

Laurence Senelick

## ANTI-SEMITISM AND TSARIST THEATRE: THE *SMUGGLERS* RIOTS

All theatrical protests are political. This is manifest in such cases as the premieres of Chénier's *Charles IX* or Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, but even when protests seem to be about the cost of admission (the O.P. Riots at Covent Garden) or xenophobia (the burning of the Astor Place Theatre), literary fashion (*Hernani*) or artistic innovation (*Le Sacre de printemps*), baiting bigots (*Tartuffe*) or *épater*-ing the bourgeoisie (*Ubu Roi*), the root cause can always be construed as political. Unrest, demonstrated within the playhouse or without, marks the evolution of a social consciousness reactive to whatever regime or authority controls the situation. Resistance (the attempt to impose a new order), no matter in which direction it moves across the footlights, engages with an established order.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons, theatrical riots are as rare as hen's teeth in the history of the Russian theatre. In a repressive autocracy, where the arts are heavily censored and policed, disruptive manifestations, particularly those of protest, whether spontaneous or planned, are afforded scant opportunity. Therefore, the riots throughout the Russian empire that accompanied performances of the play *Smugglers* in 1900–1901 deserve closer attention than they have hitherto received in histories of the theatre.<sup>2</sup> Exceptional occurrences in both pre- and postrevolutionary life, they reflected a new public mood, especially noteworthy as a response to an otherwise tolerated repression of a despised minority, the Jews. The close connection between social attitudes toward Jews and reactions to the play lend a significance to the events that is reflective of the turbulent atmosphere in the years leading up to the abortive Revolution of 1905.

### THE JEWS

At the end of the nineteenth century, Jews were more numerous and more harshly treated in Russia than anywhere in the world. Classified as aliens, from 1791 they had been relegated to the Pale of Settlement, consisting of fifteen

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*gubernias* (provincial administrations) in the western and southern reaches of the empire. Restrictions became increasingly repressive, with the explicit goal of making Russia *judenrein*. Under the laws of May 1892, congestion of the Jewish population, denial of its free movement from place to place, and its exclusion from general civil rights intensified. The right to leave the Pale was granted only to merchants of the first guild,<sup>3</sup> holders of certain academic diplomas, military veterans, and skilled artisans, although pervasive bribery and extortion got around the rules. By the mid-1890s, the capital St. Petersburg, technically and strictly off-limits, contained, according to police reports, twenty thousand Jews.

The accession of Nicholas II, in 1894, exacerbated this underprivileged status. The most powerful member of his cabinet, Minister of Finance Sergey Witte, tried hard to explain the positive role Jews had played in the industrialization of England, but the tsar's prejudices continued to be fueled by his mentor Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod, a sort of ministry of religious affairs. Pobedonostsev believed that the Jews were intellectually and culturally superior to Russians, and therein lay the danger. "The Jews are displacing us, and this does not suit us," he declared in 1898. The Synod approved of tightening the screws, in the expectation that, of every nine Jews, "three will leave, three will die, and three will convert to Christianity and be thoroughly assimilated."<sup>4</sup>

Jewish artisans, merchants, and professionals were stripped of what few rights remained to them. Soldiers were not allowed to spend their furloughs outside the Pale and, as of 1895, Jewish invalids were banned from health resorts. The government took over the liquor monopoly the following year, a move aimed directly at damaging Jewish business interests. There were regular police hunts for Jews without residence permits in Kiev, Moscow, and St. Petersburg, often characterized by midnight raids. When the bigoted Grand Duke Sergey became Governor General of Moscow in 1897, even persons who only "looked Jewish" were arrested on the street and expelled from the city. "The entire Jewish colony of Moscow was uprooted in a few short weeks, and synagogues and Talmud Torah schools alike had to close their doors."<sup>5</sup> The chief of police announced a bounty equal to that for the capture of two burglars to be paid for the apprehension of one "unauthorized" Jew, a measure that had to be temporarily suspended when the International Congress of Medicine held its annual meeting in Moscow.

Students at gymnasia and universities were restricted by ever-tighter quotas, and Jewish women could take up residence in cities to partake of higher education only if they held the yellow ticket of a prostitute. This shaming measure enabled the authorities to expel them at will as undesirables. A new wave of pogroms inundated the Kiev *gubernia* in 1897, soon spread to southern Russia, and would crest in the Kishinev massacre of 1903, an event that provoked worldwide outrage.

The increased repression drove Jews hoping to ameliorate their lot to join unions, reform movements, and illegal political organizations, actions that had the unfortunate effect of making them seem inherently subversive. A cartoon captioned “Underground Russia” in the anti-Semitic Viennese paper *Kikeriki* sums up the prevailing impression: Jews are shown planting mines, building bombs, exhorting crowds, suborning peasants, and plotting assassinations.<sup>6</sup> To combat the perceived threat, a libelous work, *The Secret of Jewry* (*Taina Evreiskaya*), was confected by an agent of the Okhrana, the Russian secret police. This forerunner to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was intended to disseminate judophobic sentiments throughout society.<sup>7</sup>

European anti-Semites liked to describe the theatre as a sphere where Jews had the greatest and most sinister influence.<sup>8</sup> In Russia, the theatre was one of the few professions open to Jews and, even there, the obstacles were considerable. As late as 1907, when young Abraham Morevski came to St. Petersburg to apply to dramatic school, his father, a merchant of the second guild, had to sign an affidavit that Abraham was in the capital to make purchases, so that he could live there for the necessary two months.<sup>9</sup> During a discussion of the rights of a stage proletariat and the enlightenment of the peasantry at the First All-Russian Congress of Theatre Workers held in Moscow in March 1897, one speaker pointed to the presence of Jews in the acting profession as a present evil: “*The Jewish influx* came about because, once they receive a diploma from a dramatic school, they are free of military obligations. Consequently they attend not for the sake of art and vocation, but *to avoid military service*.” Moreover, the speaker complained, Jewish paupers would be assisted by their community in acquiring the fees for a dramatic tuition, whereas Russians would be on their own.<sup>10</sup>

It is significant that the speaker mouthing the creed of Pobedonostsev was the actor-manager Vekhter, whose real name was Nikolay Solomonovich Vekhtershtein—in other words, a baptized Jew calumniating his coreligionists to advance his own career. This was not uncommon. Many Jews, particularly in the arts, sought to get ahead not only by renouncing their faith and converting to Russian Orthodoxy, but also by exhibiting an anti-Semitism more rabid than that of ethnic Russians. The Yiddish folklorist Solomon An-ski satirized this type of renegade in verse:

There he stands, exactly as painted,  
Judas-Windbag.  
Vile, malicious, morose, spittle-bespat  
And ready for anything.  
Thrice in his lifetime has he sold out God,  
And still he keeps on selling!  
The Church? The Chapel? The Synagogue?  
Whoever pays the most!<sup>11</sup>

## THE PLAY

There are numerous candidates for the original of An-ski's Judas-Windbag, but none more brazen than Savely Konstantinovich Litvin (1849–1926). Born in Vilna as Sheel Khaimovich Efron, he trained for the rabbinate and taught in Jewish schools. While a correspondent for the newspapers *Modern News* (*Sovremennye izvestie*) and *Russian Messenger* (*Russky vestnik*), he converted to Russian Orthodoxy, changed his name to Litvin, and from 1889 began to publish sketches of Jewish life.<sup>12</sup> His collection of stories *Among Jews* (*Sredi evreev*, 1897) was so virulent in turning victims into villains that the Jewish press felt compelled to issue warnings to readers, but these presumed exposés of Litvin's own tribe were highly esteemed in reactionary circles.<sup>13</sup>

This unsavory character concocted a melodrama entitled *Sons of Israel* (*Syny Izrailia*), and, since his dramatic experience had been confined to the translation of farces, he sought as collaborator the well-connected playwright Viktor Aleksandrovich Krylov (1838–1906). Ironically, one of Krylov's earliest successes had been a translation (1874) of Lessing's plea for tolerance, *Nathan the Wise*. Over time, however, he had become an unprincipled hack, slapping together vehicles for star players at leading theatres in the capitals and co-opting the work of tyros eager for his patronage. In the 1890s, he successfully combined the commercial flair of a Neil Simon with the collaborationist penchant of a George S. Kaufman, though history remembers him, if at all, as the writer who offered to polish Chekhov's *Ivanov* to make it "stageworthy." Litvin/Efron would later claim it was Krylov, at that time chief of the repertory department of the St. Petersburg imperial theatres, who had initiated and titled *Sons of Israel*, whereas Litvin had only refined the literary style and protested against the lurid ending. Given the play's subject matter and local color and the fact that it is Litvin's only play, it is more likely he brought his ungainly brainchild to be licked into shape by Krylov.<sup>14</sup>

Since the plot is the fruit of decades of anti-Semitic propaganda, a brief summary will suffice to expose its egregious nature. Rich businessman Moshe Goldenweiser, his daughter Sarra, her repulsive fiancé Sender (a Talmudic scholar), and other family members leave the city to welcome in the Sabbath in the squalid inn of the family patriarch, Avraam Hirshel, who lives on the Polish-German border. Except for the angelic Sarra and the good-natured Avraam, who follows the dictates of his heart, the company gathered at the inn are scoundrels, hypocrites, and pharisees. They are waiting for Moshe's equally rich nephew, Mikhel Reddikh, who is supervising a smuggling transaction. True, holy writ forbids all work on the Sabbath, but Mikhel himself isn't working, only directing the transference of the contraband. When the border guards come upon the smugglers, Mikhel, in escaping, shoots and kills one of them.

The tendentious first act ends with a sensation scene calculated to provoke the audience's indignation. After the murder, Mikhel has managed to return to

the inn, and Moshe is seized with sincere grief at the idea that, on account of “a goy, a soldier, a Christian,” the “upright” Mikhel might have to suffer. Except for Avraam, who knows nothing, everyone conspires to cover up the crime. When other border guards run in with the corpse, they find a moving scene: a long table with food and lighted candles and the whole family rapt in such devotion that their prayer cannot be interrupted, even by a homicide case. The psalm rings out: “Bless me with peace, angels of peace.”

In act 2, Moshe and Sender decide to pin the murder on the vagabond Yushke, whom they regard as a renegade because he won't recognize the authority of the Jewish community. Although Moshe has made away with the evidence of smuggling, the examining magistrate has found Mikhel's gun. The leaders of the Jewish community, among them the chief rabbi, the elders of the synagogue, and the keeper of the poor box, congregate at Moshe's home and resolve to compromise the incorruptible magistrate by sending the guileless Sarra to him. They know that the investigator has a soft spot in his heart for her and hope to find the two of them in a compromising position.

The next act, in the magistrate's office, confronts Yushke with Moshe and Mikhel. The vagabond's denials are so convincing that the investigator releases him and arrests Mikhel. At this point, the ingenuous Sarra arrives. Her spotless, conscience-tormented character is formed very much in the mold of the “noble Jewess,” introduced by Walter Scott's Rebecca of York and perpetuated in Mosenthal's Deborah. The magistrate is so taken with her virtue and her scruples that they end up in one another's arms. At this point, the Jewish leaders intrude. The magistrate assumes that Sarra is an accomplice to their scheme, and, in a moment reminiscent of Armand reviling Marguerite Gautier, casts her off as “a Jewess to the last drop of her blood” (3.5).

The last act is divided into two scenes. In the first, the Jewish community leaders try to persuade Avraam to provide an alibi by claiming that Mikhel was at the Sabbath meal all night long, but the upright old man refuses. Moshe discovers that Sarra has run away from home and promises to bring her back as a dutiful daughter of Israel. The final scene takes place in the magistrate's office, where he and Sarra have a reconciliation. He offers to marry her, but she refuses his offer and conversion to Christianity, preferring to make her own life in St. Petersburg or else accompany her father in penal exile. Moshe arrives, and in a private interview with his daughter accuses her of disobedience and breaking Mosaic law. He takes her into the garden and kills her.<sup>15</sup>

Smuggling from Prussia, Austria, and non-Russian Poland into the Pale of Settlement as a means of avoiding high tariffs had been a cottage industry from the early nineteenth century. It was so linked with Jews in the minds of the authorities that they were restricted from buying farmland and owning houses on the frontier.<sup>16</sup> Smuggling, however, hardly constitutes the play's center of gravity, nor is it the worst crime countenanced by the play's Jewish community.

