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# **“... And the entire mass of loyal people leapt up ”**

The attitude of Nicholas II towards the pogroms

SERGEI PODBOLOTOV

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SERGEI PODBOLOTOV

## “... AND THE ENTIRE MASS OF LOYAL PEOPLE LEAPT UP”

### The attitude of Nicholas II towards the pogroms

Comprehensive political biography of the last Russian emperor Nicholas II is still to be written. Reserved, secretive, changeable and at the same time of very simple character, the last tsar, who made so many controversial decisions and statements, often appeared as an enigmatic figure for both his contemporaries and later historians. Yet one of the most revealing stories describing the political portrait of Nicholas II was his attitude towards one of the most tragic events which happened during his reign, the pogroms.

The bloody wave of pogroms that swept through Russia after the publication of the October 1905 Manifesto became a peculiar sign of the rising Black Hundred monarchist movement.<sup>1</sup> After growing revolutionary events, when the people more and more decisively stood against the tsar, the pogroms confuted the seemingly obvious suggestion that the regime had no social support and was entirely isolated. The pogrom reaction against the October Manifesto demonstrated that, apart from the police, the autocracy of Nicholas II had some popular support in the struggle with revolution, even if of an extremely dubious character.

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1. The term “Black Hundred” came from medieval Russia where it signified the lower class (*chernososhnoe*) population which stayed outside the town walls. Although violent and mutinous, *chernososhniki* were conservative by virtue of their illiteracy and restricted prospects and supposedly unquestionably supported the autocracy and “the established traditions.” At the beginning of the twentieth century the opponents of the autocracy nicknamed, disdainfully, the monarchists *chernosotentsy* (Black Hundredists) because of their supposed “backwardness” and “proneness to violence,” emphasising their involvement in pogroms. “Pogromist” and “Black Hundredist” became almost synonymous. In turn, the rising Rightist political parties willingly accepted this nickname as they claimed to be representatives of the “Black millions” of simple silent-majority Russians. V. M. Purishkevich, the leading Rightists’ speaker in the Duma, when he was asked about his party affiliation, proudly declared “valiant Black Hundreds of the Union of the Russian People.” Thus “Black Hundreds” meant pogromists, and members of the Rightist parties, particularly of their violent groups.

Sporadically in 1905, counterrevolutionary violence took place already before October.<sup>2</sup> However, the events after 17 October differed in scope, which was unprecedented. Almost simultaneously pogroms flared up over the whole area of the huge empire.

The pogrom scenario was frequently the same in different places. After the astounding news of the October Manifesto, demonstrations and meetings with red flags began to occur. Now and then they were accompanied by excesses insulting to the tsarist throne. Portraits of Nicholas II, so revered by monarchists, were taken down from walls and sometimes destroyed; at meetings money was collected “for Nicholas’ burial.” In Kiev, on the balcony of the City Duma building, one of those in a meeting cut a hole in a tsarist portrait and, sticking his own head through the hole (replacing the tsar’s face), shouted, “Now I am the Sovereign!”<sup>3</sup> The admirers of autocracy, old customs, and “order” regarded such events as an outrage — a triumph of Jews and seditious “*intelligenty*,” and came out with a furious protest. Real cases of offenses to monarchist symbols similar to that described above were not ubiquitous; sometimes they were exaggerated or just invented from nothing by pre-pogrom rumours, often with preposterous accusations of outrages against Orthodox shrines or tsarist portraits. For example, right before a pogrom in Kiev rumours circulated about an attack by “Yids” (*zhidy*)<sup>4</sup> against the Goloseevskii monastery. Black Hundreds organized belligerent counter-demonstrations (sometimes under pretext of celebrating the ninth anniversary of the ascension of Nicholas II to the throne) which clashed with left-wing meetings, and fights turned into pogroms. Depending on the possibility or desire of local authorities to restore order, these could continue for several days.<sup>5</sup>

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2. After Bloody Sunday, when St. Petersburg students declared an all-out political strike, it was not always safe to appear on the streets in student attire. There were tens of cases of “groundless beatings of students” by (as the Council of St. Petersburg University put it) “unknown people,” sometimes in presence of the police. (Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv v Sankt-Peterburge [TsGIA SPb], f. 139, op.1, d. 10203, l. 3; on incidents of “groundless beatings of students” see *Vpered* (23 March, 1905), TsGIA SPb, f. 139, op.1, d. 10199, l. 190, 191, 195, 198-199.) Fightings with pogromists were recorded in Kursk and Nizhny Novgorod, see *Vpered* (15 March, 1905); *Proletarii* (9 August and 13 September, 1905).

3. TsGIA SPb, f. 139, op. 1, d. 10236, l. 6, 27-36 ob.; S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii* (Moscow, 1992): 58.

4. “Zhid,” unlike neutral “evrei,” was insulting, particularly by the beginning of the twentieth century. See: John Klier, “Zhīd: The biography of a Russian pejorative,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, LX, 1 (1982): 1-15.

