

The October 1905 pogroms and the Russian authorities

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This article analyzes the October 1905 pogroms in the Russian Empire. It explores the reasons for the pogroms, the perpetrators, the victims, and the consequences for the Jewish population. The article shows the differences and peculiarities of the pogroms, which occurred in the cities and shtetls, rural areas, on the railroads, and in the ports. The article also explores the attitude and involvement of the higher and local authorities, police, and troops in the pogroms. Historians continue to debate whether these pogroms occurred spontaneously or were organized by the Tsarist authorities. This article provides considerable evidence that the October 1905 pogroms were not a spontaneous reaction of conservatives to the revolutionary events, but rather was the policy of the Russian government directed toward the suppression of the revolutionary movement.

Keywords: pogroms; First Russian Revolution; anti-Semitism; Russian Empire

The October 1905 pogroms occurred at the peak of the First Russian Revolution, immediately after the declaration of the 17 October Manifesto, which promised to liberalize the political regime in the country. About 690 pogroms took place in 660 cities, towns, and villages from 18 to 29 October 1905 (Linden 1910, 189–192). Most of these pogroms occurred on the territory of modern Ukraine, where the vast majority of the Jewish population lived. Antony Polonsky wrote, “Nearly 87% (575) of all pogroms took place in the southern provinces of Chernigov, Poltava, Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, Podolia, Kiev, and Bessarabia” (Polonsky 2010, 57). During these pogroms 3100 Jews were killed, 2000 Jews were seriously injured, and more than 15,000 Jews were wounded (Klier and Lambroza 1992, 231). This was the largest wave of anti-Jewish violence in the Russian Empire.

I will analyze the reasons for the October 1905 pogroms and the attitude of the Russian authorities toward them. Historians continue to debate whether these pogroms were spontaneous or were organized by the Tsarist authorities. These debates began immediately after the pogroms. Russian authorities explained the October 1905 pogroms as the “people’s revenge” against Jews and radical intelligentsia for their revolutionary activities. Meanwhile radicals and liberals claimed that the pogroms were organized by anti-Semitic organizations and local authorities to suppress the revolutionary movement (Frankel 1981, 143; Trotsky 1971, 132–135; Witte 1991, 454; Urusov 2009, 667–671). Jewish historian Simon Dubnov wrote about the counter-revolutionary character of the October 1905 pogroms (Dubnov and Dinur 1981, 194). Some modern historians follow the official explanation

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of the October pogroms as “popular unrest” and “ethnic hostility” (Weinberg 1992, 280). They believe that the officials could not suppress the pogroms because of their confusion over the changes in the political regime in Russia announced in the 17 October 1905 Manifesto (Surh 2009, 39–55). However, these historians have mainly used official sources about the pogroms, for example, materials of the official investigations. Most of these documents were written with the purpose of justifying the action or inaction of the authorities, so these sources should not be taken as completely reliable.

I researched documents in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv, which show various points of view on the October 1905 pogroms and include the voices of pogrom victims, eyewitnesses, and perpetrators. Most of these documents are located in the collection of the Chancellery of the Kyiv, Podolia, and Volhynia Governor-General and the collections of the local police and gendarme (political police) administrations. There are police reports and interrogation materials about the October 1905 pogroms, correspondence of the higher and local administration about them, and appeals to the authorities of pogrom victims and eyewitnesses. I also use memoirs, scholarly publications, and contemporaneous Russian liberal and conservative press. All these sources do not leave any doubt that the October 1905 pogroms were organized by Russian ultra-nationalist and chauvinist organizations with the support of local authorities and were indeed intended to crush the revolutionary movement.

The Manifesto of 17 October 1905 and the beginning of the pogroms

In October 1905 the autocratic regime in Russia was in deep political crisis. The entire country was paralyzed by a general strike: factories, plants, and railways were shut down. Frightened and confused, Tsar Nicolas II signed the 17 October 1905 Manifesto, written by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers Sergei Iulievich Witte, which promised to liberalize political life in the country. If fully implemented, the Manifesto would have extended civil liberties and transformed the autocracy into a constitutional monarchy. Contemporaries called the Manifesto “the First Russian Constitution.”¹ On the day of the declaration of the Manifesto, 18 October 1905, work and studies ceased in almost all cities and towns and many thousands of people came onto the streets to celebrate. There were many meetings and demonstrations in which, according to police reports, “many Jews and students” participated. These meetings and demonstrations were generally peaceful, but in some of them revolutionaries delivered fiery speeches calling for an immediate fight to overthrow the monarchy once and for all.²

In a number of cities these peaceful meetings were attacked by troops without warning. Many participants were killed and wounded. Immediately after the dispersal of these pro-Manifesto gatherings, anti-Jewish pogroms began. These October pogroms had a distinctly counter-revolutionary character. The pogrom-makers told Jews, whom they beat in Kyiv, “Here is your freedom, here is your constitution, here is your revolution . . .”³

The pogroms were prepared by anti-Semitic organizations and local authorities to suppress the revolutionary movement. However, in spite of the counter-revolutionary character of the pogroms, the majority of the pogrom victims were peaceful Jewish inhabitants, who were not involved in the revolutionary movement at all.