Rabbi Sender explains that his wisdom and knowledge exist only for the benefit of Jews and, as to the commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” well, it doesn’t precisely stipulate whom you shouldn’t kill—Jews or Christians (2.1). He and Moshe debate how to swindle Russian merchants and propose to poison Yushke; they suborn perjury, ostracize recalcitrant coreligionists, and, ultimately, a father kills his daughter, ostensibly for disobeying the laws of their faith. *Sons of Israel* more than implies that the Jewish capacity for lawbreaking, secular or religious, is unlimited. “*Izvorotlivost* [disingenuousness, prevarication, shrewdness] is the primary talent of your nation” (1.6), declares the play’s *raisonneur*, the examining magistrate, who states several times that whatever virtues the Jews might have are mitigated by their clannishness and stubborn refusal to cooperate with society as a whole. As the liberal newspaper the *Northern Courier* put it, the play “is a slander on the whole Jewish people, shameless and quite without foundation; a sensational, groundless denunciation of an entire nation for the vilest crimes, immorality and obtuse fanaticism.”<sup>17</sup>

Krylov’s connections with the imperial theatres were strong enough to get the play a hearing there. Despite its crudeness, Pogozhev, the business manager, added *Sons of Israel* to a proposed repertory for the New Theatre (*Novy teatr*), an experimental affiliate of the Moscow Maly Theatre headed by the respected actor Aleksandr Lensky. *Sons of Israel*, along with works by Schnitzler and Hauptmann, was one of the few modern plays in a roster of Gogol, Ostrovsky, Sheridan, Goldoni, and Beaumarchais! In the event, however, the New Theatre never put it on.<sup>18</sup> Over March and April 1899, at Krylov’s urging, the administration in both capitals granted the play a reading. I. A. Vsevolozhsky, the chief administrator, approved *Sons of Israel* for the Alexandra Theatre in St. Petersburg, a selection that distressed the theatre’s managing director, Telyakovsky:

On reading this play and finding it a tendentious attack on the Jews, besides being written not seriously but shallowly, I considered this play unsuitable for the imperial stage, for it is not the business of the imperial theatres to scoff at peoples subject to the monarch. Whether or not the attack is accurate, an attack should be made on the faults of people in general without reference to their nationality; finally, even if Jewish types are brought into the play, the whole play shouldn’t be constructed the way Krylov constructs it. Besides, because the play is not written by Krylov alone but in collaboration with the Yid Litvin, it seemed to me that to perform it would smack a bit of the uncharitable, extortionate, and spicy [*nedobroe, shantazhnoe i pikantnoe*], providing special fodder, on the one hand, for the box office and on the other for stirring up the mob. I spoke my mind to Pogozhev and refused to stage this play, although it was already printed in the proposed repertory for the year, endorsed by the Administration.<sup>19</sup>

Telyakovsky’s was a minority opinion; the theatre’s administration and most of the actors stood behind the play. Only Vsevolozhsky’s replacement by

the more sophisticated Prince S. M. Volkonsky prevented the production of *Sons of Israel* on the imperial stage.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE THEATRE

Hard-bitten careerists such as Litvin and Krylov could not be daunted by this setback. They turned to the powerful publishing magnate Aleksey Sergeevich Suvorin (1834–1912), who printed *Sons of Israel* in 1899 as a supplement to his popular magazine *Historical Messenger* (*Istorichesky vestnik*) and offered to stage it at his private theatre.

Suvorin was a complicated individual. A self-made millionaire of peasant origin, he subscribed heartily to the pan-Slavic, Russifying policies and autocratic principles propagated under Alexander III, but he was also devoted to the cause of art and literature, and believed that the spread of literacy would be the salvation of Russia. His Low-Cost Library (*Deshevaya biblioteka*), a Russian forerunner of the Everyman and Penguin series, sold more than four million copies of five hundred titles. On the one hand, his monopoly of railway bookstalls allowed him to offer *Prometheus Bound* to the masses at ten kopeks a copy, but, on the other, his many periodicals were influential mouthpieces for government policy. As his private diary reveals, he was well aware of the incompetence and corruption of the regime and its officials, but felt honor-bound to uphold them against the forces of liberalism and reform. Although a poisonous trickle of cynicism and self-aggrandizement ran through his ideals, Suvorin's penchant for despotism was tempered by a desire to be liked. He worshiped success and, a coward at heart, was always ready to kick the underdog.<sup>21</sup>

Suvorin's anti-Semitism might seem, like that of his friend and protégé Chekhov, to be of the casual, everyday variety. Late in life he protested that "some of my best friends are . . ." naming colleagues and even his housekeeper as examples. Nevertheless, Suvorin cherished the contradictory beliefs that Jewish capital ruled the world and that if you scratched a Jew, you would find a socialist.<sup>22</sup> His personal opinions informed his many publications, turning them into widely distributed forums for judophobic rant. Suvorin's close relations with cabinet ministers won him not only a license and access to information unavailable to his competitors but immunity for even the most outrageous provocations. If the Russian press had been spreading anti-Jewish propaganda for over a quarter of a century, successfully drowning out any protests from the other side, it was Suvorin's widely circulated paper, *New Times*, that led the pack: "Preeminent in unrestrained attacks, [it] stopped at nothing, not even at methodically persistent accusations of ritual murder."<sup>23</sup>

The private Theatre of the Literary-Artistic Society in St. Petersburg, called familiarly the Maly or Little Theatre (not to be confused with the imperial Maly Theatre in Moscow), was also known by the appropriate nickname "Suvorin's theatre." Suvorin owned the majority of its shares, personally

selected the repertory, engaged the actors and directors, took a hand in casting the roles, doled out advances, and fussed over the slightest details. His appearances in the playhouse in his fur hat and coat reminded some of Ivan the Terrible.<sup>24</sup> He had founded the theatre mindful of the highest principles of art and, for a while, it served as a northern counterpart to the Moscow Art Theatre in its concern for an edifying repertory and excellent production values. Objective observers regarded Suvorin's theatre as a "genuine cultural influence."<sup>25</sup> The acting company was a distinguished mix of seasoned Petersburg favorites and talented provincial actors. The audience was largely a fashionable one, composed of the *haute bourgeoisie*, the upper echelons of government and society, and the demimonde. They also constituted the readership of *New Times* and brought its opinions with them into the auditorium.

At first, the theatre staged new European drama (which brought in the intelligentsia), plays earlier forbidden performance (which Suvorin could get his government contacts to authorize), topical Russian plays not yet seen at the Alexandra, and carefully staged classics. Suvorin presented the first Russian productions of Lev Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness* and of Aleksey Tolstoy's *Tsar Fedor Ioannovich* (both previously prohibited; the Moscow Art Theatre opened its first season with *Tsar Fedor* a few days after Suvorin's premiere),<sup>26</sup> a dramatization of *Crime and Punishment*, and Sukhovo-Kobylin's savage satire of bureaucracy, *Tarekin's Death* (albeit in a cut version under the anodyne title *The Merry Days of Raspluev*). Following Chekhov's advice, Suvorin staged Maeterlinck, and his theatre also enjoyed a major success with Rostand's *La Princesse Lointaine*, starring the flamboyant diva Lidiya Yavorskaya.

Almost from the start, however, this high-mindedness was undercut by the prejudices of the entrepreneur and his public. Boulevard drama and its luxurious high-society interiors with Jews appearing as unpleasant interlopers quickly began to dominate the repertory. Suvorin's one-act comedy *Stock-market Fever* (*Birzhevaya goryachka*, 1896), for example, featured a gross Jewish banker, and M. N. Bukharin's melodrama *Izmail* (1898), a Jewish spy. No wonder, then, that, after its rejection by the Alexandra Theatre, Suvorin agreed to the anti-Semitic critic K. K. Skalkovsky's advice to stage *Sons of Israel* at the Theatre of the Literary-Artistic Society. He encountered resistance from an unexpected quarter, however. His leading man, Vasily Dalmatov, one of Russia's most distinguished character actors, refused to appear in the play, and, in an open letter to Krylov, reminded him that he, Dalmatov, had quit the Alexandra Theatre four years earlier "so as not to have to see you."<sup>27</sup>

Dalmatov, secure in his celebrity, could be outspoken in his refusal to associate himself with rabid anti-Semitism.<sup>28</sup> It must have taken greater courage for Kazimir Bravich to turn down his role in the play. After decades of toiling in the provinces, he had just joined Suvorin's St. Petersburg troupe, and his refusal jeopardized a career in the capital (indeed, the highly strung Bravich returned to the sticks the following year).<sup>29</sup> This scandalous behavior on the



part of actors was kept from leaking to the press, and Suvorin let the whole matter drop.

Productions mooted for the southern provinces similarly failed to reach the stage: when the actress Volgina tried to stage *Sons of Israel* in Odessa, a city populous in Jews, a regiment of Cossacks had to be called out. In Sevastopol, all the actors cast turned down their roles. In January 1900, the actor Travinsky announced a production for his benefit performance in Ekaterinoslav, but the regional chief of police would not allow it.<sup>30</sup> Throughout Russia, *Sons of Israel* was proving to be a dead letter.

It therefore came as a shock to theatrical St. Petersburg to learn, in September 1900, that Suvorin was making fresh plans to stage this play at the Maly. One of the theatre's directors, P. P. Gnedich, asked Suvorin why he wanted to put on such a badly written, rabble-rousing piece and was told that *Sons of Israel* was "no sillier than *La Princesse Lointaine*," and (better) there was a concept to it.<sup>31</sup> The decision to mount *Sons of Israel* was all the more surprising because, two months earlier, Suvorin's theatre had hosted *Tarelkin's Death*, which had prompted "an outburst of laughter and applause," and "a real ovation" when "inspector Raspluev in a delirium of policing exclaimed: 'Arrest all Russia!'"<sup>32</sup> Why, following such an "antipolice" production, and after over a year's neglect, had Litvin and Krylov's anti-Semitic scurrility been resurrected?

The answer may lie in the intensifying crisis over the Jews, not only in Russia but across Europe. The Dreyfus Affair had been brought to a boiling point by Zola's open letter, "J'accuse," and his trial for offending the French Army, in February 1898.<sup>33</sup> Suvorin and *New Times* led the anti-Dreyfusard forces in Russia, a partiality that nearly destroyed the publisher's friendship with Chekhov. Meanwhile, progressive-minded Russians found that a pro-Dreyfus stance offered a secure front behind which to protest pogroms and anti-Jewish legislation at home. The "Affaire" made it respectable for them to speak up for the Jews. This development provoked a reaction, the foundation in October 1900 of the Russian Assembly (*Russkoe sobranie*) of St. Petersburg, whose methods have been characterized as the "essence of Petersburg police patriotism."<sup>34</sup> The Assembly intended, by means of education and the diffusion of nationalist feeling, to combat "the spreading cosmopolitanism [i.e., sympathy with Jews] of the upper strata of Russian society." Hardening of right-wing opposition to Jewish civil rights can be discerned in Suvorin's appointment of Yury Dmitrievich Belyaev as theatre critic on *New Times*. Otherwise socially inert, Belyaev inserted anti-Semitic squibs into his column "Theatre and Music," while claiming to exalt aesthetics over political convictions.<sup>35</sup>

As gossip about the impending production of *Sons of Israel* circulated throughout the capital, a crisis of conscience began to be expressed in the ranks of an already divided theatre company. The character actor Kondrat Yakovlev,

who had excelled as the investigator Porfiry Petrovich in the Maly's *Crime and Punishment*, rejected his role as soon as he was cast, while the Jewish actor Yakov Tinsky, a specialist in romantic juveniles, refused at the dress rehearsal to act in the play, to what would be his certain discredit.<sup>36</sup> The crisis had not been resolved by Suvorin's appointment of Evtikhy Karpov, the man responsible for the botched premiere of *The Seagull* at the Alexandra in 1898, as the play's director. With a reputation as a reasonably progressive thinker, Karpov's agreement to take part in this retrograde undertaking raised eyebrows. He successfully prevented the defections of Yakovlev and Tinsky, but his authority was most seriously challenged by the opposition of the play's leading actress and her liberal following.