5. On the pogroms of 1905-1906, see John Klier, Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish violence in modern Russian history* (Cambridge, 1992): 191-289; Don Rawson, *Russian Rightists and the Revolution of 1905* (Cambridge, 1995): 136-141; S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 49-85. Documents on the pogroms and materials from police investigations were published soon after the events: *Iz istorii kievskogo pogroma. Vsepoddaneishii otchet i proizvedennye senatorom Turau issledovaniia prochin besporiadkov v Kieve v oktiabre 1905 g.* (Kiev, 1906); *Gomel’skii protsess. Podrobnii otchet* (St. Petersburg, 1907); *Kievskii i odeskii pogromy v otchetakh senatorov Turau i Kuz’minskogo* (St. Petersburg, 1907); I. Kleinershekhet, *Delo ob oktiabr’skom pogrome v Simferopole. Sudebnyi otchet* (Simferopol’, 1907); *Materialy k istorii russkoi kontrevoliutsii*, vol. 1: *Pogromy po ofitsial’nym dokumentam* (St. Petersburg, 1908). After the revolution a collection

In the Pale of Settlement pogroms were directed primarily against Jews; in northern and central Russia — against students and the intelligentsia; in the Caucasus, particularly in Baku, — against Armenians. The exact number of victims of such bloody bacchanalia cannot be ascertained. S. A. Stepanov, using data from police investigations, reckoned that during the October pogroms 1,622 people died and 3,544 were injured. Determining nationality was only possible for 75 percent of the murdered and 73 percent of the injured; from this Stepanov concluded that Jews accounted for 711 of the murdered and 1,207 of the injured; Orthodox Christians (Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians) accounted for 428 murdered and 1,246 injured; Armenians 47 of the murdered and 51 of the injured.<sup>6</sup> Shlomo Lambroza, not trusting police sources, used data from opposition materials; only among Jews, he counted 800 deaths in Odessa alone and 3,103 for the entire country during the 1905-1906 pogrom waves.<sup>7</sup> Victims were often random people and not at all revolutionaries. During the horrible Tomsk massacre, when pogromists burned a railroad officers' building and killed all who tried to escape the blaze, 68 people died, of whom only one, according to the police, was linked to the revolutionary movement; most of the rest had not come to attend a revolutionary intelligentsia meeting (as the pogromists thought) but simply to receive salaries.<sup>8</sup> The Russian riot, *bunt*, did really turn out to be “senseless and merciless,” as Pushkin put it once. In the pogroms poor defenseless Jews (including children and women) suffered alongside those unlucky enough to be inside public buildings and educational institutions that the pogromists thought to be dangerous hotbeds of sedition, or who simply appeared to pogromists to resemble students or other *intelligenty*. Pogroms swept over the entire country, touching 358 settlements from Arkhangel'sk to Odessa and from Poland to Tomsk. More than ten thousand homes and stores were looted.<sup>9</sup> The ruthlessness and mindless vandalism of the pogrom crowds shocked the entire world.

The scope of disorder presumed a significant number of pogromists. Their exact number, as well as of their victims, naturally cannot be determined with great accuracy. Sir Arthur Nicolson, a British representative in Russia, hit the mark when he wrote that the driving force of pogroms would likely never be perfectly known.<sup>10</sup> Stepanov, using contemporaries' accounts, suggests that there were tens of thousands of pogromists. Monarchist counter-demonstrations, after which the disorder began, assembled up to thirty thousand people in Krasnoïarsk, twenty-five

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of various documents on anti-Jewish pogroms was published by the Jewish authors: S. Dubnov, G. Ia. Krasnyi-Admoni, *Materialy dlia istorii antievreiskikh pogromov v Rossii* (Petrograd, 1919-1923).

6. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, *op. cit.*: 56-57.

7. John Klier, Shlomo Lambroza, *Pogroms*, *op. cit.*: 228, 231.

8. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, *op. cit.*: 72.

9. *Ibid.*: 54-55.

10. Public Record Office, London (PRO), Foreign Office, 800.337, 1 July, 1906.

thousand in Tiflis, and up to five thousand people in the small city of Nezhin of the Chernigovskaia guberniia.<sup>11</sup>

To establish the social make-up of pogromists using data from official inquiries turned out to be much simpler. Practically all pogromists (more than 99 percent) were from the lower social strata, *meshchane* (petit bourgeois) and peasants.<sup>12</sup> For example, in Nizhny Novgorod a group of pogromists brought before a court for judgment was typical and included two innkeepers, two coachmen, a shoemaker, a cabinet-maker, a carpenter, a shopkeeper, a tailor, and an unskilled worker.<sup>13</sup> In Tver', apart from a solid group of workers, artisans, and peasants, the pogrom gangs remarkably included guardians of social order, police-officers, along with "people with criminal pasts" who played an important role in the disorder.<sup>14</sup>

One could conclude that pogromists emerged from wide illiterate lower social strata, conservative already because of their limited views, and therefore the bitterest opponents of all reforms and changes, of "sedition" as they put it. They were also distinguished by militant xenophobia; thus, anti-semitism and different forms of anti-*intelligentsia* and anti-noble sentiments found fertile soil in these strata. Their anger was stimulated not only by the irritating and mysterious "liberation movement" but also by various disasters, brought on by the October 1905 general strike — closed factories, schools, shops and pharmacies, paralyzed transportations, revolutionary violence. In the days of the pogroms they merged with big lumpen "vagabonds," always ready to smash and wreck and eager to rob, especially those defenseless. This public, using the bewilderment, connivance, or incitement of the police apparatus in the October days of 1905, expressed their protest via the bloody *bunt*.

