David W Fletcher, November 1999


# JEWISH EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN POGROMS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

During the waning decades of the Romanov dynasty in Russia, foment between tsarist and revolutionary forces precipitated three extensive waves of antisemitic violence. These pogroms or violent attacks included destruction of property, pillaging, beating of Jews, rape, and even murder. In general, the word pogrom connotes an onslaught against any ostracized group. But with usage over time it has acquired the technical designation of a specifically Russian attack "against the Jews between 1881 and 1921 while the civil and military authorities remained neutral and occasionally provided their secret or open support."[1] These three waves of antisemitic violence occurred in 1881-1884, 1903-1906, and 1917-1921.

The spark for each wave of violence was a time of dramatic sociopolitical upheaval in Russia. The first wave followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. Pogroms swept through more than two hundred cities. Jewish men, women, and even children were beaten by mobs of peasants. Homes and shops were looted and destroyed. The second wave occurred by way of official reaction to the recalcitrance associated with the first Russian revolution of 1905.

> In its struggle against the revolutionary movement, the Russian government gave the reactionary press a free hand to engage in unbridled anti-Jewish incitement in an attempt to divert the anger of the masses against the Jews

[1]Yehuda Slutsky, "Pogroms," Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), 13:694.

> and to represent the revolutionary movement as the result of "Jewish machinations."[2]

The third wave coincided with the final collapse of tsarist autocracy, the rise of the Bolsheviks to power over the Provisional Government, and the resulting Civil War. The Jews became victims of the general chaos created by vying factions that sought political and military control of the periphery of Russia.

Each wave of assaults benefitted from the regulatory policies of previous Russian rulers.[3] In the late eighteenth century, Catherine II established the Pale of Settlement, "an area from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea that included the provinces of Grodno, Vilna, Volynia, Podolia, Minsk and Ekaterinoslav, the Bessarabian and Belostok oblast, and the Kiev province, excluding the city of Kiev."[4] This made the Jews easy prey, since they lived in crowded ghettos

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[2]Ibid., 13:697.

[3]Leonard Schapiro rightly notes that "the long period of the policy of restriction and discrimination against the Jews created the basis on which the barbarous edifice of violent antisemitism could be erected." "Introduction," The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917, ed. Lionel Kochan (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 3. Erich Goldhagen categorizes the restrictive legislation as: (1) laws limiting Jewish residence to the Pale of Settlement; (2) laws excluding Jews from public office; (3) laws conscripting Jews to longer and harsher enlistments in the military; (4) laws promoting Russification of the Jews by squelching religious and cultural traditions; and (5) quotas on Jewish education for secondary schools and higher learning. "Jews, Political and Economic Conditions Under the Tsars," McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union, ed. Michael Florinsky (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), 257. Paul Johnson observes, "In the last half-century of imperial Russia, the official Jewish regulations formed an enormous monument to human cruelty, stupidity and futility. Gimpelson's Statutes Concerning the Jews (1914-1915), the last annotated collection, ran to nearly 1,000 pages." A History of the Jews (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 359.

[4]Sylvia Rothchild, A Special Legacy: An Oral History of Soviet Jewish Emigres in the United States (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 27.

concentrated in one regional area. Such localization minimized Jewish resistance, as travel outside the Pale was restricted and often prohibited.[5] Under Nicholas I, who ruled 1825-1855, the government suppressed the development of Yiddish and Hebrew culture with the passage of six hundred anti-Jewish laws. Strictures toward Russification and coercions for proselytization to Orthodoxy became commonplace. Attempted opposition only gained for the Jews the label of subversives and affirmed in the common mind the typical Jewish stereotypes. The mid-nineteenth century reforms of Alexander II notwithstanding, the negative evolution of Jewish circumstance combined with the inevitable convulsive upheavals in archaic Russian society and led to three periods of violent utilization of that old vignette of Jew as *azazel*[6] or scapegoat. Correspondingly, these outbursts spawned not only resolved counteraction by Jewish leaders and communities but also a series of *Aliyahs*[7] or massive emigrations that helped to concatenate events toward Jewish self-determination in the realization of a national homeland a la Zionism.

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[5]See Johnson, History of the Jews, 359ff.