The pogroms in cities and shtetls in the Russian Empire

In the urban centers of the Russian Empire, the October pogroms were directed against Jews, the radical and liberal intelligentsia, and revolutionaries. The vast majority of the

October pogroms occurred within the Pale of Jewish Settlement. While the bloodiest Jewish pogroms with the largest number of victims were in the Pale, there were also pogroms in cities outside of the Pale: in Tver, Tomsk, Feodosia, Krasnoyarsk, Vologda, and other places (Lavrinovich, n.d., 9). According to Leo Motzkin's *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*, 666 of 690 October pogroms occurred in the Pale of Settlement (Klier and Lambroza 1992, 227). In many places, pogrom-makers demonstrated their hatred of Jews, liberals, and the liberalization of the political regime in the country. During the pogrom in Nezhin the crowd of pogrom-makers screamed:

We don't need Jews and democrats, they torment us, get them out of our city ... If the students don't give us lists of the democrats, we know ourselves some of them and will make short work of them right now.⁴

The violent crowd in the central square in Nezhin then began to randomly attack bystanders, forcing "democrats" and Jews to stay a few hours on their knees in the dirt, to grovel, and to kiss the Tsar's portrait. The pogrom in Nezhin continued for five days. During the October pogrom in Nezhin, 250 Jewish houses and shops were destroyed and robbed and dozens of people were injured. All university students and many Jews were forced to leave the city (*Rechi po pogromnym delam* 1908, 78–81).⁵ This was a typical urban pogrom in October 1905.

In October 1905, anti-Armenian pogroms occurred in the Caucasus. The Jewish population of the region was comparatively small at the turn of the twentieth century, so the Armenian population was chosen for the role of scapegoats.⁶ The development of events during the Armenian pogroms was similar to the anti-Jewish pogroms: "patriotic" demonstrations, after or during which the demonstrators beat and killed Armenians and burned their houses. The police and soldiers did not stop the pogrom-makers, showing the same supportive attitude toward their activities as during the Jewish pogroms. In a telegram which some Baku residents sent to Prime Minister Witte, on 24 October 1905, they described the situation in the city:

They [the pogrom makers] stopped in front of houses identified previously as Armenian and started a panic by shooting. The hooligans then claimed that the shooting was *from* the houses, and they began to pillage and set the houses on fire. The hooligans acted under the protection of troops, which bombarded the houses. The great inflammation against Armenians among the crowd and troops was supported by the provocation of native [Azerbaijani] police ... The crowd did not let firemen come to the burning houses. All the occupants were allowed to escape, except the Armenians, who were burned alive; people who attempted to rescue them were shot by the troops. The crowd burst into the Armenian alms-house, they killed helpless sick women and children. A lot of people were killed and wounded; many people were left on the streets without food or housing. The situation of the Armenians is desperate; the troops not only do not protect them, but also don't allow them to organize any protection from the crowd. (Lavrinovich, n.d., 24–25)

Russian authorities claimed that the October 1905 pogroms occurred spontaneously as the revenge of all Russian people (i.e. Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians) against Jews and radical intelligentsia for their revolutionary activities.⁷ But the facts prove otherwise. Clearly these pogroms were well prepared in advance by anti-Semitic monarchist organizations, usually with the connivance or active support of local authorities, for the suppression of revolutionary activities. The similarity of the October 1905 pogroms in different places confirms that they were not spontaneous.

Rumors about preparations for anti-Jewish pogroms circulated in Kyiv, Odesa, Simferopol, and other cities of Ukraine a few days before the pogroms actually began. In most cases police and soldiers spread the rumors. According to Trotsky,

Everyone knows about a coming pogrom in advance. Pogrom proclamations are distributed, bloodthirsty articles come out in the official Provincial Gazettes, sometimes a special newspaper begins to appear. (1971, 132)

So the preparations for the pogroms were not a secret to the local authorities and they did nothing to prevent them. Furthermore, the police in Odesa, Simferopol, and other places frankly expressed their satisfaction with the impending pogroms as revenge against Jews for their support of the revolution (*Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 118–127; Rechi 1908, 20–22). In Simferopol police released all criminals from the prison before the pogrom, but held onto all political prisoners. Many of the 60 released criminals reportedly took an active part in the Simferopol pogrom and in the killing of Jews. The Simferopol police also armed pogrom-makers. During the investigation of the Simferopol pogrom, the policeman Bogdanov and other witnesses accused the chief of the Simferopol police, Kuzmenko, of preparing truncheons for pogrom-makers (*Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 118–127; Rechi 1908, 20–22). The pogrom-makers waited only for a convenient moment and for permission from the local authorities to begin the pogroms. The occasion soon appeared. This was the declaration of the 17 October Manifesto.

Local authorities, police, and the Black Hundreds organized “patriotic” demonstrations in many cities (Kyiv, Odesa, Feodosia, Nezhin, and others). Troops and police accompanied these demonstrations and Orthodox priests led the largest of these gatherings. Trotsky wrote,

Protected in the front and rear by army patrols, with a Cossack detachment for reconnaissance, with policemen and professional provocateurs as leaders, with mercenaries filling the secondary roles, with volunteers out for easy profit, the gang rushes through the town, drunk on vodka and the smell of blood. (1971, 134)

The demonstrators robbed and killed Jews and destroyed their property. In one of these demonstrations in Kyiv, the Russian flag was carried in the front, then the Tsar’s portrait, and directly after the portrait came a big silver dish and a sack with stolen property. The crowd beat all Jews which it met on the street. If after a few minutes an injured Jew tried to stand up or crawl away, they beat him again. Police and troops did not disperse the crowd, but mixed in with the rioters, rendering them support.⁸ In the crowd of pogrom-makers there were many 15–18-year-old boys, many unemployed, and criminals. All classes of society participated in the pogroms; however, the majority of the pogrom-makers were from the lower classes. In some places (Odesa, Feodosia, and elsewhere) there were many drunks among the rioters.⁹

Despite the counter-revolutionary character of the October pogroms, their victims were drawn from the entire Jewish population. Dubnov said that both rich and poor Jews lay on the streets with broken skulls (Dubnov and Dinur 1981, 204–205). Trotsky wrote (1971, 134–135),

The victims, bloodstained, charred, driven frantic, still search for salvation within the nightmare. Some put on the bloodstained clothes of people already dead, lie down in a pile of corpses and stay there for a whole day, for two or three days ... Others fall on their knees before the officers, the policemen, the raider, they stretch out their arms, crawl in the dust, kiss the soldiers’ boots, beg for mercy. In reply they hear only drunken laughter. “You wanted freedom? Here, look, this is it.”