Almost inevitably, the tsar's portrait was present at these disgraceful events. Black Hundred demonstrations were very often physically organized around the emperor's portrait.<sup>15</sup> It played an important symbolic role, highlighting the assembled crowd's loyalty to the throne and as if it had provided tsarist sanction to the pogrom. Among pogromists rumours spread wildly that Nicholas II "permitted" them to wreck and smash and to beat the seditious anti-monarchy rebels. In Tomsk the following ritual was observed: a crowd would come up to a store, and the one walking up front would turn to the portrait of Nicholas II and ask, "Your Majesty, do you allow us to destroy [this store]?" The one carrying the portrait would answer, "I permit it."<sup>16</sup>

11. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 75.

12. *Ibid.*: 77.

13. *Pravo* (10 April, 1905): column 1124; *Strana* (13 December, 1906).

14. S. V. Lavrikov, "Sotsial'naia prinalozhnost' uchastnikov pogroma v Tveri 17 oktiabria 1905 g.," in *Neizvestnye stranitsy istorii Verkhnevolzh'ia. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Tver', 1994): 44-57. Interestingly, insofar as the Tver' pogrom did not have a nationalities flavour (given the insignificant number of Jews there), the Jewish watch-maker E. Zil'berman joined the pogromists (see: *ibid.*).

15. Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, "Political symbols and rituals of the Russian radical right, 1900-1917," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 76, 3 (1998): 14.

16. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 68.

As monarchical processions progressed along their paths, all people met along the way were tested for their loyalty to the tsar: they had to remove their caps before the tsar's portrait. Those who refused were forced to comply. The reactions to this “test of loyalty” differed. Pavel Miliukov, witnessing such a scene in Moscow, turned away from the crowd as he feared for his “*intelligenty*-style” hat.<sup>17</sup> The Bolshevik V. E. Morozov, encountering a monarchical procession in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, did not turn away, but instead called the tsar a “scoundrel” (*svoloch*), shot at the portrait, and then killed the two carrying the portrait; then he himself was beaten so badly that it was a minor miracle he survived.<sup>18</sup>

Needless to say, such association with the pogroms threw a dark shadow over the Head of supreme authority. The tsar's immoderate allies had provided well-intentioned action that ultimately backfired. Grave damage was inflicted also on the reputations of that political order which had supporters of this sort.

The opposition's accusations that the “tsarist government” was organizing pogroms appeared from virtually the start of the pogrom wave.<sup>19</sup> They contained no real evidence but their tone was extremely sharp. Radical liberals in allusions, and revolutionaries directly, accused the emperor himself of leadership of the pogroms. “Can anyone have any doubt that these pogroms were prepared ahead of time on the order of Nicholas himself?” wrote the SRs.<sup>20</sup> Although no evidence was found (even in investigations after 1917) of the involvement of the tsar or his ministers in organization of pogroms, the point of view that pogromists were manipulated from above became widely accepted in leftist historiography.<sup>21</sup>

Although the anti-semitic views of Nicholas II were naturally not advertised, they were not a great secret, either. Nicholas II had a benevolent character, but his worldview was well suited for acceptance of anti-semitism. His rejection of modernisation, his mysticism, his confusion about the real world, his application of moral values to his allies and enemies (e.g. when the first belonged to “the good” and the latter to “the nasty”), his nationalism (e.g. when allies to autocracy were defined as “true Russians”) — all these traits led Nicholas II to the conclusion that opponents to his unlimited power were mostly “Yids,” as the tsar almost invariably and despicably called his Jewish subjects. He was undoubtedly influenced by many in his entourage who shared this view. The idea of Jews as a leading revolutionary element had been well-established among the imperial elite.<sup>22</sup> It cannot be said that the emperor intentionally fomented anti-semitism as a deliberate policy to direct

17. P. N. Miliukov, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1990): 318.

18. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 58.

19. Pamphlet of the Central Committee of the RSDRP of 19 October, 1905, “Tsarskaia konstitutsiia i pogromy,” in *Vserossiiskaia politicheskaia stachka v oktiabre 1905 g.* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1955), part 1: 380; “Otkrytoe pis'mo Soveta Starost S-Peterburgskogo universiteta,” *Novaia zhizn'* (28 October, 1905).

20. *Sovremennik: Nikolai II. Razoblachenii* (Berlin, 1909): 257.

21. S. M. Dubnov, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia, 1920): 127.

22. See: John Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish question* (Cambridge, 1986): 396-403.

popular discontent against a chosen scapegoat. On the contrary, the sincere anti-semitism of Nicholas II was an expression of his uncomplicated nature.

As the revolutionary movement grew, the emperor's anti-semitism took on a panicked astonishment before the treachery and secret might of the Jewish conspiracy. Nicholas II had only a very foggy understanding of the real reasons for revolutionary activity, parties, doctrines, and ideals. One can imagine how the abundance of Jewish names in newspaper accounts and in the ministries' reports on revolutionary crimes created in the emperor's head a picture of a Jewish plot. Later in Siberia in 1917 the former emperor decided to systematise his own observations and put together a list of revolutionary leaders and their Jewish surnames. V. I. Ul'ianov-Lenin was mistakenly listed as "Tsederblium," G. E. Zinov'ev as Apfelbaum (his correct Jewish surname was Radomysl'skii), but other than these, the former tsar got his surnames right and correctly identified L. D. Trotsky, Iu. O. Martov, L. B. Kamenev, and others.<sup>23</sup> Nicholas II always remembered names very well.