#### THE ACTRESS AND THE PRESS

If Suvorin fancied himself the cultural dictator of the Maly Theatre, he met his match in Lidiya Borisovna Yavorskaya (1871–1921).<sup>37</sup> The daughter of a Kiev police chief, she had been a controversial star at Korsh's private theatre in Moscow, appearing in such flashy French title roles as *La Dame aux camélias*, *L'Aiglon*, and *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Chekhov's youngest brother, Mikhail, recalled, "I was never a fan of her talent and especially disliked her voice, screechy and cracked as if she had a chronic sore throat. But she was an intelligent woman, progressive, and for her benefits would stage plays that seemed at the time 'racy.'" Anton Chekhov ignored the affectations and shrillness long enough to enjoy a brief fling with her, before channeling several of her traits into Arkadina in *The Seagull*.<sup>38</sup> He also recommended Yavorskaya to Suvorin, who engaged her and was gratified, if bemused, by her personal success in *La Princesse Lointaine*.

Suvorin was less pleased by her personal ambitions. Along the way, Yavorskaya had picked up a husband both useful and ornamental, Prince Vladimir Vladimirovich Baryatinsky, scion of a venerable strain of nobility; in so doing, Yavorskaya scandalized St. Petersburg's old guard. Baryatinsky had literary aspirations that he indulged as a theatrical correspondent to the Petersburg *Intelligencer* (*Vedomosti*), and, for a while, under the pseudonym Baron "On Dit," as the author of satirical sketches about high society in Suvorin's *New Times*. To advance his wife's career, Baryatinsky translated plays and began to write his own, and eventually founded the *Northern Courier* (*Severnny Kurier*), the only newspaper in Russia to pass as outspokenly liberal.<sup>39</sup>

Yavorskaya was cast as Sarra in *Sons of Israel*, an unusual choice since she rarely played ingénues, but one made, no doubt, to showcase the actress and secure good notices from her husband's paper. (Indeed, she had rehearsed the part in 1898, and it would have been unusual to replace an established actress in a distributed role.) Yavorskaya had asked to go over the part with the coauthor Krylov in order to achieve the proper tone. Consequently, director Karpov was surprised to receive a letter, dated 12 November 1900:

Highly esteemed Evtikhy Pavlovich! Having attentively reread the play *Sons of Israel*, I have come to the conclusion that on principle I cannot act in it. I consider this play an incitement to ethnic hatred and consequently a provocation of the worst instincts of the mob. I am sincerely sorry to have to turn down a role cast by you, but I think that in your heart of hearts you cannot but sympathize with me.

Yours respectfully L. Yavorskaya.<sup>40</sup>

When they met the next morning, Yavorskaya reiterated her resolve. Public opinion had altered since 1898, and, for an actress who cherished her reputation as a liberal, appearing in this libel would alienate much of her audience base.

In a letter to Suvorin, Karpov tried to exculpate himself by claiming that, while Krylov and Litvin wanted Yavorskaya as Sarra, he had always preferred Anna Domasheva, a former ballet dancer with a strong line in ingénues. Karpov's quandary was exacerbated when Baryatinsky's *Northern Courier* reported, that same day, that Yavorskaya had repudiated taking part in the play "in view of its tendentiousness, which has nothing in common with artistic literature or the tasks of art."<sup>41</sup> Since the internal dissensions in Suvorin's company had now been leaked by the press, Karpov took measures to reduce the Jew-baiting nature of *Sons of Israel*. With the consent of Litvin, he tried to lift the indictment from the whole Jewish people by retitling the play *Smugglers* (*Kontrabandisty*).<sup>42</sup> He began rehearsals using existing scripts, which he pruned of their grosser elements as he went along.

Yavorskaya's defection and her husband's journalistic sniping only stiffened Suvorin's determination to put on the play. To deflect adverse publicity, *New Times* published a statement that *Smugglers*, a play that the Theatre of the Literary-Artistic Society had accepted under that name, had nothing to do with *Sons of Israel*. This was refuted the next day by the *Northern Courier*, which heavily hinted that Suvorin had a hand in the cover-up.<sup>43</sup> *Smugglers* now became fair game for the press at large. Left-leaning papers sneered that the play's proper title should be "Bump Off the Yids." The popular columnist V. M. Doroshevich voiced an alleged demand of the Russian public that the actors refuse to perform: "Enough mud-slinging! Name-calling! Slanders! We don't want the stage turned into a podium for nastiness!"<sup>44</sup> The Jewish newspaper *Futurity* (*Budushchnost*) and the professional journal *Theatre and Art* (*Teatr i iskusstvo*) both printed histories of the play to that date, underlining its connection with Suvorin's various enterprises,<sup>45</sup> although the editor of *Theatre and Art*, Aleksandr R. Kugel, stated that with the change of title "the play is to a remarkable degree stripped of its tendentious character." That Kugel, an outspoken critic and himself a Jew (his first name was actually Avraam), should be so mealy-mouthed is explained by conflicts of interest: his wife was a member of Suvorin's acting company, and Kugel himself was a close friend of

Karpov, the play's director, and he sat on the board of artistic overseers of Suvorin's theatre.<sup>46</sup>

Konstantin Arabazhin, coeditor of the *Northern Courier*, unhampered by such involvements, concluded his detailed summary of the play with this peroration:

Up to now anti-Semitism has been the province of a few newspapers acting on the diffuse mind of the reader. Now it wants to influence in graphic form the feelings and imagination of the spectator. This is to widen the sphere of national intolerance and malice, which threatens the most grievous consequences. Stirring up passions and evil instincts of the mob, anti-Semitism on stage can lead to fresh pogroms.<sup>47</sup>

On the day of the opening, the play's coauthors, alarmed by so much adverse publicity, inserted a notice in *New Times* insisting that the play "has no tendentious bent, depicting only one small Jewish community."<sup>48</sup>

Stirred by these press stories and a flourishing word-of-mouth, the nerves of St. Petersburg were set on edge by the imminent premiere of *Smugglers*. The academic world was particularly excited: universities had long been a hotbed of political protest, and the student body opposed anti-Semitism, both as an attribute of the regime and an ideology of the past. Copies of the issue of *Historical Messenger* that contained the play were passed from hand to hand. Meetings to demand the closing of this offensive production were held at St. Petersburg University, the Higher Courses for Women, the Technological Institute and College of Mining, and at the Institutes of Communications and Civil Engineering. Even gymnasium seniors became involved, since they were habitués of Suvorin's theatre. (The retired gymnasium janitor, now an usher, would, for a tip, let students disguised in civilian clothes into the gallery, since high-school students were forbidden to attend anything but educational presentations.) Committees formed to coordinate information about the youth groups' plans rapidly congealed into a student front aiming to prevent the opening by means of a demonstration. As the theatre's box-office manager later testified, "During the sale of tickets an unusual demand was noticeable, for instance we would sell a block of twenty to thirty seats in the gallery; they explained they didn't care whether they could see or not, just [give 'em] the cheapest ones available. One student told me before the show: we won't let the curtain go up."<sup>49</sup>

The night before the premiere, student leaders met and distributed a document, which demonstrates both experience and foresight:

MINUTES  
MEETING OF THE "POLAR STAR" CLUB  
22 NOVEMBER 1900

## Theatre Survey

Present: members of the club (*in corpore*) and delegates of the Women's Higher Courses and the University, in all fourteen persons.

Agenda:

1. Report on the play *Smugglers*.
2. Report on the relation to the play of students' and workers' circles.

Resolved:

1. To prevent the performance of the play by any means necessary.
2. To distribute complimentary tickets and tickets paid for by private individuals among the various educational institutions and schools, so that women will not sit separate from men or be in a group apart. Groups must be of a mixed character.
3. Everyone individually to take care to bring noisemakers and whistles, but only such things as may be thrown on stage without harm to the well-being of the actors.
4. Not to begin or end the demonstration without a signal from the section leaders.
5. In case of expulsion from the auditorium and similar measures by the management, to try: imperceptibly to get rid of the things used in the demonstration, moreover to throw them away not in one's own group but under seats and benches of people who did not take part in the demonstration.
6. If interrogated, to say that participation was not organized but individual.
7. To strive by all means to come to aid of comrades, especially women.
8. Not to leave the auditorium until the performance is conclusively ruined.
9. To leave the theatre not one by one, but in groups, as far as possible.<sup>50</sup>

Yet, despite all these preparations and rumors, no one was quite sure what, if anything, would happen when the curtain went up on *Smugglers*.

### THE RIOT

Suvorin was not on hand for opening night.<sup>51</sup> Predictions of a demonstration had come to his ears and the publisher, as Gnedich recalled, was a man who "sidestepped excitement, considering that he had only a short time left to live and it wasn't worth complicating his life with needless nervous shocks. . . . So it was now: having heard that sirens and whistles were being prepared for S. Litvin's play, he, without a word to anyone, left for Moscow" (on Saturday, 18 November, ostensibly to visit Anton Chekhov). In his diary, Suvorin claims that he had every intention of returning for the dress rehearsal on Wednesday, but that Chekhov talked him out of it.<sup>52</sup> In his place, he left his son-in-law, the impassive and straitlaced Aleksey Kolomnin, co-administrator of the theatre.

A sold-out notice was hung on the box office on 23 November 1900, the day of the premiere. Arriving at the theatre that evening, people noticed that the police were gathered in large, but by no means extraordinary, numbers. They

had been summoned by Plyushchek-Plyushchevsky, the stage manager. University students without tickets milled about the building, while youthful ticket-holders and anyone poorly dressed had their ducats carefully verified. Peering through the spy-hole in the stage curtain, one police constable exclaimed, "The whole cast of the revolution is out there."<sup>53</sup>

At first, the audience waited tensely but quietly, scrutinizing one another in expectation of a performance that might occur off the stage. The strained silence was broken by a tumult that made the stall-holders leap out of their seats and stare up at the student-crammed gallery, but the disturbance arose, in fact, from a large number of persons breaking through the police cordon and rushing into the theatre. Although policemen immediately appeared in the hall and began to expel anyone without a ticket, the crowd kept shoving its way in, taking places by force, squeezing into the director's corner by the stage, and forming a dense column of bodies in the aisles leading to the pit. As calm was reimposed, the stall-holders shifted nervously in their seats. The gymnasium student Gorin-Goryainov turned to his neighbor and said: "I'm afraid we're too few. We outnumber the actors, we don't outnumber the audience. All of those overdressed stalls and boxes are our enemies." "You're wrong! Far from all. Many will come over to our side," was the prescient reply.

Ten minutes before curtain time, with every seat filled, the impatient began to clap their hands. At last, the first-act set was revealed, with the actors standing as far upstage as they could get. Doroshevich recalled that "the actors portraying Jews played in a purely music-hall manner, such as I've never seen on the dramatic stage."<sup>54</sup> Up in the gallery, the students waved their caps, banged their seats, and shook their fists at the actors, rattled by the flushed faces that leaned over the barrier, and roared, "Bring it down! Curtain! Off! Off!" The cry was taken up in the dress circle by "usually restrained persons . . . not at all like Petersburgers, starchy and chilly, but like explosive, expansive southerners."<sup>55</sup> Their conservative neighbors in the boxes and stalls added to the din by shouting back at them: "Shut up, you bastards! Throw them out!" and even "Kill the Yids." All the actors could do was gesticulate until obliterated by the fall of the curtain.