In Kyiv during the October pogrom, the houses of the richest Jews were robbed including the mansions of Baron Ginzburg, Alexander and Lev Brodsky, Landau, David Margolin, and others. Sholom Aleichem, who was an eyewitness to the October 1905 pogrom in Kyiv, wrote in his correspondence to *The Jewish Daily News* reprinted in the *New York Times* (1 December 1905),

The *millionaires*, the Brodskys, the Zazevs, the Saschses, the Halperins vainly tried to hide in the houses of the noblemen. These *noblemen* who had vouchsafed our financiers the favor of borrowing their money, now closed their eyes. Leo Brodsky's daughter, the wife of Poliakov, came, half naked, with her two children, to the ex-Governor, and they were not admitted. Baroness Ginzburg passed a night in a garret.

One of the members of the Brodsky family, Gregory, was severely beaten. Alexandra Fanny Brodsky wrote in her memoirs that Gregory attempted to stop an attack by a group of thugs on his neighbor and relative Alexander de Ginzburg. The rioters had moved on from their previous victim and were beating Gregory "about the head with an iron chair, clearly intent on killing him" (Brodsky 1997, 11). Gregory's youngest brothers Joseph (Iosef) and Michael tried to rescue him. They shot at the attackers and accidentally wounded a policeman in the crowd. Michael and Joseph were imprisoned for several months, but they were finally acquitted (1997, 11).¹⁰

Some Jews escaped the October pogroms by leaving the country in advance when rumors about the preparation of anti-Jewish riots appeared. Other wealthy Jewish families dodged the worse effects of the October pogrom in Kyiv by hiring soldiers as guards (*Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 78–84).¹¹ A few hired soldier-guards successfully protected the mansions of some wealthy Jews during the Kyiv pogrom. This clearly demonstrated that when troops wanted, they could easily stop the anti-Jewish violence at any time.

Many members of the "patriotic demonstrations," participated in them by the order of the authorities. One of the participants of such a demonstration in Feodosia gave the following testimony in court about how it was organized:

The authorities told us: "Stop working," so we stopped working. They said: "Let's take the Tsar's portrait," so we took the portrait. They said: "Let's go to the monument," so we went there. (*Rechi* 1908, 89–90)

Few of the participants in the so-called patriotic demonstrations understood the meaning of the 17 October Manifesto and some even did not know that such a Manifesto had been announced.

After police agitation, teamsters in Feodosia quit their work, got drunk "for courage," and rushed to the place where many people were gathering to peacefully celebrate the October Manifesto with banners and speeches. Members of the Black Hundreds and drunk workers surrounded the Concert Hall, where a pro-Manifesto meeting had taken place, and:

with sticks ganged up on people who were leaving ... began a bloody massacre ... The Concert Hall was set on fire on all sides; desperate people jumped from the roof and windows and immediately were beaten by the crowd. The number of killed and wounded was very large.¹²

Local authorities, police, and troops in Simferopol used similar tactics to attack people celebrating the Manifesto. Pogrom-makers in this city were more selective in their choice of victims; their victims were exclusively Jews. Police and soldiers in Simferopol closed all exits from the boulevard where a pro-Manifesto demonstration was occurring and allowed only Christians to leave. At the same time police and troops let pogrom-makers enter the boulevard. The boulevard became a trap, in which pogrom-makers, soldiers, and police hacked at and shot Jews. The pogrom in Simferopol began in front of the gate of the police station, near the governor's residence. As dozens of wounded and dying people groaned nearby, a military orchestra played the national anthem. Calls of "Hurray!" deafened the groans that resonated from the boulevard. This massacre of Jews was committed in front of the eyes of the local authorities, including the military police Colonel Zagoskin and the Chief of the Police Kuzmenko. Together they chased Jews

away from the yard of the police station. Many of these Jews were then killed by the pogrom-makers near the front door of their office. On the evening of 18 October, Kuzmenko told the pogrom-makers: "Thank you, guys," as if they had won an important battle with an enemy (Rechi 1908, xvii–xviii, 20–22). The victims' advocate, I.I. Shik, later characterized the behavior of the local authorities during the pogrom in Simferopol by saying, "Pogroms are a system of ruling, only a very peculiar system" (1908, 37–38). In October 1905 the police felt that the monarchical regime was near collapse, and that the ground was shaking under their feet, so they organized an "explosion of the people's wrath" to forestall the cataclysm (1908, 37–38).

In many cities and towns, local officials, troops, and police aided the pogrom-makers. Senator Kuzminsky, who participated in an official investigation of the Odesa pogrom, wrote in his report,

In many cases policemen themselves directed the crowd of hooligans in their wrecking and robbing of Jewish houses, apartments and shops, equipped the hooligans with cudgels made from cut-down trees, participated in the destruction of property, robberies and killings, and themselves controlled the actions of the crowd. (Trotsky 1971, 134)

The New York Times wrote on 1 December 1905, "The press has proofs of the police organization for the massacre. Many people have seen the civil clothes the police brought for disguise." Trotsky also provided evidence of the organization of the October 1905 pogroms by the Black Hundreds and police,

Visiting "instructors" and local policemen in civil clothes, though frequently still wearing their uniform trousers which they have not have time to change, are scattered among the crowd. They keep a watchful eye on the proceedings, excite the crowd and urge it on, giving the impression that everything is allowed and all the time looking for a pretext for open action ...

If no pretext is at hand they create one: someone climbs into an attic and fires on the crowd, usually with blank cartridges. Patrols armed with police revolvers make sure that the anger of the crowd is not paralyzed by fear. They respond to the provocateur's shot with a volley at the windows of previously selected apartments. (1971, 133)

The anonymous author of the book *Odesskii pogrom i samooborona* (The Odesa Pogrom and Self-defense) claimed that policemen in uniform and policemen dressed as civilians committed most of the murders during the Odesa pogrom (Anon 1906, 65).