Given the tsar's attention and trust in the messages from Black Hundred organizations, undoubtedly the torrent of anti-semitic petitions also had an influence on him. Especially after the formation of right-wing parties, the tsar was flooded by an enormous number of telegrams and letters about how "the Orthodox motherland has been trampled upon by Jews and agitators."<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, Nicholas II stated at a meeting with the German ambassador (!) in the beginning of 1907 that the world wide union of Jews and Masons was a "deadly danger" and that international Jewry was the leading force in the 1905 Revolution.<sup>25</sup>

The tsar's sympathies towards the first major pogrom during his reign (Kishinev, 1903) are indicated in remarks by general A. N. Kuropatkin, at that time close associate of Nicholas II, in his diary on April 14, 1903, on a personal conversation with the Minister of Internal Affairs, V. K. Plehve, in which the Kishinev pogrom was discussed: "I heard from Plehve *as well as from the tsar* that Jews needed to be given a lesson that they had become conceited and they are leading the revolutionary movement."<sup>26</sup> When and in what exact form Nicholas II expressed such a thought Kuropatkin did not explain. However, knowing the tsar's anti-semitism, it is likely that such a conversation did exist. It was striking that the tsar did not hurry to express his support and provide aid to those of his subjects who became the victims of the pogrom. Plehve, receiving a worried Jewish deputation after the pogrom, assured them that the tsar was sorrowful about the pogrom and wanted to render to the suffering Jews fifteen

23. Mark Steinberg, Vladimir Khrustalev, eds., *The fall of the Romanovs* (London, 1996): 202.

24. This particular cite comes from a petition to Nicholas II by railroad workers from the Ivanovo station in 1906 (GARF, f. 601, op. 2, d. 8, l. 6). See also: GARF, f. 116, op. 1, d. 625 (Letters from Black Hundreds on the "Jewish domination" in various areas of life, 1905-1916).

25. Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *The tsars and the Jews: Reform, reaction and antisemitism in Imperial Russia, 1772-1917* (Chur, 1993): 223.

26. "Dnevnik A. N. Kuropatkina," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 2 (1922): 43. My italics.



thousand rubles, but Plehve had “convinced him to wait” perhaps so as not to stir up raised anti-semitic passions.<sup>27</sup>

The emperor’s opinion of the October 1905 pogroms is known already quite clearly from a letter of October 27, 1905, to his mother, where he presented his rather direct view on the occurrences:

In the first days after the Manifesto bad elements strongly raised their heads, but then a strong reaction came up, and the entire mass of loyal people leapt up.

The result was understandable and usual for our place: the people were outraged by the audacity and insolence of the revolutionaries and socialists, and since nine-tenths of them were Yids, then all hostility was directed at them — and thus the Jewish pogroms. It was striking since everything happened immediately and with surprising unanimity in all cities of Russia and Siberia. In England, of course, they write that these disorders were organized by the police, as usual — the old familiar false story! Not only Jews but also Russian agitators, engineers, lawyers, and all other foul people suffered. Events in Tomsk, Simferopol’, Tver’, and Odessa clearly showed to what limits a fierce crowd can go when it surrounded homes where revolutionaries had holed themselves up and set fire to them, killing all who tried to escape.<sup>28</sup>

In this way Nicholas II considered the pogromists — in contrast to their victims — to be “loyal people,” and thus sympathized with their spontaneous impulse. Yet the tsar also admitted the wildness of the “fierce crowd.” He emphatically wrote about the pogroms as spontaneous occurrences, fully denying any kind of organizational role by the authorities. It is highly doubtful, Heinz-Dietrich Löwe has noted, that Nicholas II at this moment knew more about the pogroms than he let on in his letter.<sup>29</sup> It is absolutely groundless to claim that the tsar played an organizational role behind the scenes, planning the pogroms from his Peterhof palace in the autumn of 1905.

In his next letter to Maria Fedorovna Nicholas II criticized Witte’s government, which was trying to calm the country, for its inability to stop the disturbances and again referred to the pogroms:

But I cannot hide from you my certain disillusionment with Witte. Everyone thought that he was terribly energetic and despotic and that he would immediately initiate the process of establishing order [...]. And everything turned out quite the opposite — everywhere demonstrations began, then Jewish pogroms, and finally the annihilation of gentry estates.”<sup>30</sup>

Clearly Nicholas II did not expect such effects, including the pogroms, in the wake of the October Manifesto. It is noteworthy that Nicholas II lumped together the

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27. Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka. Otdel Rukopisei (RGB OR), f. 126, d. 13 (Diary of A. A. Kireev, 1900-1904), l. 232 ob.

28. “Perepiska Nikolaia II i Marii Fedorovny,” *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 22 (1927): 169.

29. H.-D. Löwe, *The Tsars and the Jews*, op. cit.: 218.

30. Letter from 10 November, 1905, cited in Marc Ferro, *Nikolai II* (Moscow, 1991): 116-117.

revolutionary demonstrations, gentry pogroms, and Jewish pogroms as different sides of the same phenomenon of mass disorder that needed to be stopped.