[6]This literally means "the goat of going out" which is from two Hebrew words *ez* meaning "goat" and *azal* meaning "to go away." This *azazel* or "scapegoat" dispatched on Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, according to Leviticus 16:8, 10, 16, is interpreted variously as: (1) the animal itself, (2) the place to which the animal is sent, or (3) the name of a demon inhabiting the desert. T. H. Gaster, "Azazel," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia, ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:325-326.

[7]This Hebrew word refers to the literal act of "going up" to the platform or *bemah* (also called an *almemar*) in the synagogue during the Sabbath service in order to recite the blessings before or after the reading of the apportioned scripture from the Torah or Prophets. See "*Aliyah,*" Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Gramercy Books, 1989), 38. Metaphorically, the word refers to the biblical Exodus, that is, the children of Israel "going up" to the freedom of Palestine from bondage in Egypt. By analogy, the Jewish "going up" to freedom in Western Europe, the United States, or Palestine from slavery in Russia is seen as a modern Exodus or *Aliyah*.

Thus, the significance of the Russian pogroms as a collective self-actualization of Jewish consciousness was realized through a process of blame,[8] the consequent purging,[9] and the resulting refinement.[10] This brief paper will focus on the second and third surges of Jewish

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[8]The proverbial "scapegoating" is the sad lot of the Jewish people historically. It is even predicted in their own scriptures, "You shall be a consternation, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples to which the Lord will drive you." Deuteronomy 28:37, TANAKH The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 318.

[9]This purging is to be likened to cultic ritual cleansing, and it results in the purification of Judaism which, by a process of Russification, had become attached to an idolatrous land.

[10]The refinement is the renewed zeal of the Jewish people for their ancient homeland. Jewish existence–historically, politically, and religiously–is born of and rooted in the land of Palestine. James Parkes comments, "It was impossible to forget that it was within the Land of Israel that the religious formation of the Jewish people had taken place. A sanctity remained inherent in its soil. The concept of a 'return' was never absent from Jewish thought, and there was no alternative but the holy soil of The Land to which a 'return' could be envisaged. Jews did not forget that once before there had been an exile and a restoration." Whose Land? A History of the Peoples of Palestine (rev. ed.; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 32-33. Codifications of Oral Law show rabbinic encouragement of this attachment to Palestine. "One may compel his entire household to go up with him to the land of Israel, but none may be compelled to leave it. All of one's household may be compelled to go up to Jerusalem, but none may be compelled to leave it." Mishnah *Ketubot* 13:11, from Arthur Hertzberg, ed., Judaism: Great Religions of Modern Man, gen. ed. Richard Gard (New York: Washington Square, 1961), 148-149. For the rabbis, it was better to "live in the land of Israel," even in a predominately Gentile city, than to "live outside of the land," even in a predominately Jewish city. "Whoever lives in the land of Israel is considered a believer in God. . . . Whoever lives outside of the land is considered to be in the category of one who worships idols." The one who lives in the land lives "a sinless life"; the one who walks four cubits in the land receives "a place in the world to come." Mishnah *Ketubot* 110b-111a. Ibid. These quotes highlight the unswerving attachment to the land in postbiblical rabbinic thought, an attachment that has continued throughout the centuries.

One could argue, however, that secular, political, and economic considerations strongly overshadow any purely religious reasons for this attachment during late nineteenth and early twentieth century Judaism. For example, "Modern Zionism was nurtured in the soil of the religious doctrines about the Holy Land and the return to it. In its contemporary expression, however, it represents on the surface a blending of three other things: the pain of the Exile, in its modern manifestation in anti-Semitism; the example of national revivals in Europe and the world; and a secularized version of the Messianic ideal." Hertzberg, Judaism, 172. But Brian Lancaster responds, "The equation of Zionism with what is generally understood as nationalism is very misleading, and has become the vehicle for a

persecution, i.e., 1903 through 1906 and 1917 through 1921, as illustrative of these themes in Russian Jewish history.[11]

According to the census of 1897, the Jewish community of tsarist Russia was the largest in the world, approximating 5.2 million.[12] "In 1900, of the estimated 10,600,000 Jews

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peculiarly modern form of anti-semitism. The Zionist ideal is not simply a political goal grafted onto a group of people defined by some cultural or social heritage. Jerusalem, to which the biblical word 'Zion' refers, and Israel itself occupy an absolutely central place within the corpus of Jewish teaching and tradition. 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion,' cries the Psalmist (Psalm 137:1). Judaism without Jerusalem is a body without a heart. All prayers have focused on Zion for two thousand years; many commandments of the Torah can operate only in relation to the Land of Israel; Jewish history–which is seen as the vehicle of God's presence in the world–is ultimately defined in relation to Israel; and Jews have always aspired to settle in the Land of Israel when conditions permitted." The Elements of Judaism (Shaftesburg, Dorset: Element Books, 1993), 13-14.