The Odesa pogrom was the bloodiest of all the October 1905 pogroms, because Jews constituted a significant part of the city population and many of them actively participated in the revolutionary movement.¹³ Prior to the October Manifesto, Jews in Odesa had played a major part in barricade battles between revolutionaries and the police. Pogrom-makers and the policemen, many of whom also participated in the pogrom, were especially brutal. They broke into the apartments and houses of Jews and often killed the occupants. The rioters threw Jews from the top floor of multistory buildings, raped girls and women before killing them, and tore babies to pieces in front of their mothers.

Many Jewish self-defense fighters showed great courage in Odesa during the pogrom days. In some places a self-defense detachment successfully protected whole quarters of the city, and many times they fought off floods of rioters. The heroism of Jewish self-defense exhibited here was enough for resistance against pogrom-makers, but they were helpless against the weapons of the police and soldiers (1906, 53; *Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 6). Thus a member of the self-defense in Odesa Moisei Brodsky recalled, "First we succeeded in making the pogromists crowd disperse, but then we were surrounded by a host of Cossacks who opened fire. Five were killed, and all the rest wounded and beaten" (Shtakser 2014, 139).

The Jewish self-defense units were illegal and the authorities dispersed them by regular troops. Because of this, the self-defense could not stop the pogrom in Odesa and other cities, and, as their members fought more heroically, more of them were killed. Troops mercilessly shot down the self-defense. There were self-defense detachments in Odesa where of 30 members only five or six returned from the battle against the pogrom-makers. Soldiers and police stopped each person on the street, and, if they found a weapon, shot them on the spot. On the third day of the pogrom in Odesa, the leaders of the self-defense decided not to send out their detachments, because they were being annihilated before they could reach the pogrom sites (*Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 6). Members of the self-defense detachments comprised many of the pogrom victims in Odesa, Ekaterinoslav, and Kyiv. Dozens of members of the self-defense detachments were killed, but the pogrom-makers also sustained damage in these battles. The self-defense detachments let the rioters know that they could not plunder and kill Jews with impunity. In these units the majority of members were Jews, but there were also some non-Jewish participants.

Most of the gentile population was indifferent to the fate of Jews during the October 1905 pogroms. Only the most courageous gentiles hid Jews or participated in self-defense. If pogrom-makers found Jews in an apartment or house of a Christian family, they were likely to kill not only the Jews, but also their Christian protectors. Several such cases were reported during the October pogrom in Kyiv (Grigoriev 1961, 21; *Kievlianin*, 27 October 1905). Sholom Aleichem wrote that "A young Christian student, Veneroky, tried to defend the Jews and was killed before the very eyes of the police" (*New York Times*, 1 December 1905).

The most bloody October pogroms were in Odesa (800 Jews killed and 5000 wounded), in Kyiv (100 Jews were killed and 406 wounded), Ekaterinoslav (67 Jews killed and 100 wounded), and Simferopol (50 Jews were killed) (Klier and Lambroza 1992, 233). The most severe pogroms occurred in 1905 in places where there was a strong revolutionary movement, with the exception of the two main cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow. According to Trotsky, the preparation for a pogrom in Petersburg "went on at full strength:"

The Jewish population of the capital was in a state of constant dread. After [October] the eighteenth, students, worker agitators, and Jews were beaten up daily in different parts of the city. Separate gangs, yelling and whistling, attacked not only in the suburbs but in the Nevskii itself, using knuckledusters, jackknives and whips. (1971, 137)

Trotsky wrote that the pogrom did not occur in the capital, because the Petersburg Soviet armed 6000 workers and organized a self-defense force or militia of approximately 300 men, who patrolled the streets at night. Later the militia was disarmed by the authorities. "But by that time the danger of a pogrom had already passed" (1971, 138–139).

Jews in Moscow comprised less than one percent of the population after the expulsion of Jewish artisans from the city in 1891 and were only a small percentage of the local radicals.¹⁴ So a Jewish pogrom would not be an efficient method for suppressing the revolutionary movement in the city.

October 1905 pogroms in the villages

During the First Russian Revolution of 1905 the vast majority of the peasants were staunch monarchists, and they were very upset about the 17 October Manifesto, which limited the absolute power of the Tsar. For example, representatives of peasants from the Zhitomirsky district sent a telegram to Nicholas II with expressions of "loyalist feelings and mourning" about the limitations of the power of the Tsar by the October Manifesto.¹⁵ The monarchist mood of the peasants was effectively used by the anti-Semites to set them against the Jews.

The October pogroms in the villages began a few days later than the pogroms in the cities and towns of Ukraine started. Usually the events had the following scenario. Members of the Black Hundreds came to the villages from the cities and towns. They read to the peasants some forged papers that the Tsar gave them the right to beat up the Jews and that the police would allow them to do it. The anti-Semites impressed upon the peasants that Jews are the enemies of the Tsar. Under the influence of this propaganda peasants believed that when they attacked Jews they were protecting the Tsar.¹⁶

During the October pogroms, fewer Jews were killed in rural areas than in the cities. The peasants usually robbed Jews and destroyed their property, but rarely killed them. They drove Jews away from the villages (Guschitsy), demanded money from them (Pavlovka), and destroyed Jewish shops (Cherepashnitsy).¹⁷ These three pogroms in the villages of the Vinnitsa *uyezd* of the Podolia province occurred on 26 October 1905. There had never been previous anti-Jewish riots in any of these locations. This explosion of hatred of peasants toward Jews can be explained by the anti-Semitic propaganda of the members of the Black Hundreds. A few Jews were killed and wounded in the villages (in the village Tomashovka, Uman' *uyezd* of Kyiv province, and in the village Krivets, Chernigov province, four Jews were beaten to death).¹⁸ Jews could not organize self-defense in most rural places, because the Jewish population was quite dispersed. Usually only one or a few Jewish families lived in a village. Local authorities did not do anything to protect the Jews during pogroms, but they did not hesitate to use weapons against peasants who attacked the property of wealthy landlords. The newspaper *Kievskaiia gazeta* wrote on 3 November 1905:

This is almost a "patriotic duty" to smash poor Jews, but violence against the landlords, the representatives of the upper-class society, is a crime that is immediately punished under martial law.

