

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
IMMIGRATION SERVICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

January 4, 1916.

No. 14898/7-6

A meeting of a
BOARD OF SPECIAL INQUIRY
ANGEL ISLAND STATION
composed of

In the matter of
the application of

Lev Kotz, alias Lebe Nissonoff,
Russian Hebrew

Ex. S.S. "Persia Maru" #
12-25-15
For admission to the
UNITED STATES

Inspector J. P. Lawler, Chairman

Inspector Henry Weiss,

Inspector H P L Beck, (acting)

Stenographer H P L Beck

Interpreter Henry Weiss (acting)

Testimony written and
filed.....1/6.....1916

14-472

Medical certificate Released

Held for SPECIAL INQUIRY by Inspector Swasey as L.P.C.

Alien, being first duly sworn, testifies:

- Q By Chairman: What is your name and age? A Lev Kotz, age 24 years
- Q Is that your right name? A No, my right name is Lebe Nissonoff; I was born in Russia, arrived at this port from Yokohama, Japan, on the s/s "Persia Maru" December 25, 1915, accompanied by no one; I am single; at home in Lodz, Russia I was a merchant; I can read and write; paid own passage; never in the United States before; coming to San Francisco, Cal., to join Abraham Kent, I don't know his address; I have \$15.00; (Produces 20 yen, 12 rubles, and \$1.80 in American money; name and address of nearest relative in Russia, Samuel Nissonoff, brother, lives at 16 Passage Scholtz, Lodz, Russia.
- Q What do you expect to do in the United States if landed? A I understand a little about tailoring, inasmuch as we used to keep clothing also in our store, and it was necessary to make alterations, to do busheling, and I learned it from other people there; however, I am ready and prepared to do any kind of work, hard labor or anything
- Q Have you any relatives in the United States whose addresses you can give? A No, but I have a Mr. Allenberg, living somewhere in the United States, who is a distant relative of mine
- Q Have you any friends whose addresses you can give? A No, my idea was to go to some countryman of mine and ask him to locate Mr. Abraham Kent
- Q Have you any trade of any kind other than you have mentioned, tailoring, at which you could earn a living? A No
- Q Have you any other funds than what you have already produced here? A Personally I have nothing more than I have produced here just now; however, I have a cousin in Harbin who has offered to send me money should I require same, and he told me to ask for it.

Lev Kotz

- Q Have you any relatives or friends in the United States upon whom you could call for assistance in case you need it? A None but countrymen of mine and friends who are here already, one is Salmon Franklin
- Q Why did you leave Russia? A For two reasons; there is absolutely no work to be had there, and I did not want to join the army and go to war
- Q What became of your commercial business you had there? A I and my cousin conducted it, we sold out everything; there was not very much to ~~make~~ it; we lived on it; business was bad; when I left Lodz I had about 4000 rubles; it cost me that money to live and get through and take care of various officials.
- Q Have you a passport entitling you to leave Russia? A I have a passport upstairs, (meaning detention quarters), I used it in Russia and I was allowed to go through
- Q Is that a passport to the United States? A Our passports generally do not say that, but we have permission to go to any part of the country
- Q Is not the passport that you have in your possession the passport which all Russians are required to have while resident in Russia? A Yes, I have not a passport which entitles me to leave Russia for any foreign country
- Q Would you be in any danger if you were refused admission at this port and returned to Japan, the country from which you came? A One of the main reasons for my leaving Russia was that I had suffered considerable already from the prosecution of the Jews, and I understand there is an understanding now between the Japanese government and our government that the Japanese send back Russian subjects to Russia, and it will certainly be very bad for me if I am sent back to Japan
- Q Do you know whether that is a fact or not, or you just heard it? A I was advised at Harbin that we should make our get-away as soon as possible, that the two governments had made arrangements to return Russians from Japan, if caught
- Q Why are you entering this country under an assumed name? A I did not enter under an assumed name, my right family name is Kotz; the ticket agent made it Katsu; Lev is the same as Lebe
- Q How do you explain the fact that in answer to a former question you stated your correct family name is Nissonoff? A My father's first name is Nisson, and "off" means the son, consequently Nissonoff is the son of Nisson; it is a mere form that we have at home; the called me Nissonoff, the son of Nisson
- Q Chairman to Board: Any further questions? A No

Chairman: I move that further action in this case be deferred until this office can investigate the conditions in San Francisco under which a number of Russian Hebrews, who were admitted a short time ago, are now living.