The hissing and booing were abetted by the shrill blast of boatswain's whistles, whose distribution Suvorin later attributed to Prince Baryatinsky, once a midshipman in the navy.<sup>56</sup> Someone pointed out that such nautical piping came from a box that held Yavorskaya, Baryatinsky, Arabazhin, and the seventy-five-year-old man of letters Danila Lukich Mordovtsev. The wrath of the stalls was now aimed at the actress: "Tramp, numbskull, throw her out of the theatre!" Arabazhin suggested that Mordovtsev leave, since it was unlikely the show would go on. "Not for the world," answered the old man. "I'll be the last to go! For me this is a triumph! I seldom attend the theatre, but I'm glad to witness *such* a manifestation, *such* a protest."<sup>57</sup> Yavorskaya, however, left almost immediately. Bewildered, the police shifted from group to group, and eventually

escorted one individual out of the hall. When one policeman, on the lookout for student culprits, ran over to Gorin-Goryainov and his companion, they quietly smiled and pointed to the stalls, whose occupants were making all the racket.

After twenty minutes of pandemonium, the curtain slowly rose again, to a smattering of applause and then dead silence, while background noise continued to filter in from the corridors. Twitchy and embarrassed, director Karpov emerged to plead for silence, but no sooner did he open his mouth when he was drowned out by more shouting, whistling, and cries of “Shame!”

ONE LADY: Utterly nasty! A filthy lampoon of a whole people. More persecution.

EVERYONE SHOUTS: Off! Aren't you ashamed to perform such nastiness! Down with it! Down with it! Down with it!<sup>58</sup>

As Karpov made an effort to shout the audience, an overshoe hit the stage. It was followed by a volley of cucumbers, potatoes, and onions, forcing him into the wings. Journalists report such outbursts as:

GRAY GENTLEMAN: It's high time we showed Suvorin that there are limits to his mischief-making.

AN INDIVIDUAL: It's easy enough to stop this, just call the police and arrest all the Jews.

LADY: A typically Russian solution. Haul 'em away and don't let 'em go. Even if you arrest the Jews, there'll be enough Russians left to whistle this filth off the stage. . . .<sup>59</sup>

When the auditorium eventually fell silent, the audience became aware that the noise in the corridors was an accompaniment to mass arrests and expulsions. Tension increased in both stalls and gallery. Someone made for an exit, but returned immediately; no one was being allowed to leave. Spectators abandoned their seats, gathered in groups, and began demanding that the play be changed or money refunded.

“Was it tactical on the part of the management to persist in going on with the show after a protest had been so clearly expressed?” a reporter would later ask.<sup>60</sup> In fact, during this hectic hour and a half, the usually even-tempered Kolomnin, whom Suvorin had left in charge, could not make up his mind what to do. He paced the auditorium and backstage area, pale as death, hands and lips trembling. “I told Aleksey Sergeevich that *Smugglers* shouldn't be staged,” Gnedich, seated at the director's desk, tactlessly remarked. “Well, of course it shouldn't!” Kolomnin retorted. “But the old man's stubborn, you can't talk him out of things. He was right to go away, and now he's sitting at the Slav Bazaar restaurant. If he were here, he'd have a fit.”<sup>61</sup> Barely recovered from a serious illness, Kolomnin decided to change the play, but, by telephone, a police official

in the City Provost's office gave the order to carry on, no matter what. Informed of this, the actors were hesitant to face the barrage of green-grocery that had assaulted Karpov. The police official gave the order to station a squadron of constables at all the exits, both behind the scenes and on the stage itself. Meanwhile, in the street outside the theatre, firemen with torches, platoons of mounted gendarmes, and the general public began to collect in ever greater numbers. No one was allowed near the playhouse, but crowds gathered on a nearby embankment.

For the fourth time that night, the curtain went up, but no sooner had the terrified actors come on when they were met with more whistles and shouts. Spectators sitting along the sides could see constables stationed behind the scenes, and when the vegetable bombardment began again, the targets were not the actors but the police. A direct hit was welcomed with roars of laughter and applause and, for a moment, a sense of sport overwhelmed political feelings. The actors crept upstage, as rotten eggs and apples, carrots, and heads of garlic bounced off the canvas backcloth. When a constable attempted to remove a coed from the gallery, he was tripped up, and the two of them fell to the floor. As he seized her by the hair and laboriously dragged her, screaming, toward an exit, the spectators hastened to her aid. More policemen rushed through the doors to intercept them, and the battle was joined.<sup>62</sup>

In the ensuing chaos and din, the occupants of the stalls hurled opera glasses and bunches of keys on the stage, then rose and turned their backs on it. Employees of *New Times* encouraged the actors with applause and pointed out to the police those in the house they should arrest. The police, infiltrating the gallery and the dress circle, decided to end the matter peremptorily. They sped to their designated victims, who were yanked from their seats, beaten, and chucked down the stairs. By this time, it was obvious that there was no way to clear the hall of disruptive elements and go on with the show. The better part of the audience (not unlike the crowd gathered on the Odessa steps in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*) was torn between sympathy for the demonstrators, hatred of the police, and fear for its own skin. In this bedlam, people began to run in all directions, enabling many demonstrators to mingle with the crowd and slip away unnoticed.

At 9:30 that evening, the iron fire curtain was finally let down. The demonstration had lasted two hours. As the audience streamed out of the theatre, now surrounded by armed cavalry, a group of elegant French-speakers sporting silver cigar-holders expressed sympathy with the demonstrators: "The actors deserve a good beating." Meanwhile, the actors, still in their makeup, were escorted by the police through a back door leading to Apraksin market. Exhilarated, a crowd of students jeered at the constables: "Why don't you take out your sabers or your cats-o'-nine-tails?" "What for? The police'll make a report, and the authorities will see to it." Another crowd stood on the Fontanka side of the embankment out of harm's way, shouting: "Hey, you, cops, try out



your whips on us!”<sup>63</sup> Other overheard comments included: “But yesterday in *New Times* they wrote that it’s all the Jews’ doing.” “Of course, they have to take evasive action. And still it’s a good lesson. Even for us it’s been a glorious shock.”<sup>64</sup> In the course of the riot, seventy-two persons had been arrested in the theatre, forty-three of them students. A few days later, nearly a hundred more were apprehended, although most of those were soon released.<sup>65</sup>

#### THE AFTERMATH

The press the next day was sharply divided, although the word used to describe the event by reporters of whatever stripe was *nebyvaly* (unwonted, unprecedented). The progressives regarded the demonstration as a victory. The reactionaries praised the play’s depiction of Jewish hypocrisy and attributed the scandal to revolutionary hooligans spurred on by Jews and Jew-lovers. *New Times* branded the demonstrators a “mob of brawlers,” who “knocked the caps off the constables because the latter bravely tried not to allow them to terrorize the theatre.”<sup>66</sup> The paper’s theatre critic, Belyaev, was indulgent to the play’s aesthetic faults and accepted *Smugglers* as an entirely appropriate depiction of the seamy side of life. The paper would later review every new production of what it called a “brilliant” play, as well as print excerpts from anti-Semitic “letters from readers.” An article in the *Petersburg Blade* (*Peterburgsky listok*) laid all the blame on the Jews;<sup>67</sup> although even the reporting agent of the Okhrana had to admit, “If they were to tell you that last night’s demonstration bore a Jewish character, don’t believe it unconditionally: Jews were in a minority.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, of the seventy-two persons arrested on the spot, only seventeen were Jewish.

University students regarded the *Blade* article as a provocation: two classes staged a walkout, discussed measures to prove that the Jews were blameless, and collected signatures. Speeches emphasized the mischievous nature of a play staged specifically “with the intention of mocking Jews and exposing them to hatred.” A sympathetic demonstration for Yavorskaya was planned, if she were willing (“I’m flattered,” she replied), and handbills attacking Suvorin were distributed.

Suvorin returned home at noon the day after the riot, but was unable to consult with Kolomnin, who, after a sleepless night, had gone to the Senate to defend a lawsuit. Suvorin decided to treat the whole matter as a joke and, sitting down to write his editorial for *New Times*, avoided any mention of the protest, declaring the play to be merely “light-hearted nonsense, a vaudeville.” He insisted that all nationalities in the Russian empire deserved literary treatment—repulsive types (“Jews or Armenians or Greeks or Tatars”) not excluded. “We are all too prone to exaggerate,” he observed, stating that *Smugglers* had “seemed” to the audience “to be a fantasy, of course, a rather crude one.”<sup>69</sup> At three o’clock, Suvorin was putting the finishing touches to this leader when he was informed that Kolomnin had just died of a heart attack in the *New Times* bookshop. Suvorin, who had always relied on his son-in-law as a fount of sense

and support, was deeply shaken and began to regard the scandal with new eyes. He discarded his facetious editorial, now convinced that his dearest kinsman and colleague had been slain by the riot. Behind it all, he was sure, were Yavorskaya and her husband, the editor of the *Northern Courier*.

Meanwhile, the government initiated stern measures. On Saturday, 25 November, the Ministry of the Interior issued a circular ordering the press to mention neither the play *Smugglers* nor the scandal. The minister, Dmitry Sipyagin, justified his action to his absent junior, P. N. Durnovo: "One of the reasons that prompted me to call a halt to newspaper polemics over the excitement created by the theatrical riot is the danger that the newspapers will raise the Jewish question and exacerbate the situation so much that it will be difficult to correct things by the usual means."<sup>70</sup> Suvorin, for whom freedom of the press was more important than anything else, wrote a sharp criticism of the circular and suggested that if further performances were permitted, the tickets would be distributed only to known individuals, which would guarantee order. He believed that the worst thing the government could do in the present state of unrest was to prohibit *Smugglers* or to muzzle the *Northern Courier* (which, in his opinion, should be tried like the arrested students) and thus make martyrs out of Baryatinsky and Yavorskaya. Minister Sipyagin, whom Suvorin would later call an "obtuse idiot," tabled the matter while awaiting his junior's return to St. Petersburg.<sup>71</sup>

Chided by the government for putting on the play and by the theatre's management for not allowing tickets to be booked solely by subscription, Suvorin vented his own spleen on the mutinous students who, in his view, were swinish children who had besmirched the honor of their parents. Their gatherings had been indulged by the rector of St. Petersburg University, who now requested them to stop agitating "while waiting for the trial of their comrades in detention." The rector pointed out that all plays undergo a double censorship, once for publication and once for performance, and that a third censorship by students was unnecessary.

On 27 November, the walkouts, which had involved nearly two thousand people, were suppressed and thirty-two students expelled. The Minister of Education and the Minister of the Interior proposed to close the university in the event of further agitation; if the unrest were to spill out of the building into the streets, Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky wired the Minister of Education, steps would be taken "to suppress it decisively." Since Svyatopolk-Mirsky was commander of the Gendarme Corps and prefect of the police, as well as a junior minister in the Interior Department, his concise phrase implied gunshots, whips, and the forcible recruitment of students into the army.