Jewish pogroms on the railroads and in the ports

During the October pogroms in the cities and towns, many Jews left and went to other places. But the pogrom-makers would not let them escape from the "people's revenge." They organized gangs of Black Hundreds who traveled on the railroads, killed Jews in railway stations and on the trains; they also made pogroms near railway stations and river ports. Thus, the wave of pogroms spread down the railway lines. *Kievskaiia gazeta* wrote on 6 November 1905:

Many pogrom-makers moved from one place to another. All trains are full of pogrom-makers ... at Poltava and Konstantinograd arrived almost one hundred "specialists" [i.e. rioters] from Rostov and other ruined cities ... Many of them looked like policemen.

The existence of well-organized Black Hundreds detachments deflated the claim of Russian authorities that these pogroms occurred spontaneously as revenge of Russian people against Jews for their participation in the revolutionary movement. On the contrary, it was obvious to most contemporaries that these pogroms were very well prepared and organized by local anti-Semitic organizations with the support of local authorities for the suppression of the revolutionary movement.

Could the local authorities have stopped the pogroms?

The high and local Russian authorities claimed that the October pogroms occurred so suddenly that it was impossible to suppress them quickly. The authorities complained about the shortage of police and troops in the pogrom locations. However, the facts refute this claim.

In October 1905, due to prior revolutionary events, control of many cities had been given to military commanders and martial law was in effect. The city police continued to perform their functions, but military commanders were in charge of places under martial law. During pogroms the local authorities, police, and military commanders usually worked in cooperation. All of them were responsible for the suppression of disorder. During the October pogroms, these three branches of power demonstrated either lack of activity or outright support for the pogrom-makers. The officials began to act against the rioters usually only on the third to fifth day of a pogrom. Among pogrom-makers, rumors even circulated that the authorities allowed them to rob and beat Jews for three days. When the authorities gave orders for troops and police to suppress the disorder, pogroms stopped almost immediately. After the order of the commander of one of the military districts of Kyiv, General Drake, to arrest pillagers, the pogrom was brought to an end in a few hours without additional troops. A 30,000-men garrison was stationed in Kyiv during the October 1905 pogrom. So the explanation by General Drake that he could not suppress the pogrom for three days, because of the relatively low number of available troops, is clearly false. By comparison, the number of pogrom-makers in Kyiv, by different calculations, ranged from a few hundred to a couple thousand and few of them had firearms (Khiterer 1992, 36). Sholom Aleichem described in his correspondence to *The New York Times* how easily the riots in Kyiv were suppressed,

On the 20th (October) Count Haden, an attaché of the Imperial Court, arrived by rail. When he saw that the police did nothing to protect the victims he demanded that General Koras give him 50 Cossacks, and these sufficed to save all the Jews. (*New York Times*, 1 December 1905)

Why did local authorities show such indecision and postpone for at least a few days suppression of the disorders? The Commander of the Odesa military district, General Aleksander Kaulbars, gave the most forthright answer. He told an assembly of Odesa policemen “all of us sympathize in our souls with the pogrom” (Klier and Lambroza 1992, 271).

The commander of the Second Guard District of Kyiv, General Bessonov, openly encouraged the pogrom-makers. Jewish stores were robbed and pillaged in front of his eyes in downtown Kyiv, near Duma Square. General Bessonov told pogrom-makers: “You can smash and destroy Jewish property, but do not take it” (*Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 61). Stealing Jewish property could undermine the claim of the authorities that the pogroms were the revenge of patriots against Jews for their revolutionary activities.

During the pogrom in Odesa, various people asked the city governor Dmitry Neidgardt to stop the violence. He replied, “I cannot do anything, you wanted freedom – here is the Yid’s [zhidovskaia] freedom” (Lavrinovich, n.d., 62).

According to the results of the official investigation by Senator Kuzminsky,

the Odesa city police staff included 853 policemen, who in cooperation with the troops, had enough power to halt the disorders and dispel the crowds quickly and not let the pogrom continue for a few days. But even in cases when police patrols with military units appeared at the places of pogroms, they, by the evidence given by all the witnesses interrogated during the subsequent investigation, did not do anything to stop the disorders and riots. Because all policemen considered Jews as the cause of all political disturbances and strikes, and considered them revolutionaries, the policemen sympathized with the anti-Jewish pogrom, and even did not bother to conceal this. (*Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 158–159)

Six regiments, an artillery battalion, an artillery brigade, and a field gendarme squadron were located in Odesa during the October 1905 pogrom (Kagan 1925, 10–11). So the official claims that all these well-armed troops and police could not stop the pogrom from the beginning are ridiculous. All these forces could have quickly stopped the pogrom whenever they received an order to do so. Just a few months before the pogroms, the same troops

and police had successfully suppressed riots in Odesa's port and the sailors' rebellion on the battleship *Potemkin*.

The high Russian authorities and the October pogroms

During the October pogroms in 1905, Prime Minister Witte received telegrams from Jews about the violence and pogroms in many locations. Witte demanded that local administrations stop the violence, but, even after his order, the October pogroms continued in many parts of the Russian Empire until most Jewish property was stolen or destroyed. For the first few days, local authorities did nothing to stop the riots. A powerful person at this moment in Russia was Commandant of the Court, General Dmitry Fedorovich Trepov. In his memoirs Witte stated, "I was the responsible premier without much influence ... he [Trepov] was more or less the official dictator" (Klier and Lambroza 1992, 234). General Trepov and other high-level government officials actively encouraged pogroms. Witte wrote that Trepov always used pogrom methods, "when he considered them necessary for the defense of state interests, as he understood them" (1991, 454).

