owned by Herman Silver who co-signed Kohn's note to HEAS, CP-8, and served as the Chairman of the Cotopaxi Relief Committee. This explains the punning jibe at line 5.

Line 22

This conveys the writer's affiliation with Schwarz from whom he was not so far in age.

Lines 27 and 28

Tuska sent Schwarz \$1,000 immediately (as CP-3, page 5, line 26) and Schwarz had the spending of \$3,000 in total (CP-11, page 1, lines 23 and 24) from which he took his board and salary as well as contributing to the costs of cows and wire. Hart's remark tells us that these sums were insufficient.

1 The houses are not composed of rough timber, but are built of inch plank, doubled with a layer
2 of tar paper between the planks. Each house is well built and furnished with a number eight cook
3 stove with all the necessary cooking utensils; and is by far superior to the houses of other
4 farmers in the vicinity.

Lines 1 to 3

Circumstantially rebuts Kohn as CP-8, page 1, lines 25 to 27.

5
6 There are but six of the houses built in Cotopaxi (at the colonist's request, owning their separate
7 farms in Wet Mountain Valley) two of which leases have been given for forty-nine years, and the
8 others may be had by the mere asking for them.

Lines 6 to 8

Circumstantially rebuts Kohn as CP-8, page 2, lines 1 to 9; and confirming Schwarz' account of six *houses* built or to be built in Cotopaxi in October, as CP-6, page 6, lines 13 and 14.

"...for the mere asking of them..." is so colourful a turn of phrase as to suggest a direct quotation, possibly from Saltiel, who had a knack for lively language

9
10 In regard to the land, they are situated in one of the finest farming districts in the State (Wet
11 Mountain Valley) and needs but a ditch to make it the same as the rest of the farms surrounding
12 it. This fact is told the New York committee by Mr Schwarz in his report wherein he says: "The
13 colonists need help to build a three miles long ditch to irrigate their land." In regard to the cows
14 of the colonists, the reason they do not give milk is that they are not properly fed and housed by
15 the colonists.

Line 12

Conveys that Schwarz' report was in general circulation among interested parties in Cotopaxi.

16
17 It is with regard to the clothing, provisions and financial position of the colonists generally,
18 wherein the report is the greatest at variance with actual facts. One instance it relates of Morris
19 Minkonsky's family is, to say the least of it, an untruth, the fact being that at the time he crossed
20 the river he was coming home from his land and was at the time a single man, not being married
21 until three months after his adventure in the river, which was not the great feat it is represented,
22 but one which any of the residents would have undertaken under the circumstances; and
23 moreover, he did not have to procure provisions, as he was at the time being provided for by the
24 society.

Lines 13 to 15

Another instance of the settlers' clumsiness with livestock.

25
26 It also relates an incident of Zolle Prizrand, stating that his wife lay at home sick and the people
27 of Cotopaxi refused to give him credit for a sack of flour. This is a pronounced falsehood, as
28 many of the Russians have accounts in Cotopaxi, and have never been refused credit for a sack
29 of flour.

Lines 23 and 24

In conjunction with lines 27 and 28 on the previous page conveys that the swim took place in the summer, as before the Colony's funds were exhausted in August.

Lines 26 to 29

As the son of the store-keeper, the author should know. On the other hand, he may not have been a party to the terms of the credit on offer, particularly after the disappointing reception of Schwarz' report.

1 It also says that at no time the colonists had work together. This is wrong, as they have had
2 month's work in Salida from the Denver & Rio Grande railroad, each man receiving a check from
3 the pay-car, the average of which was \$40, and some of the checks are still held by the colonists.
4 They have also had work at various times in the zinc mines, the average number employed being
5 six, and wages from \$1.50 to \$2 per day – also, two of them have been earning \$1.50 per day for
6 the last four months carpentering.

7
8 In regard to them being in actual need or in danger of starvation, it is absolutely untrue. They
9 have at the least calculation \$1,000 between them and the cost of living to the largest family is
10 but \$15 per month, and on this basis they have enough money to live on for six months. They
11 also have a society among themselves which possesses \$60, to be used in case of need of any of
12 the colonists, and as none of them have made any demand on the fund they surely could not
13 have wanted very badly.