High society manifested its opposition to the demonstration, the Jews, and the student protests. Masses of letters poured into *New Times*. As Minister Sipyagin had feared, the Jewish question had suddenly been thrust to the

forefront of public attention, embarrassing “right-thinking” citizens who would have preferred to keep it subliminal. Otherwise intelligent individuals found themselves in the conservative camp when it came to open support of Jews. The refined critic and director Akim Volynsky, for example, noted, “Strange as it seems, at the time all this bred in me nothing but disgust. When the Jewish question becomes worthy of the streets and a subject for demonstrations with banners, [ ] grief awakes in my soul. I do not believe in the Semitic sympathies of the self-seeking combatants.”<sup>72</sup> In Moscow, the administrator of the imperial theatres, Telyakovsky, who had disapproved of staging *Smugglers* and yet believed the “disgraceful” demonstration had been organized by “Yids,” spoke for many educated persons when he opined:

It was a matter for the press and public to express themselves in writing about the play, but to allow such a scandal is just one more proof of how powerful the Jews are and what audacious acts they are capable of in a city where they have no legal right to live (except for those in the civil service). I am surprised that the police did not take swift and energetic measures and did not post a division of 20-30 men. This scandal is unprecedented, and now, of course, it will be a sorry thing if Suvorin removes this play from the repertory and thereby proves that by censoring Jewish plays he acknowledges not only the government’s but the Yid censorship as well.<sup>73</sup>

Much of the opprobrium was laid on Yavorskaya. The prima donna of the Alexandra Theatre, Maria Savina, pitied Suvorin and could not find words to express her annoyance with that “bitch” (*merzavka*): “Of course that hussy should be thrown out of the place.”<sup>74</sup> Closer to home, the actors of Suvorin’s theatre were badly divided over Yavorskaya’s behavior. Those who would have preferred to drop out of *Smugglers* were envious that, wealthy and well-connected, she could allow herself the luxury of open rebellion; others objected to her political drumbeating during rehearsals. In either case, her actions showed disloyalty to her comrades. Several actors signed a statement that they no longer cared to work with Yavorskaya.<sup>75</sup> The distinguished comedian Mikhailov, himself something of a troublemaker, admitted that they had no idea whether Yavorskaya played any active part in the demonstration, but added:

When they threw eggs at us, galoshes and opera-glasses, she should have come to us and said, “My comrades, they are insulting the innocent, and I want to be with you.” Instead she sat in a box and accepted applause from those very persons who insulted us. That’s what drives us to sign the protest. We made our decision not in the heat of anger but calmly, two days later, and we think we are right.<sup>76</sup>

Suvorin showed little sympathy for the actors’ complaints: “When soldiers go into battle, they don’t say ‘There’s someone in our midst with whom we don’t want to go. Get rid of him first.’”<sup>77</sup> He was loath to grant actors the right to expel colleagues, and chose to put the matter before the general assembly of the Literary-Artistic Society.

On 1 December, Suvorin vouchsafed Yavorskaya a private interview of three hours to present a reasoned explanation of her behavior. Asserting a mere difference of opinion, she denied organizing the demonstration and laid the blame on Jewish bankers and “500 Yids who came to Petersburg on that day.”<sup>78</sup> Almost abjectly, the actress pointed out that her husband’s *Northern Courier* had carried an article against Jewish nationalism (without mentioning that a disclaimer of the article had been published almost immediately). Yavorskaya attributed the demonstration to *New Times*’ earlier attacks on student activism.

How candid was Yavorskaya’s explanation? In Russia, the most she would admit to was that, “I wished with all my heart that the play fail and be hissed—and that’s all.”<sup>79</sup> In Paris in 1902, however, she told an interviewer that her reasons for giving up her role were indeed political.<sup>80</sup> The firmness of her political conviction is open to question. Usually her actions were calculated to promote her celebrity and fortify her popularity. Refusing her role “bore the obvious stamp of publicity,” according to Aleksandr Kugel, editor of *Theatre and Art*.<sup>81</sup> The critic Akim Volynsky was only one of many who considered her actions part of her pose as the Lady Bountiful of liberal causes: “How could L. V. Yavorskaya turn her back on such an opportunity—to shine before the mob in the mantle of civic benefactress of those with whom she had nothing in common.”<sup>82</sup>

Whatever her motives, the day after Yavorskaya’s meeting with Suvorin, thirty-seven actors in the Maly troupe presented the management with a statement, based on “reliable sources,” asserting that the actress had indeed been involved in “preparing the disturbing, unexampled demonstration which took place at the first performance of *Smugglers*, a demonstration humiliating and insulting to each of us.” They requested that she leave the company at once.<sup>83</sup> Soviet historians have claimed that Suvorin put pressure on the actors to demand her expulsion, but it is clear from contemporary documents that, in an untenable position himself, he was not the prime mover. Peppered with exculpatory letters from Yavorskaya, he burst out,

What an excruciating female. She’s not responsible for anything! It’s not her fault, but that of the enemies who persecute her. . . . She refuses to understand a thing. I’ll have to leave the theatre. It’s impossible to run it with the help of a few leaders. When there’s a hit, the shareholders make money. When there’s a flop, I bear the costs. Very profitable. If the theatre were mine [*sic*], I’d end this business with Yavorskaya in two hours. But now it drags on endlessly.<sup>84</sup>

In fact, the General Assembly of the Theatre revealed dissension in the ranks, and the matter did drag on until 25 February 1901. Then the vote to expel Yavorskaya was thirty-two for, twenty-nine against, a parity that suggests the depth of the rift within the company. The cause given for her expulsion was that she had broken her contract, a flimsy pretext since Yavorskaya served under a

verbal agreement. Outwardly sorry for the decision, Suvorin was inwardly relieved by her departure.<sup>85</sup>

The other action taken against the Baryatinskys was one Suvorin had anticipated and deplored: the police suppressed the *Northern Courier* for having allegedly played the leading part in organizing the demonstration. Yavorskaya and her husband had long suspected that Suvorin was angling for this closure, and they were not alone. The liberals assumed that his political connections and invulnerability had engineered it. The Bolshevik journal *Spark (Iskra)* remarked, "Among our press only Mr. Suvorin must feel like celebrating. Thanks to the involvement of his friends in the police he is allowed, untrammelled, to corrupt the Russian public—both from the stage and from the pages of his newspaper."<sup>86</sup> Prince Baryatinsky, who had nearly half a million rubles tied up in his ruinous publishing ventures, tried to shoot himself. The wound turned out to be superficial, and the ill-fated publisher "of the first fundamentally liberal newspaper," as he called it, soon recovered.

In the meantime, the same confederation of students from institutions of higher learning that had planned the demonstration collected fifteen hundred signatures and, on 9 December, four formal protests were lodged. One was against Suvorin and the theatre management (a petition to the Writer's Union, to be presented by student delegates, demanding a court of honor to try the xenophobia and defamation diffused by the editor of *New Times*). The second protest was directed at the police, the third at their interrogations, and the fourth (to be sent to the Theatrical Society) at the actors who took part in the performance. The authorities took all this very seriously, indeed, police records noted, "The students again showed themselves to be an organized force, protesting not against some individual incident or episode, but against the government regime and the powers that be."<sup>87</sup>

Police prefect Svyatopolk-Mirsky considered a trial would be beneficial to public tranquility, so, accordingly, Criminal Case no. 3171, "On disturbing the peace and order at the Maly Theatre," was inscribed in the Petersburg docket for 11–12 December 1900. Of the seventy-two accused, forty-six were bound over for trial (forty-four had been jailed for four days, two for a week), twenty-one were brought before a justice of the peace, and five cases were remanded for further investigation.<sup>88</sup> When the cases came up for appeal on 26 January 1901, the accused behaved like victorious champions. They were defended by the crusading advocates Berenshtam and Karabchesky, who pointed out the provocative nature of the police arresting anyone who "looked like a Jew." Karabchesky, in his address to the jury, insisted, "The disorders at the Maly Theatre are an important event for the study of Russian culture, and the youths who took part in them can always recall them with pride."<sup>89</sup> In his own defense, a *Privatdocent*<sup>90</sup> of the university, Mikhail Yulevich Goldshtein, was exceptionally eloquent. A distinguished chemist and a Jew, he pointed out that

his duty was not only to educate, but also to edify the young in a spirit of truth and the need to protest against injustice. He had gone to the theatre to provide an example: "I did not whistle because I had no whistle, but if I had had five thousand whistles at that time, I would have blown them all." Goldshtein ended his speech with the comment that he feared no punishment meted out for his convictions, words which, according to an official from the Petersburg provost's office, "made a powerful impression on the young people." A police agent noted that if a harsh verdict were not handed down, "They will organize you a more serious parade than the one on the 23rd." The original sentences were confirmed. Goldshtein was stripped of his lectureship and exiled to Archangelsk, where he was brutally murdered in 1905 by Black Hundred hooligans, during a riot over a new manifesto prohibiting police interference in universities.<sup>91</sup>

#### THE REVIVALS

Dismayed though he might be by the government's ham-fisted attempts at repression, Suvorin was ultimately pleased by the discomfiture of his enemies (Baryatinsky he deemed a "motley fool," Yavorskaya "a liar and a slyboots"). Even though he thought *Smugglers* a mediocre play full of "Krylovian stupidities and vulgarities," he was eager to reopen it to show that he could not be cowed by Jews and liberals: "It must be staged both in order to stop the talk about it and to tell the pack of scandalmongers that they are wrong, that there is nothing inadmissible in it. If the public doesn't like it, it can proscribe the play by not attending and, at worst, hissing it." On 22 December 1900, he visited the Minister of the Interior and requested permission to reopen the play, without further interference from the police. Sipyagin gave his consent, remarking, "If we [i.e., government officials] can allow *The Inspector General* to be staged, then the Jews can put up with *Smugglers*." The next day, Suvorin called a rehearsal under his own supervision, in which he deleted the Yiddish accents and made a few other minor changes. There were nearly two hundred persons at the rehearsal, but they did not include the coauthors or the play's original director, Karpov.

Karpov knew about the university unrest at first hand: his son, a student, had been thrown down a flight of stairs for trying to defend his father's actions on the opening night. When he heard that Suvorin was planning a revival, the director sent Suvorin a letter that is worth quoting at length.

Lift from my soul the nightmare which has kept me from sleeping a whole month long, tormenting me horribly, let me know your final decision about staging *Smugglers*.

The expulsion of thirty-two persons from Petersburg University as a repercussion of what happened at the Maly Theatre, the closure of *The Northern Courier*, the ferment among the students has convinced me once and for all that I have to leave the Maly Theatre if the play *Smugglers* goes

onstage. I'm convinced that it can't go on without a scandal, the facts say as much, and the assurances of those who say that it will go smoothly is decidedly unfounded, let alone the *police* assurances, which I don't believe for a minute. Nor do I believe that once the disorders begin, the students will be treated indulgently. If in Kiev four hundred persons were expelled and two hundred drafted as soldiers,<sup>92</sup> then in Petersburg they will do the same. I can consider such measures neither indulgent nor just, however guilty the young people may be. And when I think of those four hundred families bereaved of children—I'm horrified! In our day students used to be expelled for walkouts, exiled to their homes and families.<sup>93</sup> And of course for the majority this exile to home and hearth had a beneficial effect. But to turn them *en masse* into soldiers, to exile them without a trial and investigations to Kwantang province—this is something unheard-of in its depraved cruelty. Even under Nicholas I people were drafted into the army individually and in special cases. To draft a whole university into the army—that's the acme of indulgence. I've heard from fully trustworthy sources that a census will be made of the first walkout at the university and its participants drafted into the army. Lord, what's going on?!! And after this can one seriously say or even think that the Maly Theatre, at ministerial behest, has got to stage *Smugglers*, and start a war with the younger generation!

For a war with the younger generation the Hon. Minister has such tried-and-true means as the military, Cossacks, cats-o'-nine-tails and so on. Let them do the fighting without the aid of the theatre! And what can one say seriously about a society that looks on calmly while its hope, its children, are drafted *en masse* into the army because they (rightly or wrongly—that's another question) stand up for the honor of their insulted comrades. And the press is forced to sit with sewn-up mouths and by order of the Hon. Minister insert a report concocted by the police about the student disorders, while thousands of young people are already being shipped off to Port Arthur.

I beg you, in the name of Christ, Aleksey Sergeevich, *irrevocably* decide one way or another whether *Smugglers* is to be produced and let me know your final decision. Give me the possibility either to quit the theatre or calmly go about my business, which demands a great deal of hard work and energy.