The tsar's public statements confirmed that it was just what he meant. On a report about the disorders in Balashov, Saratov *guberniia*, where a crowd had attacked a meeting of the local *intelligentsia* (many of whom were doctors), Nicholas II wrote, "Revolutionary demonstrations cannot be tolerated, together with this, the arbitrary actions of the crowd cannot be allowed." The resolution was published in *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*.<sup>31</sup> Receiving a peasant deputation from the Tula *guberniia* on February 23, 1906, the tsar cautioned them against "the incitements of the enemies of order," revolutionary agitators, and further still announced, "But do not deal with them yourselves, but turn them over to the authorities, who will deal with them with all the severity of the law."<sup>32</sup>

Naturally, right-wing unions presented a special pogrom danger. Nicholas II constantly taught them during audiences to observe legality and order. On December 1, 1905, during a speech before representatives of the Russian People's Union (*Soiuz Russkikh Liudei*) and other emerging right-wing groups, the tsar openly told them that unleashing malicious passions and mutual hostility was "a great sin."<sup>33</sup> However, one would only need to briefly glance over almost any copy of the Rightist newspapers *Zemshchina* or *Russkoe znamia*, as the tsar regularly did, to see that his calls were being ignored.

V. N. Kokovtsov highlighted the tsar's full understanding of the necessity of stopping the pogrom threat after Stolypin's assassination in September 1911. At the interrogation of the Extraordinary Commission of the Provisional Government, the former prime minister stated that his decisive measures to avert pogroms, including a telegram to all governors in the Pale of Settlement demanding to open fire upon pogromist crowds if necessary, received the tsar's "full approval."<sup>34</sup> "What a nightmare to take revenge upon the guiltless mass for the guilt of one Jew," the tsar said, according to Kokovtsov.<sup>35</sup>

31. *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 173 (1905). Opposition newspapers widely accused Stolypin, at that time the Saratov governor, of organizing the Balashov massacre. Stolypin, in letters to his wife, rejected these accusations as ludicrous, writing that he "was being slandered for the Balashov affair," that he himself was injured by a crowd attack when "defending doctors." "Already the mean local press has accused *me*, who had saved the city (this is true!)", of the organization of the Black Hundreds." Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGIA), f. 1662 (Stolypin), op. 1, d. 231, ll. 36, 44 ob., 65 ob.

32. *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 48 (1906). The peasants' harsh treatment of revolutionary agitators from the cities did take place. The well-known social democrat V. S. Voitinskii, one of the most popular revolutionary orators at meetings in St. Petersburg, wrote about his experience of agitation amidst peasants, where he and his partner were grabbed by a peasant crowd and avoided a terrible death only thanks to a Cossack detachment that arrested them and threw them in jail. Set free after a short period, Voitinskii continued the struggle against that tsarist regime that had saved him. V. S. Voitinskii, *Gody pobed i porazhenii* (Berlin, 1923).

33. *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik* (2 December, 1905).

34. A. Serebrennikov, G. Sidorovnin, eds., *Stolypin. Zhizn' i smert'* (Saratov, 1991): 174.

35. V. N. Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo. Vospominaniia. 1911-1919* (Moscow, 1991): 44.

The sincerity of public and private declarations of the head of the state could be verified first and foremost by the actions of the government he appointed. There is no evidence that the closest executors of the tsar's will, his ministers, were involved in the organization of pogroms. Professor Hans Rogger refuted the widely-distributed thesis that the government had planned the pogroms.<sup>36</sup> Sergei Witte's interests had nothing to do with pogroms, on the contrary, he was interested in stopping pogroms and, indeed, pogromists were his worst enemies. The Minister of Internal Affairs P. N. Durnovo has attracted more suspicion. Archival materials, however, demonstrate that Durnovo's assurances (which he gave to anxious Witte), that he did not belong “to those people who consider Jewish pogroms a useful phenomenon” and was doing “everything possible” to support social order<sup>37</sup> were genuine. Durnovo gave regular instructions to the governors general that “observance of total order and elimination of all attempts at Jewish pogroms is absolutely necessary. Under current circumstances even the smallest disorders, violence and open arbitrariness will have extremely disastrous consequences for the state.” He demanded from local authorities “the most decisive measures” against pogroms, “eliminating even the least grounds for them.”<sup>38</sup> Durnovo's successor, Petr Stolypin, also demanded they take preventative measures at the appearance of even the slightest threat of a pogrom.<sup>39</sup>

There are serious doubts about the practical possibility of the government-made-pogroms version. In October 1905 the government could hardly have a clear idea of the situation throughout the country — not to mention its ability to organize planned actions in 358 places. Connections between the capital and regions were severed or made difficult by the telegraph and postal strike. The Irkutsk governor could not explain to his people even on October 21 what was happening in St. Petersburg since news of the October Manifesto had still not reached him. With the declaration of the Manifesto the police leadership were in euphoric mood, thinking that in the new era of freedom police work would drastically decline. When a political amnesty was announced, representatives of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies went to check whether anyone was under arrest in the St. Petersburg Department of Security. They had even seen the office of the Security Chief Gerasimov himself. “The situation was such that one would think that if representatives of the Soviet wanted to see papers on my table, they would let

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36. Hans Rogger, “Conclusion” and “Overview,” in: J. Klier, S. Lambroza, *Pogroms*, *op. cit.*: 345.

37. See: R. Sh. Ganelin, “Chernosotennye organizatsii, politicheskaia politsiia i gosudarstvennaia vlast' v tsarskoi Rossii,” in: *Natsional'naia pravaia prezhd i teper'.* *Istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki*. Chast' 1 (St. Petersburg, 1992).

38. Coded dispatch #4350 of 20 March, 1906 (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Warsaw [AGAD]), f. Kantseliaria Varshavskogo General-Gubernatora, d. 2884 — directive on forbidding Jewish pogroms — l. 2-2 ob.). See also the telegram from P. N. Durnovo to governors on 26 February, 1906 (*ibid.*, l. 1).