Contemporaries characterized the role of Witte and Trepov in the government thusly, "The Tsar equally needs Witte and Trepov: Witte for the good impression he makes, Trepov for real affairs; Witte for the bourgeoisie, Trepov for the proletariat" (Samoilenko 2000, 75). From April until October 1905, Trepov was Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Director of the Department of Police. On 26 October 1905 he was officially dismissed from these positions, but he actually retained control of powerful structures in the country. However, Trepov was only fulfilling the will of the Tsar.

What did the Tsar, the principal ruler of the authoritarian country, do in the days of the October pogroms? Initially his reaction to the disorder appears more than strange. He did not pay any attention to the events. Even when the government received hundreds of telegrams from local authorities about Jewish pogroms, the Tsar did not take any official notice. At that time he was living in Petergof where he met with members of the government and representatives of monarchist organizations (*Dnevnik* 1991, 236–241). The lack of interest from the Tsar regarding the pogroms against Jews was not unusual. It was a specific political posture which established a pattern of behavior for other Russian authorities. Nicholas II expressed his views on the October pogroms in a letter to his mother:

In the first days after the manifesto, the bad elements boldly raised their heads, but then a strong reaction set in and the whole mass of loyal people took heart. The result, as is natural and usual with us, was that the people (*narod*) became enraged by the insolence and audacity of the revolutionaries and socialists; and because nine-tenth of them are Yids, the people's whole wrath has turned against them. That is how the pogroms happened. (Polonsky 2010, 56)

These views of the Tsar on the reasons for the pogroms completely coincided with the official explanation (2010, 56). Witte tried to persuade Nicholas II not to allow the pogroms, however, as Witte recalled "the Tsar either was silent or told me 'But they, the Yids, are guilty themselves'" (Witte 1991, 454). Witte wrote in his memoirs that "the pogrom movement went not from below to above, but from above to below," that is, it was not spontaneous, but was organized by the high authorities (1991, 454).

Without the moral and tangible support of high and local authorities, riots of such great dimension would not have been possible in Russia. Contemporaries accused General Trepov and the Department of Police of organizing the pogroms and spreading pogrom agitation. Duma deputy and former Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Prince S.D. Urusov, said in his speech in the Duma on 8 June 1906,

in the fall of 1905 (probably before the October government was appointed), the printing-machine began to work in one of the distant rooms of the Department of Police in the building on Fontanka Street, 16. This printing-machine was paid for by the Department of Police. A police official, Komissarov, with a few assistants, zealously prepared the previously mentioned [pogrom] proclamations ... Meanwhile the work of the organization for which this printing house worked was obviously very successful. Komissarov replied to the question of some person, who accidentally found out about this organization's business affairs, "We can create a pogrom of any size – for ten people or for 10,000 if necessary." For the information of the deputies from Kyiv, I would like to add that in Kyiv, 10,000 was the assigned number for the planned on February 3 [1906] pogrom, but it was staved off.¹⁹

Prince Urusov warned in his speech that pogroms would repeat in Russia and:

the great danger will not disappear while people educated as loud-mouthed soldiers and low ranking policemen [*gorodovye*], who are pogrom-makers by their belief, have influence on the governing of the country and its fate.²⁰

Prince Urusov was neither the first nor the only person to reveal the role of the Department of Police in the instigation of the October 1905 pogroms. After the October 1905 pogroms, the newspaper *Nasha zhizn'* (Our Life) published an article by the industrialist F. L'vov (Lavrinovich, n.d., 213–215). He claimed that he had absolute proof that within the Russian bureaucracy there was a pogrom organization tightly linked to the government and that some top bureaucrats sympathized with this organization. L'vov said that General Evgenii V. Bogdanovich led this organization (Lavrinovich, n.d., 213–215). General Bogdanovich was an official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and an ultra-conservative monarchist, who believed that Russia needed neither a Duma nor a constitution; it only needed the blessing of God through the Tsar. Bogdanovich wrote, "The Tsar should call for God's blessing for his people and to each faithful house will come joy and happiness."²¹ The salon of General Bogdanovich and his wife was one of the most influential centers of right-wing monarchist politics in Russia.²²

The activities of the Bogdanovich organization before the October 1905 pogroms included the distribution of "patriotic" and anti-Semitic proclamations, drawings, and cartoons, many of which were published with state subsidies. All "the pogrom business" was located in the house of Bogdanovich at 51 Bol'shaia Morskaia Street in St. Petersburg. L'vov claimed that the members of the organization were Odesa's governor Neidgardt, his brother the Governor of Ekaterinoslav, Bogdanovich's son, the Kyiv General-Governor Kleigels, the Assistant of the Caucasian Governor-General Shirinkin, Moscow's Governor Baron Medem, Governors Rogovich, Azachevsky–Azanchev, and many others. The majority of them were prominent figures during the October 1905 pogroms. General Bogdanovich, with the assistance of all of these people, organized from the members of the Society of Banner-Carriers (*Obschestvo Khorugvenostsev*) an enormous armed detachment, which had members everywhere and many local branches. As L'vov described the conspiracy, the core of the organization was composed of 6000 Khorugvenostsev, "the rest of the force – members of the Black Hundreds – should be delivered to them by the local police departments" (Lavrinovich, n.d., 213–215). This organization created a plan for widespread pogroms with a counter-revolutionary purpose. They wanted to show the faithfulness of the Russian people to the monarchy and suppress the revolutionary movement in the country (Lavrinovich, n.d., 213–215). Their opponents and the press called them the "Party of the Old Regime." They sought to prevent liberalization of the regime by all possible means.