14
15 There are several of them also who have money coming to them from storekeepers here, also
16 from the mining company, for work performed in January. It was only day before yesterday
17 (Tuesday) when there were paid about \$800 for December work by the mining company.

18
19 No doubt the committee sent from Denver meant well by their efforts, but they have actually
20 done more harm than good. Their only source from which they obtained their information being
21 from the colonists themselves, who are naturally inclined to accept alms, and when they saw the
22 prospect of obtaining a few provisions without cost they naturally made their case look as bad as
23 possible. When they heard the committee was coming from Denver they refused to work,
24 claiming they were sick and unable to do so. I do not want to take up too much of your valuable
25 space, so will not trouble you with anything further, and trust you will publish what I have
26 already written.

27
28 Respectfully,

29
30 M.H.

Lines 1 to 6

This passage gives much information.

The colonists had paid work from three sources (four, if line 15 refers to income for helping in the store).

The railroad paid by check, for cashing in the store, just as the scrip from the mine complained of by Satt (CP-14, page 25 line 18 to 20) .

Railroad workers were hanging on to checks rather than cashing them. This would be either because railroad checks attracted a heavier discount on cashing, or because the store was imposing a haircut for past debts.

Hart confirms the records of the Fremont County Courthouse that in early 1883, there were six settlers working in the mines.

Lines 8 to 13

The "at least \$1,000 between them" is Hart's calculation rather than his knowledge; no doubt a cause of chagrin to his family, to whom the settlers owed money. See CP-1, graphic 8 and CP-2, tables 13 to 21 for reasoned estimates.

His estimate of "the cost of living to the largest family is but \$15 per month" is consistent with the figures in CP-2, Quantitative material.

The \$60 of communal funds follows Schwarz' reference to "a Mutual Relief Society" at CP-6, page 16, line 18; and anticipates Henry's disobliging remarks at CP-10, page 2 lines 9 to 13.

Lines 15 and 16

This should be taken as a contradiction of Satt's complaints about scrip at CP-14, page 25, lines 18 to 21, as he fails to repeat his reference to pay checks as lines 3 and 4 above. His estimate of "about \$800" is consistent with the figures in CP-2, Quantitative material.

Lines 19 to 26

However hard to read, there is no reason to disregard this passage. It is more probable (and certainly more flattering to those concerned) that the colonists had been prepped to give the visitors raw material for their campaign, than that they were simple mendicants. On the other hand, conditions were sufficiently challenging for the records of Arapahoe County (ie, Denver) to show that eight days later, Solomon Chuteran had decamped to become a county charge.

1 Russian Refugees.
2
3 COTOPAXI, COLO., February 12, 1883.
4
5 To the Editor of THE TRIBUNE:
6
7 In the article of THE DENVER TRIBUNE, published on Sunday, the 11th instant, my name was
8 used to corroborate a report made by the Kohn, Witkowski and Strauss committee, from
9 Denver, concerning the Russian refugees. Such authority has never been given by me to that
10 committee, as I do not know sufficient about the transactions or business of Mr. Saltiel with the
11 Russian colonists to corroborate any reports pro or con.
12
13 GEORGE H. RUMMEL,
14
15 Justice of the Peace.
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Lines 1 to 15

It is a wonderful coincidence that this passage should come to light as appearing below the letter from MH.

Mr Rummel could have had any number of reasons to disassociate himself from "the Kohn, Witkowski and Strauss committee", but he may also be a tad disingenuous. Six weeks later he was one of the 26 miners in Saltiel's mine (including six colonists) who assigned back wages to Joseph Bardine in docket nos 10869 and 10870, dated 17 and 18 April 1883.

As a "Justice of the Peace", Mr Rummel may have organised this manoeuvre, intended to crystallise obligations on the closure of the mine. See CP-17, the Bardine Assignment.

Rummel is linked to "Judge" Bardine in Gulliford, CP-12, page 6, line 3. Gulliford also writes that Bardine went on to run the Cotopaxi post office in 1883 (CP-16, page 6, line 25).

Published by
Miles Saltiel
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miles.saltiel@cotopaxicolony.com

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