39. Urgent telegrams from P. A. Stolypin to the Warsaw Governor General of September 3, 1906 (*ibid.*, l. 5, 8).

them,” Gerasimov wrote.<sup>40</sup> There is little doubt that if the government planned the “pogrom wave” from the centre, such an inclination would have come to the surface in this particular period. But there was no evidence this was the case.

It seems that there was, in fact, no single figure in the government who could take on such a responsibility. The organization of pogroms involved a colossal risk. It was impossible to predict to where and against whom popular agitations could turn at any moment. The experience of the Kishinev pogrom, which damaged the extravagant apartment of the Head of the local gentry along with Jewish homes, showed that no one was secure against the threat of pogroms.<sup>41</sup> In the course of the October 1905 pogroms the home of vice-governor Ledokhovskii in Baku was destroyed, as were the house of the Barnaul city Head or the apartment of an Orthodox priest in the Riazan’ *guberniia*.<sup>42</sup>

Among those in power, direct responsibility for pogroms lay not with the central authorities in Petersburg but with local authorities in their bewilderment or tolerance of the violence. The negligence or even sometimes instigation of local police officials, feeling helpless in the face of the 1905 revolution and dreaming of vengeance against “Yids and students” created a chance for the pogrom riffraff.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps, a story exposed by high-ranked officials of the Ministry of Interior, the former director of the Police Department A. A. Lopukhin (in his writings) and his brother-in-law former deputy Minister of Interior Prince S. D. Urusov (in his Duma speech) suggested a possible link between pogroms and the highest levels of Russian authority.<sup>44</sup> In a hidden corner of the St. Petersburg Police Department a secret printing press was discovered, where pamphlets calling “to kill Jews, to tear them apart into tiny pieces” were being printed under the supervision of the gendarme officer M. S. Komissarov. From the capital they were being disseminated throughout the country with the help of right-wing organizations and through informal police channels. Komissarov was for a time subordinate to P. I. Rachkovskii, the well-known author of anti-semitic political provocations,

40. A. V. Gerasimov, *Na lezvii s terroristami* (Moscow, 1991): 38, 41.

41. GARF, f. 601, op. 1, d. 1046 (V. K. Plehve’s notes on Jewish pogroms in Kishinev and Pinsk), l. 2 ob.

42. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 59, 62, 74.

43. In a number of regions the authorities actively opposed pogroms — for example, in many Polish territories (AGAD, F. Pomoshchnik Varshavskogo General-Gubernatora, d. 772 — on encounters between Christians and Jews, l. 10, 18-18 ob., 35, 77-77 ob.). On the other hand, many eyewitnesses testified to the collaboration of the police with pogromists in Voronezh (*Vpered, zare navstrechu! Molodezh’ Voronezhskoi gubernii v revoliutsionnom dvizhenii. 1903-1920. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Voronezh, 1958): 33), Iur’ev (The Central State Historical Archive, Republic of Estonia [CSHIE], f. 2623, op. 1, d. 59, l. 38; *Revoliutsiia 1905-1907 gg. v Estonii. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Tallin, 1955): 370), Kursk (*Molodezh’ v 1905 g.* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1926): 108-113), and Odessa (*Khronika odesskikh sobytii* (Odessa, 1906): 23-27).

44. A. A. Lopukhin, *Otryvki iz vospominanii. (Po povodu “Vospominanii” grafa S. Iu. Vitte).* (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923); *Gosudarstvennaia Duma. Stenograficheskie otchety. Chast’ 1. Sessia I* (St. Petersburg, 1906): columns 270-277.

particularly he stood behind the appearance of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In the period of Witte's government Rachkovskii held a post in the Ministry of Internal Affairs being responsible “for the execution of crucial assignments in the area of higher politics” and was known for his closeness to D. F. Trepov. Accordingly, revolutionaries and liberals pointed to Trepov as the inspiration for the pogrom provocation. Prince Urusov described him (as it was widely popularised by relevant newspapers) as “a cavalry sergeant plus policeman in his upbringing, and a pogromist in his conviction.” Trepov was the closest political figure to Nicholas II.<sup>45</sup>

It is likely that the creation of underground press in the police was not Komissarov's idea, who, in Urusov's description, “was appointed [by someone] and not came up by his own initiative” at the printing press. Rachkovskii possibly put Komissarov up to this, however there is no evidence that Trepov sanctioned this activity.

It is known that the typography was at work in December, and at the start of 1906 Komissarov broke the press after a reprimand from Witte. One can only guess at the activities before and during the pogrom wave.

Characteristically, however, Komissarov was not punished, thanks to good references given to him by Witte, but he later even had a distinguished career. Regardless of the scandalous story, Komissarov reached the status of a general, which could not be achieved without the tsar's good graces.<sup>46</sup> Those disseminating the pamphlets printed at the police, activists of the Black Hundred parties, were rewarded with gracious receptions by Nicholas II. All this created a basis for continuous rumors at the police apparatus — that formidable circulars of the government on counteractions against the pogroms and public admonitions of the tsar against the violence were simply “to create a false impression,” while the real inclinations of the authorities, about which they preferred to remain silent, were different. The tsar's anti-semitism was well-known.