Knowing you, your goodness, intelligence and your ardent love for Russian youth, whatever your enemies may say, I'm convinced that you will understand me and not judge harshly my unconditional decision, prompted exclusively by my conscience, without any admixture of personal animus.<sup>94</sup>

The next day Karpov received a sharp rebuke from his employer and resolved to resign from Suvorin's theatre, a decision he had actually taken the day after the demonstration.<sup>95</sup>

In the face of this resistance, Suvorin chose his moment carefully. The Grand Duke Konstantin had requested him not to reopen *Smugglers* on 30

December, a benefit performance for the Theatrical Society. At seven o'clock on New Year's Day 1901, Suvorin arrived at the theatre and sent for some of the actors. Half an hour later, when most of the audience was in place, he announced to the company that *The Merry Days of Raspluev* would be replaced by *Smugglers*. When the stage manager made the announcement of the substitution, allegedly owing to the illness of a leading player, the news was received by the spectators with a noisy and prolonged ovation. Only fifteen persons returned their tickets, among them seven students and two "Jewish types," according to a police informant. "The play proceeded with great success and without the slightest protest," *New Times* reported the next day.<sup>96</sup> Although the Minister of the Interior was annoyed that he had not been informed in advance, and neither had the police, who were prepared "to save the fatherland from revolution,"<sup>97</sup> a week later *Smugglers* was played to an audience of specially invited guests—princes, dukes, counts, senators—who greeted it with applause. The play entered the theatre's repertory and was repeated for a few months without incident, chalking up twenty-two performances in all.<sup>98</sup>

Although a production of *Smugglers* at the actress Maria Poiré's poorly regarded Theatre of Melodrama at the Moscow Aquarium in October 1901 passed uneventfully,<sup>99</sup> subsequent performances in the provinces continued to provoke demonstrations. Russian anti-Semites welcomed this malicious depiction of Judaism (the unreconstructed script *Sons of Israel* was often used), while the intelligentsia and liberal thinkers condemned the staging of the play as an incitement to pogroms. Their repeated appeals to the police to stop productions were ignored, since the authorities were inclined to promote libels on the Jews. Consequently, wherever *Smugglers* was performed—Smolensk, Orel, Kishinev, Tiflis, little Kursk, or big Kiev—violent demonstrations took place, which largely replicated what had gone on at Suvorin's theatre in St. Petersburg. The upper galleries would be closed, but Jewish spectators and university students, along with a smattering of well-informed Russians, would hiss and hoot and demand the removal of this libel on a whole people. In response, the privileged members of the audience would rise as "mutineers," applaud every line, demand that the show go on, and, according to newspaper reportage, "part of the public in the front rows would point out protestors to the police." Less refined anti-Semites would shout "Beat up the Jews!" and fight with the protestors. The latter would be arrested and legal proceedings set in motion against Jews charged with disturbing the peace. The newspaper reviews invariably sported the title "Unwonted [or "Full-scale"] Riot."

Each town's protest had its own distinguishing features, however. In Saratov (March 1901), anonymous appeals were distributed asking the vice-governor to ban the performance, the actors to refuse to act in the play, and society to stay away: "The only goal of the play appears to be a desire to ignite hatred of the Russian people against a persecuted nation. And such a desire is



understandable: those who profit by the contemporary social and political status, actually strive to divert from itself the people's displeasure, directing it anywhere at all, not least at the unhappy Jews."<sup>100</sup> All decent people, the appeal concluded, would therefore choose to stay away. In Smolensk (April 1901), a Jewish dentist went to the chief of police and demanded that the play be forbidden, but was refused. In Yalta, posters were torn down. In Novozybkov, the controversy led to the governor's banning the play and then lifting his ban. In Pskov (November 1901), the protestors were led by a group of "politically unreliable" exiles. In Orel, Rabbi Yakov Katsenelson took part. At his ensuing trial, the counsel for the defense argued:

The play inflames the national passions, and makes the ethnic traits of a people the object of ridicule and mockery—of a people, moreover, which is denied equal rights and has no means of voicing its protest. The production of such a play should never have been permitted, the more so since the police were well acquainted with the agitated state of the public mind.<sup>101</sup>

Courts found such arguments unconvincing. The article of Russian law that forbade the "incitement of one part of the population against the other" lost its validity whenever the "other part" was the Jews.

A powerful separatist climate in the Caucasus that hoped to sever Georgia (Gruzinia) from Russia provided a salient reason for the local authorities to feel threatened by public outbursts. As the centennial anniversary of Georgia's union with Russia drew near, the movement for an independent Gruzinian monarchy grew in strength. There the "instigators of the disorders" against performances of *Smugglers* were usually hotheaded Georgian students expelled from Russia, inspired by the popular actor Lado Meskhishvili, who had been educating the theatregoing public in the liberalism of classic European drama.

Radzevich's Russian troupe touring Kutaisi tried to stage *Sons of Israel* on 16 April 1902. At the start of the second act, students rioted, threw rotten eggs onto the stage, broke chairs, and strewed the floor with snuff soaked in chlorine, causing a fit of sneezing. The show had to be stopped. In the street, a crowd of about a thousand collected. As the police, aided by a military unit, tried to disperse the demonstrators, hand-to-hand skirmishes broke out, and many were wounded. Finally, nearly two hundred persons were arrested and "the instigators" turned over for trial. As the police report emphasized, "by nationality all were natives," that is, Georgians, not Jews. The trial was conducted by a special tribunal without the participation of lawyers, where the detainees were accused not of disturbing the peace but of resisting arrest, which allowed for more severe punishment.<sup>102</sup>

On the night of 14 May, handbills were distributed describing the measures the authorities had taken in and around the theatre. The leaflets ended

with a call to rise up against government despotism. The managers of the Kutaisi theatre were served with a police injunction:

In view of the disorder in the theatre and in the interest of preventing a repetition of disorders made by means of unattached and unscrewed seats, as well as other unfortunate events, I, Kutaisi chief of police, Staff-Captain Lisovsky, declare: that the civic playhouse be closed and no performances be allowed in the near future until the above order is rescinded in writing.<sup>103</sup>

Once the seats were fastened with cords, however, performances resumed. On 5 May, the Russian troupe acted *Sons of Israel* with policemen seated throughout the hall and stationed in the street. Despite the measures taken by the authorities, a clash between spectators and police stopped the show after the first act. When this same troupe tried to stage *Smugglers* in Batum, with similar precautions, local workmen trashed the performance.<sup>104</sup>

Demonstrations during the production of *Smugglers* in Caucasian Stavropol led to a trial that lasted nearly a year. A hall, packed with officials and constables, had turned the play into a judophobic demonstration, against which only one spectator tried to protest, a Jew named Sanzhur. After he had been arrested and charged with disturbing the peace, Sanzhur demanded that the governor and vice-governor be called into court as witnesses. Offended by this slur on his authority, the governor obtained a special order from the Minister of the Interior for Sanzhur's two-year exile to another city, under police surveillance "for impertinent behavior." The outrageous treatment of Sanzhur did not become public knowledge for another two years, by which time it had lost its topicality and simply evoked a shrug from the progressive press.

For the monarchical brutes, the Black Hundred, *Smugglers* represented the same kind of graphic and inspiring rallying point that *The Birth of a Nation* was to be for the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. The Black Hundred revived the play at the People's House, a working-class club in Kiev in 1906, as did the "Two Headed Eagle" group in 1913 in Ekaterinoslav, but only with difficulties. As the Eagle's newsletter complained, "The production of *Smugglers*, which marks a gratifying fact in the life of the Russian theatre, contributes greatly to the credit of our patriotic youth, all the more since they had to overcome not only a mass of technical difficulties, but also the irrationality of stupid people."<sup>105</sup> In other words, because of a Jewish boycott, not a single publisher would print the play or a single theatre agree to stage it, so for the Black Hundred, the real obstructionists were Jews and their "helpers" — the police.

#### THE REPERCUSSIONS

The condition of the Jews hardly changed for the better because of the *Smugglers* riots. Higher-education quotas were tightened in 1901, for example,

when Jewish children who had graduated from the lowest six grades of the gymnasium were forbidden to go on to advanced classes until there was a vacancy within the allotted Jewish percentile—"a truly miraculous contingency," one historian ironically remarks.<sup>106</sup> A pogrom in Nikolaev at Easter seemed another step backward. In addition, when the Second All-Russian Congress of Theatre Workers met in Moscow in March, most Jewish delegates who had attended the First Congress were now absent, because the governor-general refused to issue them temporary residence visas. As the Congress debated whether Jewish members of the Theatrical Society were entitled to employment in the profession, the venerated actress Strepetova argued that only extraordinary talents should be admitted, since "we've got" enough ordinary actors, and "this inundation can have a baneful effect on the well-being of the Russian actor's world in the very near future. Why inundate the Russian stage with Jewish people and accents, unfit even for the artistic pronunciation of Russian speech; why deprive Russian actresses and actors of a crust of bread in their own homeland, Russia?"<sup>107</sup> Fiery speeches by Kugel of *Theatre and Art* and a few others brought about preliminary approval of the clause guaranteeing Jews the right to work, but a spate of judophobic orations, calling for a crusade, defeated it, 170 to 117.<sup>108</sup> A month later, Suvorin published an editorial that claimed that the clause in question "opened all eyes" to "Jewish cunning:" "Scratch an actor's Russian name and you'll discover a Jew beneath it. . . . The more of them there are, with the help of the aforementioned clause, they'll convert all theatres into Berdichev."<sup>109</sup>

That *Smugglers* enjoyed enough financial success and public favor to enter Suvorin's repertory suggests that, although Petersburg audiences of 1900 were capable of periodic outbursts against anti-Semitism, they were not ready for day-to-day resistance. Still, the largely negative *Smugglers* affair had some positive effects. Through it, for example, civic politics and social conscience penetrated the hitherto hermetic world of the theatre. How was an actor to proceed if a role in which he was cast ran counter to his convictions? What would happen if a management selected a reactionary play and actors refused to appear in it? The balkiness of Dalmatov and Yavorskaya, and Karpov's troubled conscience, heralded a more general reconsideration of the theatre's responsibility to the wider world.

The riot also made the authorities reluctant to approve similar works. In 1901, heeding rumors of unrest caused by Albert Guinon's *Décadence*, a French play that satirized the rise of the Rothschilds, an official from the Department of the Press attended the dress rehearsal at Suvorin's theatre and reported to a special session of the Departmental Council, which revoked the play's license as a censor's oversight. Owing to its negative depiction of Jews, Minister of the Interior Sipyagin informed the tsar, "The performance of the play is undesirable, for its subject may give rise to demonstrations in the audience,"<sup>110</sup> and it was proscribed both for the capitals and the provinces. (A Russian minister coming

out against an anti-Semitic play is a rare enough occurrence to deserve special mention.)

“The spirit of *Smugglers*” (*Dukh kontrabandistov*), a catchphrase denoting hostile reactions to stage anti-Semitism, haunted theatrical censors. A report on P. Kholostov’s *Eclipse* (*Zatmenie*, 1903), which “smartly and ruthlessly thrashes the Jews,” concluded, “Recalling the disorders caused by the performance of *Smugglers*, it is impossible not to foresee that the appearance of this squib on a stage must lead to serious riots.”<sup>111</sup> Even Suvorin seemed chastened. He suggested that the Jew be portrayed onstage not in his usual guise “as a motley fool, butchering the Russian language, a lousy coward and spy, raising the mirth and scorn of the mob.” Rather, he argued, “Let the Jew speak proper Russian or with only a barely perceptible accent. One must see the Jew in his domestic setting, with his grief and joys, with his faults and virtues, with his Kahal, which must be fought against for the general prospects of civilization.”<sup>112</sup> He tried to excise anti-Semitic themes from his theatre’s repertory, even from foreign plays such as Charles Marlowe’s *When Knights Were Bold*, and he agreed to stage *Two Worlds* by the Zionist Max Nordau, although this was purely commercial speculation on his part.