In the beginning of October 1905 the leaders (*sotennye*) of the Black Hundreds' armed units came to a meeting in St. Petersburg, where they discussed the plan for suppressing

the revolutionary movement by the organization of widespread pogroms. However, a general strike had begun on the railroads in Russia, and the leaders of the Black Hundreds could not immediately return and execute their plan. They came back only when the 17 October Manifesto was released. Thus the Black Hundreds leaders could not prevent the announcement of the Manifesto. But they did not want to give up their ideas and organized the waves of the counter-revolutionary, vindictive pogroms (Lavrinovich, n.d., 213–215). The adherents of the old regime tried to discredit the 17 October Manifesto and show that the liberalization of political life in the country would be followed by major political disorder, pogroms, murders, and pillage. These anti-Semitic organizations appeared in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century (Stepanov 1992, 33–42). They called themselves “patriots” and “true Russian people.” The main goal of these organizations was to struggle against the revolutionary movement and against Jews as active participants of this movement. The Black Hundreds actively participated in the organization and realization of the October 1905 pogroms. They had tight connections with the authorities. The Tsar’s portraits and national flags for the “patriotic” demonstrations that usually turned into pogroms were provided by police headquarters. “Visiting ‘instructors’ and local policemen in civilian clothes ... are scattered among the crowd” (Trotsky 1971, 133).

After the October 1905 pogroms, the leaders of the Black Hundreds were not satisfied by their results and had further plans for the annihilation of the Jews. The newspaper *Kievskie novosti* (Kyiv News) published an article titled “The Headquarters of the Black Hundreds” on 3 November 1905. The article said,

We received information about the propaganda of the leaders of the Black Hundreds, which organized their meetings in the restaurant of A. K. Sack, 45 Aleksandrovskaia Street [Kyiv] ... They discussed at these meetings the “suppression of sedition and the annihilation of neighbors – enemies [Jews] that aspired to impose their laws upon an alien state.” They admitted that the tactic of pogroms is not rational at this time, because not only Jews, but Russians also suffered from pogroms ... They think that most perfect and rational solution is to arrange a Saint Bartholomew Night, which will immediately rid the Russian people of their unwelcome guests.

Investigations into the October pogroms

Public opinion in Russia was aroused by the October 1905 pogroms and many people were outraged by the behavior of the local authorities, police, and troops. To pacify the public, the authorities organized investigations of the October pogroms at least in the places with the bloodiest riots and the most victims. Senators E.F. Turau and A.M. Kuzminsky, who conducted official investigations in Kyiv and Odesa, accused local authorities of criminal inaction, and accused some policemen of participation in the murder of Jews and in the theft and destruction of Jewish property. Senator Kuzminsky opened a criminal investigation against Odesa’s governor Neidgardt for his inaction during the Odesa pogrom, and against 42 policemen, accused of actively participating in the murder of Jews, and of the theft and destruction of Jewish property (*Kievskii i odesskii pogromy* 1907, 160, 220). Senator Turau opened a criminal investigation against the Chief of Kyiv police Vacheslav Tsikhotskii and two policemen for their inaction, which “had very important consequences” (Kagan 1925, 15). However, the main culprits of the October 1905 pogroms avoided punishment. The high Russian authorities tried to protect their faithful servants from any charges. During consideration in the Senate of the cases of Odesa Governor Neidgardt and Minsk Governor P.G. Kurlov on 14 March 1906, the Minister of Internal Affairs P.N. Durnovo said:

People such as Kurlov and Neidgardt never could nor should have criminal proceedings instituted against them, because they acted according to the interests and directions of the government, and were valid proponents of its will. (Lavrinovich n.d., 284–285)

Minsk Governor Kurlov ordered shooting at a peaceful meeting of people, who gathered to celebrate the 17 October Manifesto in one of the central squares in Minsk (Lavrinovich n.d., 284–285). The Chief of Kyiv police Tsikhotskii also was not punished. Only some ordinary pogrom-makers were tried and the majority of them received very light punishment, such as a few months in prison for murdering Jews during the pogroms. The Tsar later pardoned most of those convicted of pogrom violence. Members of the self-defense detachments were more severely punished and were never pardoned by the Russian authorities.

In their session on 29 June 1906, the Duma adopted a resolution regarding pogroms. The resolution only mentioned the pogrom in Belostok (Bialystok), however, the conclusions about the reasons for the pogroms and the role of the authorities in these events were based on the information that the Duma's deputies had about the October 1905 pogroms. Lavrinovich wrote in his book *Kto ustroil pogromy v Rossii?* (Who Organized the Pogroms in Russia?) that when the resolution was adopted, the deputies of the Duma did not yet have reliable information about the pogrom in Belostok on 1–3 June 1906 (Lavrinovich n.d., 284–285). The Duma rushed forward with this resolution to show their attitude toward pogroms and the government policy regarding them. This was the First State Duma, thus the deputies might still have naively believed that Duma resolutions would influence the Russian government.

The resolution adopted on 9 July 1906 said,

- that the pogrom in Belostok was caused exclusively by the organized activities of the authorities ... ;
- that responsibility for these pogroms not only rests with local authorities, but also with the central government, which by way of underground propaganda led by the officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, organized everywhere by Russia military and police personnel, who are ready at any time to attack the unarmed Jewish population; that this propaganda is supported with impunity and even rewards to the officials who organized pogroms and participated in them;
- that government announcements, which understate the truth and try to justify the murder of peaceful people, are complete evidence that the government itself, which is realizing its impotence in the struggle against revolution, aspires to suppress it by the means of overwhelming attacks directed against peaceful citizens;
- that the government, which systematically oppressed and degraded Jews, persuaded the population that regarding Jews everything is allowed, decided to direct its vindictive attacks against this most oppressed and weak part of the population of the country; and
- that the only exit from this unprecedented situation in the history of all civilized countries and the only means to prevent the future spread of pogroms is to immediately convict all those responsible among top and local officials, without discrimination as to their ranks and positions, and the immediate resignation of the government (Lavrinovich n.d., 284–285).