Lopukhin revealed his conversation with General D. V. Drachevskii, appointed as governor of Rostov. Because of his promotion he was introduced to Nicholas II. In Drachevskii's words written by Lopukhin, Nicholas II wished to note to the general, “You have so many Yids there both in Rostov and Nakhichevan’,” to which Drachevskii reported that yet many Jews had died during the military actions against the revolution and the pogroms that followed. “No,” the tsar supposedly interrupted, “I expected that many more would die!” According to Lopukhin, Drachevskii understood the tsar's phrase as “His Majesty's instruction” that in case of more pogroms the authorities would shut their eyes.<sup>47</sup> Thus the tsar's careless but

45. For more, see R. Sh. Ganelin, “Pechatanie pogromnykh listovok v Departamente politsii,” in: *Natsional'naia pravaia prezhde i teper'*, op. cit.

46. Komissarov's successful career and his debt for this to Nicholas II and Sergei Witte was due to his activities in military intelligence during the Russo-Japanese War; see P. E. Shcheglov, ed., *Padenie tsarskogo rezhima*, vol. 3 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925): 104-112; S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 3 (Moscow — Tallinn, 1994): 84.

47. A. A. Lopukhin, *Otryvki iz vospominanii*, op. cit.: 85-86.

unobliging remark in the circumstances of revolution, wide-spread anti-semitism of bureaucrats and official third-rate status of Jewish citizenship, could lead yet to another tragedy.

The tsar's attitude towards the pogroms was most clearly expressed in the authorities' punitive policy towards the participants, although the term "punitive" should not be understood in its normal sense here — in general the pogromists were treated with leniency. Courts normally dealt with pogroms according to the law introduced after the anti-Jewish disorders that followed the murder of Alexander II in the nineteenth century — pogromists were tried for participation in crowd violence and looting (article 269 part 1, Code on Punishment). The same article of the law applied to peasants robbing gentry "on a revolutionary basis," or what leftists proudly dubbed "agrarian campaigns." A harsh punishment awaited pogromists, since the tsarist regime was not among those that tolerated crowd disturbances. Socialists, however, immediately began to point out that they were being treated more harshly than revolutionaries from the right.<sup>48</sup>

Special senatorial commissions investigated the circumstances of all major pogroms. According to Stepanov's calculations, a minimum of 205 "pogrom processes" were opened from the investigation's conclusions.<sup>49</sup> Statistics from that time demonstrated that from the general number of those brought to court, in 1908 54.3 percent were found not guilty, and in 1909 — 55.6 percent.<sup>50</sup> 1,860 people were convicted, almost inevitably receiving easier punishment from those allowable by law. Some pogrom participants received several weeks or months in prison. More than half of the convicted received eight months in jail. The hardest punishments were meted out for murder during the pogroms — ten years of hard labour.<sup>51</sup>

The Right vigorously sympathized with the convicted. A. S. Shmakov came forward as a defender at the pogrom processes. A loud campaign arose in defense of pogromists and brought accusations against the courts and government. N. D. Obleukhov wrote, "...voluntary defenders of the existing order were fully given to courts filled with Kadets and to Yids-lawyers. Patriotism found itself on the defendants' bench. Yesterday's revolutionary rebels or their sympathizers were trying patriots for their patriotism."<sup>52</sup> The Right's hope was for clemency from the tsar, and not in vain.

When Count A. I. Konovnitsyn, head of the Odessa section of the Union of the Russian People (*Soiuz Russkogo Naroda*) and a favourite of the tsar, complained to Nicholas II about lack of mercy from the courts towards "patriots," the emperor assured him that he also knew that Russian courts were too harsh to pogrom

48. L. Martov, "Ballans pravosudiia," *Otkliki*, vol. 1 (1906): 42.

49. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, *op. cit.*: 81.

50. A. B. Ventin, "K statistike repressii v Rossii. (Iz itogov 1908-1909)," *Sovremennyi mir*, 4 (1910): 75.

51. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, *op. cit.*: 81.

52. Cited in: Iu. I. Kir'ianov, ed., *Pravye partii. Dokumenty i materialy, 1905-1917* (Moscow, 1998), vol. 1: 1905-1910 gg.: 53.

participants, and he promised Konovnitsyn that he would always soften the sentences on petition from the Union.<sup>53</sup>

Flooding the tsar with Unionist “beseechings” (*chelobitnye*) went into full swing. Minister of Justice I. G. Shcheglovitov took personal control of the affair, presenting appeals for clemency to Nicholas II during his reports. Emphasis was mainly put on two mitigating circumstances: the accused acted “under the influence of the crowd” and “because of hostility towards Jews.”<sup>54</sup> Asked why the latter served as an argument for giving clemency, Shcheglovitov answered that hostility to Jews “in certain strata of our population” led to a situation when “passion and the well-known feeling of hatred played a predominant role, where reason and clear thoughts had retreated to the background.”<sup>55</sup> His direct participation in the affair and sympathy for the accused from the authorities the Minister of Justice explained with the fact that “such was the general political point of view [...]. The government had placed high hopes on right-wing organizations, seeing in them support for the existing political order.”<sup>56</sup>

Nicholas II reviewed requests for clemency with almost unexceptional favour. In historical literature it was often stated that the tsar confirmed all petitions for clemency.<sup>57</sup> Archival materials on clemency cases suggest some correction to this view but yet do not change the overall portrait. The tsar refused clemency for 78 pogromists; his decisions on 147 others remains unknown; for 1,713 cases — an overwhelming majority — petitions for clemency were satisfied.<sup>58</sup>

This procedure, however, took up a significant amount of time. Shcheglovitov was presenting to the tsar a certain number of cases once a month. In 446 cases, the convicted had served out their terms before the declarations of clemency were issued, although the main part were still imprisoned. Only 195 of the convicted pogromists did not serve any time.<sup>59</sup>

Among the masses of lesser-known forgiven pogromists there were rather renowned individuals. For example, Nikolai F. Mikhailin, the murderer of the prominent social democrat N. Bauman, was pardoned.<sup>60</sup>

News about such pardons was greeted with triumph by both the Black Hundreds and the opposition.<sup>61</sup> For the former, the tsar’s mercy meant Supreme patronage

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53. Robert Warth, *Nicholas II. The life and reign of Russia’s last monarch* (Westport, 1997): 102.