How far matters had come could be measured when Suvorin tried to impose his play *The Slap* (*Poshchechina*) on the theatre in 1907. The talented young leading man Pavel Baratov, a Jew whose real name was Brenner, refused to play the central role of a venal Jewish newspaper editor. Baratov’s prominence in the company was itself a sign that the winds of opinion had shifted. Suvorin capitulated and relegated the play to the Alexandra, which accepted but never staged it.<sup>113</sup>

Elsewhere in Russian society, “the spirit of *Smugglers*” resonated loudly, indicating an almost seismic shift in public opinion. Newspaper articles and actors’ protests would have been incapable of producing such an open and tempestuous resistance in audiences if a sentiment receptive to protest had not already existed. In such a climate, reactionary forces resorted to provocation in their own defense. Had the play been staged in the 1870s or 1880s, it might have gone unnoticed, but on the cusp of the twentieth century it seemed a strange atavism, a weapon of a hated regime and a challenge to progressive reform. It may be going too far to say, as a French journalist did, that this symbolic moment triggered the political disturbances in St. Petersburg afresh, or, as Kugel declared, that the riots occasioned by *Hernani* and *Thermidor* were by comparison innocent.<sup>114</sup> At the time, however, the factions both of reaction and of reform perceived the events that accompanied performances of *Smugglers* as the prelude to a serious upheaval. Two days after the riot, for example, Suvorin’s mind reverted to the tumultuous reign of Alexander II, when he observed, “Something is growing in society, which powerfully reminds me of the 1860’s.”<sup>115</sup> Twenty years later, in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution,

Kugel saw the play's political significance more clearly: the *Smugglers* affair, he said, may merely have been "the instruments tuning-up before the overture. But one felt that the orchestra was a powerful one, capable of playing a mighty symphony."<sup>116</sup>

ENDNOTES

1. For a brief survey of English examples, see Sir St. Vincent Troubridge, "Theatre Riots in London," in M. St. Clare Byrne, ed., *Studies in English Theatre History in Memory of Gabrielle Enthoven, O.B.E.* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1952), 84–97.
2. Even Soviet theatre historians, affected by a pervasive if covert anti-Semitism, barely mentioned the riots in standard works, limiting themselves to an allusion to a "reactionary play." See, e.g., S. S. Danilov, *Istoriya russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1944), 417; E. A. Dubnova, *Chastnye teatry Moskvy i Peterburga. Russkaya khudozhestvennaya kultura* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), 3: 148; N. Levin, "Pervoe vystuplenie," *Pskovskaya pravda* (1976): 4.
3. Under the legal code approved by Catherine the Great, merchants had to be inscribed in one of three guilds; prospective members had to pay an initiatory fee, on which an interest of 6 percent was levied annually by the Imperial Treasury. In the late-nineteenth century, the inscription fee for membership in the first or highest guild was equivalent to twenty thousand dollars. See Robert Sears, *An Illustrated Description of the Russian Empire . . .*, rev. R. S. L. Lewis (New York: Hurst, 1889), 516–17.
4. Pobedonostev quoted in Semen Markovich Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, 3 vols., trans. I. Friedlaender (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916–1920), 3: 10. Synod quoted in Valery Feldblyum, "Politika diskriminatsii evreev v tsarkoy Rossii," *Korni* 1 (January–June 1994): 49. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
5. Max Raisin, *A History of the Jews in Modern Times* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1930), 3: 88–211. Also see Mikhail Beizer, *The Jews of St. Petersburg* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), and Christoph Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914: The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).
6. Eduard Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1921), plate 202.
7. Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *The Tsars and the Jews: Reform, Reaction & Anti-Semitism in Imperial Russia, 1772–1917* (Chur [Switzerland]: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), 115, 119. For a view of the Jewish question by an unreconstructed apologist for tsarist policies, see A. T. Vassilyev, *The Ochrana: The Russian Secret Police*, ed. René Fülöp-Müller (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott, 1930), chap. 6.
8. Fuchs, 265–66.
9. Abraham Morevski, *There and Back: Memories and Thoughts of a Jewish Actor*, trans. Joseph Leftwich (London: James Clarke, 1967), 241.
10. *Trudy Pervago Vserossiiskogo sezda stsenicheskikh deyateley*, 9.3–23.3 1897, pt. 2 (Moscow: A. A. Levenson, 1898), 162.
11. "Vot on ves, kak namalevan / Iuda-Pustoslov. / Gnusen, zol, ugryum, oplevan / I na vse gotov. / V zhizni trizhdy prodal Boga, / I eshche prodast! / Tserkov? Kirka? Sinagoga? / Kto dorozhe dast!" Quoted in Viktoriya Levitina, *Russky teatr i evrei*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Biblioteka-Aliya, 1988), 2: 13–14.
12. S. Ginzburg, "Literatura rynochnogo sprosa," *Voskhod* 10 (1897); G. G. [Herman] Branover, ed., *Rossiiskaya Evreiskaya Entsiklopediya*, vol. 2: *Biografii K-R* (Moscow: Rossiiskaya Akademiya Estestvennykh Nauk, 1995), 187–88.
13. A. R. Kugel, in his memoir *Listya s dereva: vospominaniya* (Leningrad: Vremya, 1926), describes him as having "the look and accent of a salesman on commission" (55). Litvin took to

arguing for the purity of Russian Orthodoxy and, after the Revolution, moved to Serbia, where he became an Orthodox monk. He died in the Petkovian Monastery in 1926.

14. S. K. Litvin, "Vospominaniya o Krylove," *Istorichesky Vestnik* 4 (1906): 234. In 1899, Krylov linked up with another apostate Jew, O. G. Etinger (born S. Sutugin), to dramatize and direct Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* for the Alexandra Theatre. A remark by the theatre's administrator, Telyakovsky, appalled by their botch-job, sheds light on Krylov's methods: "Considering Krylov to be an author and man of letters experienced in doctoring and carpentering plays, it never occurred to me to check his requirements and the organization of the staging. I assumed that he and his partner (a Jew), a *Privatdocent*, would have given the novel sufficient study and ticked off all the relevant details." V. A. Telyakovsky, *Dnevnik Direktora Imperatorskikh teatrov 1898–1901 Moskva*, ed. M. G. Svetaeva (Moscow: Artist. Rezhisser. Teatr, 1998), 144. (On the *Privatdocent*, see note 90.)

15. *Syny Izrailia, drama v 4 deistviyakh i 5 kartinakh* (St. Petersburg: V. V. Komarov, 1901). It ran to at least four editions.

16. Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 85–86.

17. *Severny kurer* (22 November 1900). Also see Yu. Gessen, "Kleveta v forme dramaticheskogo sochineniya," *Voskhod* 3 (1899).

18. Telyakovsky, 95. In fact, there were complaints that Pogozhev was choking the New Theatre's repertory with melodramas and farces. Letter of A. M. Kondratev to A. I. Yuzhin, quoted in N. Zograf, *Aleksandr Pavlovich Lensky* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1955), 280.

19. Telyakovsky, 423–24.

20. *Budushchnost* (20 November 1900).

21. A. R. Kugel, *Literaturnye vospominaniya (1882–1896 g.g.)* (Petrograd–Moscow: Izd. Petrograd, 1923), 158–71.

22. Abraham Morevski, *There and Back*, vol. 2: *As It Was in the Days of Nicholas II*, trans. Eve Zeitlin Dobkin (St. Louis: Fireside Books, 1991), 170. Also see E. Dinershtein, "A. S. Suvorin i 'evreisky vopros,'" *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve* 1 (1992): 57–74; and A. E. Kaufman, *Druzya i vragi evreev*, no. 3 (St. Petersburg: Pravda, 1908).

23. Adolf Gornfeld and Herman Rosenthal, "Russia," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1907), 10: 552.

24. For Suvorin's theatre, see *Dvadsatletie Teatra imeni A. S. Suvorin* (Petrograd, 1915); E. G. Kholodov et al., eds., *Istoriya russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra v 7-mi tomakh. Tom 7. 1898–1917* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1987); I. F. Petrovskaya, *Teatr i zritel v rossiiskikh stolits 1895–1917* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1990); I. F. Petrovskaya and V. Somina, *Teatralny Peterburg nachalo XVIII veka–Oktjabr 1917 goda: Obozrenie-putevoditel* (St. Petersburg: Rossiisky Institut Istorii Iskusstv, 1994); Kugel, *Literaturnye vospominaniya*, chap. 13; Levitina, 2: 7–12.

25. B. L. Bertovin, *Novosti i birzhevaya gazeta* (14 September 1900).

26. *Tsar Fedor* had been banned because it showed a bygone imperial dynasty in a negative light, *The Power of Darkness* because its talk of cesspools and portrayal of an infanticide offered a sordid depiction of peasant life.

27. *Teatr i Iskusstvo* 47 (1898): 845. Also see N. V. Drizen, "Pochemu V. P. Dalmatov ushel s imp. steny v 1894 g.," *Ezhegodnik imperatorskikh teatrov* (1912).

28. In 1907, Dalmatov was responsible for admitting two Jewish students to Suvorin's acting school, and, in 1910, when Suvorin remarked at a rehearsal, "my theatre seems to have an air, a curse, an atmosphere of mildew and rot. Even Yids lose their ability here and are unable to accomplish anything," Dalmatov took him to task for using such language. Morevski, *There and Back*, 2: 166.

29. *Slovar Stsenicheskikh deyateley* (St. Petersburg: *Teatr i Iskusstvo*, supplements 1898–1905).

30. B. A. Gorin-Goryainov, *Aktery (iz vospominany)*, ed. M. Yankovsky (Leningrad–Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1947), 80; *Budushchnost* (20 November 1900).

31. P. P. Gnedich, *Kniga zhizni: Vospominaniya 1855–1918*, ed. V. F. Botsyanovsky (Moscow: Agraf, 2000), 234.

32. *Teatr i Iskusstvo* 14 (1913): 326; *Dvadsatletie teatra Suvorina*, 40; *Rossiya* (17 September 1900).
33. A brief but detailed narrative account is provided in Armand Lanoux, "L'Affaire Dreyfus à l'heure de la vérité," in Gilbert Guilleminault, *Prélude à la Belle Époque* (Paris: Denoël, 1956), 161–258. For reaction outside France, see *Intolérance et indignation: l'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: Ed. Fischbaker, 1999).
34. Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 188–92.
35. A. Ya. Altshuller, *Ocherki istorii russkoy teatralnoy kritiki konets XIX–nachalo XX veka* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1979), 96. Also see D. A. Elyashevich, *Pravitelstvennaya politika i evreiskaya pechat v Rossii 1797–1917. Ocherki istorii tsenzury* (St. Petersburg: Mosty kultury; Jersuaalem: Gerashun, 1999).
36. Tinsky was pressured to go on or else be discharged from the company, for which later writers have called him both an opportunist and an apostate.
37. Rebecca Gauss's "Lydia Borisovna Yavorskaya 1871–1921: A Biography" appeared in the Internet magazine *Theatre Perspectives International* (1997). For a balanced view of Yavorskaya's career, see Catherine Schuler, *Women in Russian Theatre: The Actress in the Silver Age* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 137–54.
38. M. P. Chekhov, *Vokrug Chekhova: vstrechi i vpechatleniya* (Moscow, 1964), 212. See Laurence Senelick, "The Lake-shore of Bohemia: *The Seagull's* Theatrical Context," *Educational Theatre Journal* (May 1977): 204–05.
39. P. Kallinikov and I. Korneeva, eds., *Russky biografichesky slovar: v dvadsati tomakh*, 20 vols. (Moscow: Terra Knizhny Klub, 1998–2001), 2: 143–44.
40. Gorin-Goryainov, 85.
41. *Severny kurer* (13 November 1900).
42. A story by M. P. Mezheritsky, "The Smuggler: Scenes from Life on the Western Border" ("Kontrabandist. Stseny iz zhizni na zapadny granits") had been published in the July–September 1899 issue of Suvorin's *Historical Messenger* (494–510). Set in Poland in the 1850s, it contrasts a ruffian's bloody deeds with his love for his daughter, but the picturesque protagonist is not a Jew.
43. *Novye vremya* (17 November 1900); *Severny kurer* (18 November 1900).
44. V. M. Doroshevich, "Geroy dnya," *Sobranie sochineny* (Moscow: I. D. Sytin, 1907), 4: 116–17.
45. *Buduschnost* (20 November 1900); *Teatr i Iskusstvo* (21 November 1900).
46. A. Ya. Altshuller et al., eds., *Pervaya russkaya revolyutsiya i teatr: Stati i materialy* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1956), 169.
47. K. A[rabazhin], "Syny Izraila," *Severny kurer* 368 (22 November 1900): 2.
48. V. Krylov and S. Litvin, "Pisma v redaktsiyu," *Novoe vremya* 8888 (1900).
49. StPGIA (St. Petersburg State Historical Archive), archive 520, case 1, file 124, p. 84; quoted in Levitina, 2: 198.
50. Recalled from memory by Gorin-Goryainov (88–89), who was one of the students involved.
51. This re-creation of the premiere is based on the following sources: N. Ash, "Kontrabandisty v Malom teatre," *Novosti i birzhevaya gazeta* 326 (1900): 3; Smolensky [A. A. Izmailov], "Nebyvaly spektakl," *Birzhenye vedomosti* (24 November 1900); "Teatr i Muzyka," *Novoe vremya* (24 November 1900): 4; A. Vergezhsy, "Peterburgskie pis'ma," *Severny kray* (Yaroslavl) 314 (1900): 2; N. Negorev, "Khronika," *Teatr i Iskusstvo* 48 (1900): 867; V. Linsky, "Kontrabandisty," *Teatr i Iskusstvo* 3 (1901): 54–56; *Zhurnal zasedaniya direktsty literaturno-khudozhestvennogo obshchestva* (6 December 1900), TsGALI (Central State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow); Aleksey Sergeevich Suvorin, *Dnevnik Alekseya Sergeevicha Suvorina*, ed. D. Rayfield and O. E. Makarova (London: Garnett Press; Moscow: Izd. Nezavisimaya gazeta, 1999), 401–04; A. R. Kugel, "Iz moikh vospominany," *Zhizn iskusstva* 38 (1924): 6; Gorin-Goryainov, chap. 2, 79–93; Telyakovsky, 423–24; Gnedich, 234–36.