However, the resolution of the Duma had no effect on government policies. The government did not resign, the instigators of the pogroms were not punished, and anti-Jewish pogroms continued to occur. Less than two weeks after the adoption of the resolution, the Tsar and his government dissolved the First Duma. On 8 July 1906, the deputies who came to the Duma session at Tavricheskii Palace found that the door was locked,

and on a column near the palace gate a Tsar Manifesto was hung announcing the dismissal of the Duma. The Manifesto stated that the Duma did not pacify the population, but only sowed discord (Tiukavina 1990, 296; Riazanovsky and Steinberg 2013, 407). Thus the Tsar's government demonstrated its total domination of the Duma and the nascent democratic process. The number of pogroms decreased greatly with the suppression of the First Russian Revolution, because they had already accomplished their primary goal. The Second Duma shared the fate of the first, lasting for only 10 weeks.

Conclusions

The October 1905 pogroms helped suppress the revolutionary movement in Russia. The purpose of the October pogroms was "to frighten the Jews away from taking part in the [revolutionary] movement, and to divert the anger of the discontented masses by setting them upon a suitable scapegoat" (Klier and Lambroza 1992, 314). The Jewish writer and member of the revolutionary populist movement Semen An-sky (Shloyme Zaynvl Rappoport, 1863–1920) wrote that the pogroms "were all organized by the government with the single goal of putting out the revolutionary fire with Jewish blood" (Frankel 1981, 143). The October 1905 pogroms accomplished their goal. A leading ideologist of Russian nationalism and conservatism Vasilii Shul'gin (1878–1976) wrote in his front-page editorial article in the newspaper *Kievlianin* on 16 December 1905,

The main and fundamental reason for tranquility in Odesa, Kishinev, Vil'na, Lodz' and many other places is the saving fear of the Black Hundreds, who do not show any inclination to allow any appearance of the "Great Revolution," even as a "general political strike ..." We know very well that many Jewish fighters are absolutely outraged, because they cannot support [the uprising in] Moscow, but Jewish fear is stronger than their wrath. (Cited in Shul'gin 1992, 256–257)

The October 1905 pogroms had a major impact on Russian Jews, who felt utterly defenseless in the face of pogrom-makers supported by the government. Jews realized that in the case of future pogroms they could not count on the protection of the authorities, troops, or police. The October 1905 pogroms exacerbated the economic plight of the Jewish population in the Russian Empire and deprived many Jewish families of their property and employment. Only Russian and international Jewish philanthropic organizations helped Jewish victims of the October pogroms. The Russian government did not do anything to help them at all.

The October 1905 pogroms, and the fear of their recurrence, motivated greatly increased emigration of Jews from Russia (Frankel 1981, 135). Sholom Aleichem wrote a month after the end of the pogroms, "The Jews are in terror. We all sleep in our clothes, ready for riots" (*New York Times*, 1 December 1905). He left Kyiv forever soon thereafter. About 240,000 Jews emigrated to the USA from the Russian Empire over the following two years and approximately the same number went to other countries.²³

These tragic events left little hope for a peaceful life or equal civil rights for Jews in the Russian Empire. In this situation, many young Jews chose either to leave the country or to join national and revolutionary movements aimed at ending the brutal Tsarist regime.

Notes

1. The Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv (TsDIAK U), f. 316, op.1, d. 382-B, ll. 6–8.
2. See note 1.
3. See note 1.

4. TsDIAK U, f. 317, op. 1, d. 3443, ll. 20–21.
5. TsDIAK U, f. 317, op. 1, d. 3443, ll. 17–21.
6. For example, according to the 1897 census, 2341 Jews lived in Baku, one of the largest cities of the Caucasus. *Evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, (Moscow: Terra, 1991), 3: 702.
7. TsDIAK U, f. 442, op. 855, d. 391, part I, l. 258.
8. TsDIAK U, f. 442, op. 855, d. 391, part III, ll. 36; 269–270.
9. See note 8.
10. TsDIAK U, f. 317, op. 1, d. 5125, ll. 2–13.
11. TsDIAK U, f. 442, op. 855, d. 391, part II, l. 38.
12. TsDIAK U, f. 275, op. 1, d. 64, l. 9; *Kievskaia gazeta*, October 26, 1905.
13. 138,935 Jews lived in Odesa in 1897, which constituted 34.4% of the population. *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence*, 231; “Odessa.” *Kratkaia Evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, (Jerusalem, 1992), Vol. 6, 118.
14. According to the 1897 census, 8095 Jews lived in Moscow out of a total population of 1,038,600; in 1902 the Jewish population of the city had increased to 9339. Leonid Praisman. “Moscow” *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Moscow>; “Moscow.” *Kratkaia Evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, (Jerusalem, 1990), Vol. 5, 474.
15. TsDIAK U, f. 317, op. 1, d. 3443, part III, l. 9.
16. TsDIAK U, f. 442, op. 855, d. 391, part III, l. 275.
17. TsDIAK U, f. 442, op. 855, d. 391, part III, l. 33.
18. TsDIAK U, f. 442, op. 855, d. 391, part III, l. 275.
19. TsDIAK U, f. 335, op. 1, d. 74, ll. 21–32.
20. See note 19.
21. “Bogdanovich Evgenii Vasil’evich” *Chernaia Sotnia. Istoricheskaiia entsiklopedia 1900–1917*. Compilers A.D. Stepanov, A.A. Ivanov. Ed. O.A. Platonov. (Moscow: Institut russkoi tsvilيزاتsii, 2008), <http://interpretive.ru/dictionary/961/word/bogdanovich-evgenii-vasilevich>
22. See note 21.
23. *Evreiskaia entsiklopedia* (Moscow: Terra, 1991), 12: 621–622.

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