Inspector Weiss: I second the Motion! Mr. Beck: I concur.

The above is a correct transcript.

J. P. Beck
Stenographer.

Jan. 5, 1916.

Lev Ketz.

Board of Special Inquiry reconvened; composed of the following members:

J P Lawler, Chairman

J A Robinson,

H P L Beck, (Geo A Bauers, act'g Interpreter)

Alien appears before the Board.

By Chairman: This case was deferred on the 4th instant for the purpose of having an investigation conducted by this office as to the conditions under which certain Russian Hebrews, recently landed in San Francisco, were now living in San Francisco.

Chairman to Inspector Robinson: I understand you were detailed to make an investigation for this Board, will you state for the benefit of the Board just what you found.

By Inspector Robinson: Last evening, in company with Watchman Graham of this Service, I went out to locate a house in which it was reported that there was a large number of Russians, recent arrivals in San Francisco, staying, and that they were all out of work and being supported by subscriptions of Hebrews in San Francisco. We found the place mentioned to be 310 Laguna St., San Francisco. Upon entering the premises at 310 Laguna Street, which consists of a store which is fitted up with tables and a small counter near the door on which there was a cash register. Mr. Cahan, who claims to be manager, sat behind the counter at the cash register. There were about 30 Russian Jews in this place, which was fitted up like a cheap restaurant. Some of them were eating at the tables, while others were just standing around talking to one another. Upon interviewing Mr. Cahan, he stated that there were 50 men located at this address who were out of work, all Russian Jews. Part of them had arrived in San Francisco by way of Japan five weeks ago and some were here about a week; that twenty of them slept in the restaurant, and about 30 of them slept down the street in another house. He further stated that they were supplied with meals at 15 cents each, and my understanding from him was that this money was donated by subscriptions, the money so collected given to them, who purchased their meals with it.

There were no beds in this restaurant, and it is evident that the twenty men who live there sleep on the floor. There is not sign out in front to show that the place is used as a public restaurant. There was a sign on the wall in Yiddish, I think, of some benevolent association, signed by Mr. Cahan as manager. Mr. Graham informed me that this place is known as the Ezra Benevolent Association. Previous to Mr. Graham and I visiting this place on Laguna Street, we were informed by a Jewish tailor on McAllister Street, near Laguna, that there was a place on Laguna Street in which a number of poor Russian Jews were being supported by a society known as the Ezra Society.

From my observation, these men appear to be all Russian Hebrews of recent arrival, no English having been spoken by them in the place while I was there. The store was fixed up like a soup house like we had here at the time of the earthquake and fire. When Mr. Graham and I visited this place ostensibly to obtain laborers, we were informed by Mr. Cahan that he could furnish me 50 men any time I wanted them. I told him we wanted "green" hands, and Mr. Cahan stated that these people were all new arrivals.

Lev Kots.

Q Chairman to alien: Have you anything further to state in regard to your case?
A No

Q Chairman to Board: What is the pleasure of the Board?

By Inspector Robinson: I move the alien be excluded as a person likely to become a public charge.

Mr. Beck: I second the motion.

Chairman to alien: It is the unanimous opinion of the Board that you be excluded and ordered deported as a person likely to become a public charge, you having only a small amount of money, unable to speak the English language, and no near relatives in the United States upon whom you could call for assistance in case of need. If deported it will be at the expense of the steamship company who brought you here. From this decision you have the right of appeal to the Secretary of Labor at Washington, D. U., which appeal will cost you nothing.

Q Do you wish to appeal? A Yes

Q In case the Secretary should decide to land you under bond, would you be willing and able to furnish such a bond? A Yes, through my friends

(Note by Chairman: This alien is not well dressed, answers the questions propounded by the interpreter in a hesitating manner, and is not of very robust build.)

The above is a correct transcript.

W. B. Beck
Stenographer.