52. Gnedich, 234–36; Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 28 November 1900, 400–01.
53. A. R. Kugel, “Iz moikh vospominany,” *Zhizn iskusstva* 33 (1924): 9.
54. LGIA archive 520, case 1, file 124, p. 95; quoted in Levitina, 2: 20.
55. Ash, 3.
56. Yavorskaya later told Suvorin that someone had come to the offices of *Northern Messenger* to demonstrate how effective a boatswain’s whistle could be, but that Arabazhin neither distributed them nor used them at the theatre. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 1 December 1900, 406.
57. K. Arabazhin, “D. L. Mordovtsev. Nekrolog,” *Novosti i birzhevaya gazeta* 146 (1905): 2.
58. Ash, 3.
59. Ibid.
60. A. A. Izmailov, *Birzhennye vedomosti* (24 November 1900).
61. Gnedich, 235.
62. Kugel later blamed police brutality for creating the furor that turned a demonstration into a riot. “Iz moikh vospominany,” *Zhizn iskusstva* 38 (1924): 6.
63. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 403.
64. Vergezhsy, 2.
65. Levitina, 2: 24–25. Rumor exaggerated the number. Gorin-Goryainov claims a hundred arrested at the theatre, with a thousand apprehended over the next few days. Suvorin believed six hundred students were arrested in the subsequent university walkouts.
66. Sigma [S. N. Syroshyatninov], “Seyateli antisemitizma,” *Novoe vremya* (25 November 1900): 3.
67. “Vcherashny gevalt v Malom teatre,” *Peterburgsky listok* 324 (25 November 1900).
68. Assistant Minister of the Interior Durnovo reported in turn, “In my opinion, the Jews did not play the leading role in this riot.” TsGAOR (Central State Archive of the October Revolution, Moscow), archive 102, DP 00 1898, case 3, file 11, pp. 3, 50; quoted in Levitina, 2: 25.
69. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 588.
70. Sipyagin to P. N. Durnovo in Yalta (29 November 1900), TsGAOR, loc. cit.; quoted in Levitina, 2: 23.
71. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 28 November 1901, 401.
72. A. L. Volynsky, “Kriticheskie nabroski,” note 23 January 1924, TsGALI, archive 95, case 1, file 68, p. 11; quoted in Levitina, 2: 21.
73. Telyakovsky, 26 November 1900, 423–24. Suvorin, echoing the anti-Semitic sentiments at the First Congress of Theatre Workers, worried that soon all Jews will be educated, while Russian peasants will have to wait until they are rich enough to compete with Jews: “A Jew will shove aside a Russian, a Jew will suppress a play.” Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 28 November 1900, 403.
74. Letter to her husband, A. E. Molchanov (14 November 1900), TsGALI archive 853, case 2, file 144, no. 29; quoted in Levitina, 2: 21.
75. *Zhurnal zasedaniya*. . . .
76. Quoted in Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 28 November 1900, 403.
77. Ibid. Yavorskaya once wrote to Suvorin: “Favoritism and factionalism in your theatre reach such a pitch that one loses the desire to work and throws up one’s hands.” Undated letter, TsGALI, archive 459, case 1, file 4927, p. 25; quoted in Levitina, 2: 67.
78. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 406. This belief was supported by Durnovo, who put most of the blame on the police. Suvorin was also told by a colleague that Prince Baryatinsky took part only because he was in debt to Jews for fifty thousand rubles.
79. TsGIA (Central State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg), archive 678, case 1, file 1031; quoted in Levitina, 2: 16.
80. “Pour des motifs politiques, refuse sa place dans une pièce politique.” Georges Bourdon, “Madame Lydie Yavorskaïa et le théâtre russe,” *L’Art du théâtre* 21 (September 1902): lxix–lxxxii.
81. *Teatr i Iskusstvo* 26 (1901): 481.
82. Volynsky, 11. As the political situation worsened, Yavorskaya continued to display leftist sympathies at one remove: she gave money to the Poltava committee in 1903, often made donations



to political prisoners, and, in 1908, put on a show in Tiflis on behalf of social-democratic and Bolshevik organizations.

83. Quoted in Gorin-Goryainov, 92.

84. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 8 December 1900, 406; 14 February 1901, 411; *Zhurnal zasedaniya* . . . Within the company, no one seemed willing to take responsibility for initiating the move against Yavorskaya. As late as February 1901, the stage manager Plyushchevsky was collecting signatures to an affidavit that he was not to blame. Baryatinsky drew up his own fifteen-page account: "Zapiska o konflikte L. B. Yavorskoy i direktsii Malogo (Suvorinskogo) teatra, predstavlenaya v Literaturno-khudozhestvennoe o-vo. Yanv. 1901." The copy at the Russian National Library, St. Petersburg, is heavily annotated by Suvorin.

85. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 25 February 1901, 412. When the Maly Theatre burned down in August 1901, the police received a letter accusing Yavorskaya, but Suvorin laid the blame on his staff's carelessness and ill-advised economies; *ibid.*, 20 August 1901, 418; 24 August 1901, 420.

86. "Nasha otechestvennaya reptiliya," *Iskra* 22 (February 1901), repr. in *Iskra. No. 1–52, dekabr 1900–noyabr 1903*, ed. P. P. Lepeshinsky and N. Krupskaya (Leningrad: Priboi, 1925), no. 2/3, 44.

87. The police also questioned if the Writers' Union could consider a petition lodged by students. TsGAOR, archive102, DPOO 1898, chap. 3, pt. 1, pp. 73–75, p. 10, on the back.

88. *Nizhegorodsky listok* (28 January 1901). The Okhrana had the right to keep suspects under arrest for no more than two weeks before either releasing them or transferring them to prison on remand, depending upon the recommendation of the Public Prosecutor's office. Vassilyev, 39.

89. After the trial, the authorities sought to punish the defense lawyers by lodging a complaint with the Bar Association; nothing came of this, however.

90. A teacher or lecturer recognized by the university, but not on its salaried faculty. Any Jew who taught at a Russian university had, perforce, to occupy this rank.

91. TsGAOR, pp. 50, 93 on back, pp. 79–80; quoted in Levitina, 27–28; Kallinikov and Korneeva, 5: 328–39. The Black Hundred was the name applied to reactionary terrorists, whose political organization was the League of the Russian People. They fomented pogroms with the benign approval of the government.

92. Karpov refers to a meeting of a thousand students in Kiev in 1900, which was surrounded by Cossacks. Five hundred were arrested, of whom 183 were drafted into the army and the rest expelled.

93. Administrative banishment of up to five years was the only extrajudicial punishment permitted the police.

94. TsGALI, archive 459, case 1, file 1730; quoted in Levitina, 2: 171–73.

95. It should be noted, however, that Karpov's concerns were for his own reputation and for ethnic Russian youth. Yavorskaya's behavior he regarded as a personal slur, and the Jews he later characterized to Suvorin as "persistent, pushy, and impudent." *Ibid.*, letter to Suvorin, 1906.

96. A. S. Suvorin, "Malenkie pisma," *Novoe Vremya* 8931 (2 January 1901).

97. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 28 January 1901, 408. In a marginal notation on a letter from Suvorin, a testy Sipyagin stated, "I personally explained to Suvorin all the inappropriateness and irresponsibility of his behavior." TsGAOR, archive 102, DPOO, 1898, pt. 3, subset 1, p. 96.

98. Petrovskaya, *Teatr i zritel*, 69.

99. *Ibid.*, 127.

100. TsGAOR, archive102, DP 00, 1898, subset 9, pt. 29; quoted in Levitina, 2: 29.

101. Dubnow, 3: 38.

102. "Delo o 'Kontrabandistakh'," *Russkie Vedomosti* 269 (1901).

103. A. Ya. Altschuller et al., eds., *Pervaya russkaya revolyutsiya i teatr. Stati i materialy* (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1956), 304–05; Levitina, 2: 31–32.

104. A. Ya. Altschuller et al., eds., *Pervaya russkaya revolyutsiya i teatr. Stati i materialy* (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1956), 304–05; Levitina, 2: 31–32.

105. *Dvuglavny orel* (Ekaterinoslav) 24 (1913): 2.

106. Dubnow, 3: 29, 34.

107. The debate concerned point L, paragraph 9 of section 3, “Rights and Obligations of Members of the Theatrical Society.” TsGALI, archive 641, case 2, file 34, pp. 19–20; quoted in Levitina, 1: 189–97.

108. A later vote upheld the clause 259 to 229. This turned out to be a moral victory with no practical effects, however, since none of the resolutions was acted on until 1906, at which time the whole third paragraph, including point L, was dropped.

109. *Novoe Vremya* 8960 (1901): 2. Berdichev, near Kiev, had one of the largest Jewish communities in the Russia Empire: nearly 50,500 Jews out of a population of 62,283. (This is the point of Chekhov’s joke in *Three Sisters* that “Balzac was married in Berdichev.”)

110. Report 13 December 1901, TsGIA, archive 776, case 1, file 34, p. 21; quoted in Levitina, 2: 33. Sipyagin was assassinated in April 1902, to be replaced by Vyacheslav Plehve, who pursued a policy of pogroms against the Jews.

111. TsGIA, archive 776, case 26, file 23; quoted in Levitina, 2: 35.

112. Suvorin, “Malenkie pisma,” *Novoe vremya*, 8931 (1901). The reference to the *Kahal*—Hebrew for “assembly”—had been the Jewish community liaison with Russian municipal governments until abolished in 1844. In 1869, a converted Jew named Jakob Branfmann published *The Book of the Kahal*, which claimed they persisted in secret to wreak baneful influence on the populace. These sensational fabrications were widely spread by the anti-Semitic press.) Suvorin never practiced in his own plays the modifications he preached; the Jewish banker Zonnenshein in *Tatyana Repina*, for instance, is a buffoon who talks in a thick Yiddish accent.

113. Baratov had been accepted into the company on Karpov’s recommendation. From the start, he was so continually insulted by the company’s male lead, Boris Glagolin, that Baratov took him to court, where he won his case. Baratov left Suvorin’s theatre not long thereafter. He wound up playing in Yiddish theatre in New York in the 1930s.

114. Bourdon, lxxix; Kugel, *Listya s dereva*, 60.

115. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, 28 November 1900, 403.

116. Kugel, *Listya s dereva*, 60.