54. Incidences of clemency (cf. GARF, f. 124, op. 45, d. 1835-1926; op. 65, d. 54-219) were first analysed by S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 49-82.

55. Iu. I. Kir’ianov, ed., *Pravye partii*, op. cit., vol. 2: 1911-1917 gg.: 717.

56. *Ibid.*: 716.

57. For example, A. S. Tager, *Tsarskaia Rossiia i delo Beilisa* (Moscow, 1934): 47-48; Robert Warth, *Nicholas II*, op. cit.: 102.

58. S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 82.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 11-12 (1925): 443.

61. For example, see *Russkoe znamia* (14 March, 1907); *Sovremennik: Nikolai II. Razoblacheniia*, op. cit.: 327-328



and the longed-for overcoming of the bureaucratic barrier (*sredostenie*) between tsar and people.<sup>62</sup> For the latter, the tsar's favourable attitude served as proof of the emperor's sympathies with the darkest forces of Russian political world and their evil deeds, and they used it as a strong argument to discredit the regime further. One should note that often the defendants not only lacked the tact and intelligence to express remorse, but during the judicial process they openly appealed to the tsar, announcing that they already knew of his leniency in advance, and this was even more harmful to the prestige of the authorities and the tsar himself.<sup>63</sup>

Witte described a story of the tsar's reluctance to punish the criminals even in the case of their clear guilt, when there were no visible "mitigating circumstances" as acting because of "wild passions" "under the influence of the crowd." Investigations carried out by Witte's government on the reasons for the extraordinary cruel Gomel' pogrom in 1906, showed that it was organized by a local police officer who was a "true Russian count," one Count G. Podgorichani, who did not even feel obliged to deny his own role in the pogrom. The Council of Ministers decided to turn Count Podgorichani over to the courts and relieve him from service. This decision was submitted to Nicholas II for confirmation, who left an angry resolution: "I have nothing to do with this. The question of the further development of the case of Count Podgorichani belongs to the discretion of the Minister of Internal Affairs." Perhaps, the irritation of the tsar may be explained by the fact that the revealed circumstances ran counter to his interpretation of the pogroms as a spontaneous upsurge in a simple people loyal to their tsar. Meanwhile, the Count was successfully transferred to a post of police officer in one of the Black Sea cities.<sup>64</sup>

Neither Nicholas II nor his ministers prepared or led the pogroms or terrorist acts, regardless of how often they were accused of such. The Trudovik S. M. Ryzhkov claimed in the Duma, "Let the government leave, and we will see that there will be no more pogroms."<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, he was wrong. After the tsarist government was forced "to leave" in 1917, pogroms recurred during the Civil War with new force. But there is no doubt that under the last tsar, the well-known anti-semitism of the monarch and of many of the members of the ruling elite and police apparatus provoked anti-semitic actions.

Higher authorities expressed their attitude towards anti-semitic violence by leniency to the guilty and ambivalence towards the victims. Nicholas II, hearing the

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62. "If many of these accused were liberated from punishment, then this was exclusively because of the personal will of His Imperial Majesty, and the government has nothing to do with this," wrote N. D. Obleukhov. (Iu. I. Kir'ianov, ed., *Pravye partii*, op. cit., vol. 1: 53.)

63. A. Chernovskii, ed., *Soiuz Russkogo Naroda. Po materialam Chrezvychainoi Sledstvennoi Komissii Vremennogo Pravitel'stva 1917 g.* (Moscow — Leningrad, 1929): 42; *Delo o pogrome v Orshe* (n.d.).

64. S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, op. cit.: 84.

65. *Gosudarstvennaia Duma. Stenograficheskie otchety. Pervyi sozyv*, vol. 1-2 (St. Petersburg, 1906): column 956.



news of the October 1905 pogroms, experienced nearly the same feelings as the family of Prince S. P. Golitsyn, head of the Chernigov gentry:

A feeling of pride in the *muzhik*, who was being seduced from the path to truth by Jews and agitators [...] this feeling embraced us [...]. We all one after another cried out engulfed like children by a rapturous outburst, “Fine fellows, what fine fellows!”; “There’s revolution for you!”; “There is a monarchical people for you.”<sup>66</sup>

When the throne was shaken by revolutionary campaigns, it looked as if suddenly, as in old days in the Time of Troubles, the people rose up to defend autocracy and their tsar. This way events were interpreted by those (including the emperor himself) who admired the idea of unity between tsar and people. Accordingly, some representatives from that too stormy ocean of people’s passions should be punished, but naturally not too severely. Weren’t the majority of victims, after all, “bad people” who deserved to be taught a lesson? The myth replaced reality. The authorities, sympathizing with pogromists, demonstrated their weakness and handed a strong weapon to their critics.

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66. Diary of Z. V. Arapova (Golitsyna), cited in: S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia v Rossii*, op. cit.: 80.