[11]For an excellent treatment of the earliest outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Russia, see Stephen Berk, Year of Crisis, Year of Hope: Russian Jewry and the Pogroms of 1881-1882 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985). See also Zosa Szajkowski, An Illustrated Sourcebook of Russian Antisemitism, 1881-1978 (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1980), 1:9-19. This period, during which a flurry of Jewish political activity erupted, is crucial for understanding Jewish reaction to later pogroms. Note Eli Lederhendler, who portrays the extensive political activity of the medieval diaspora as "substitutes for sovereign power in order to guarantee [Jewish] welfare and existence." With the nineteenth century rise of nationalism, however, he concludes that the old substitutes "were rendered obsolete by the processes that led to the emergence of the modern state." The necessary "call for Jewish autoemancipation" was played out most fully in tsarist Russia during the last part of the nineteenth century. The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 154-155. Similarly, David Biale argues forcefully for the emergence of "a new Jewish political life" during the time "between Haskalah [Enlightenment] and the Holocaust." "Zionists, Bundists, liberals, assimilationists, religious revivalists, and socialist revolutionaries of all stripes and colors vied with each other for the support of the millions of Europeans Jews, especially in Eastern Europe. This quest for power was rooted in an increasing sense of the impotence and impoverishment of the European Jews. No one could afford to remain indifferent. Whether a solution to the problems of the Jews lay in Jewish nationalism or in a cosmopolitan revolution was far from an academic question." Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History (New York: Schocken Books, 1987), 118.

[12]This would include Poland as well as other areas of East Central Europe. Paul Robert Magocsi, Historical Atlas of East Central Europe (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1993), 97-98.

throughout the world, over 70 percent were Ashkenazim living in East Central Europe."[13] This remained true in spite of a large number of Jewish emigrants to the West beginning in the 1880s. Further, almost 70 percent of these Ashkenazim, some 7.5 million, lived in the Pale of Settlement, where Jews typically conglomerated to urban areas.[14] An even higher proportion of Russian Jewish population occupied the Pale, that is Lithuania, the Western Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Congress Kingdom of Poland, which comprised roughly 11.5 percent of the total population for these areas, a significant number.[15] This bourgeois minority, that was quite different culturally, stood out as a self-contained yet commercially interactive segment of a society that was ethnically heterogenous and predominately agricultural. By virtue of their mercantile professions, their locale of residence, and their odd folk traditions, the Jews were naturally viewed as atypical. Economic uncertainty created by competition for urban jobs with the movement of former serfs and the peasants to the cities, and the ever threatening physical insecurity left the Jews at risk. Many decided to flee by way of emigration. Yet many stayed. They suffered the brunt of tsarist reactionism early in the new century.

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[13]Ibid., 107.

[14]Ibid., 108. "In 1897 more than half of the urban population of Belorussia and Lithuania were Jewish, and in the Ukraine Jews constituted nearly one-third of the urban population. For example, Jews made up more than 75 percent of the population of Bialystok, more than 50 percent of the residents in Minsk, 45 percent of the population of Vilna, and more than 30 percent of the inhabitants of Lodz, Odessa, and Warsaw." Alexander Orbach, "Jewry, 1905-1921," Dictionary of the Russian Revolution, eds. George Jackson and Robert Devlin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), 277. See also Viktor Kozlov, The Peoples of the Soviet Union, tr. Pauline Tiffen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 55, 98. Concentration of Jews in the Ukraine was particularly heavy.

[15]Orbach, "Jewry, 1905-1921," 277.

In February 1903, Pavolaki A. Krushevan, editor of the local newspaper Bessarabets, and a hater of Jews, sparked malevolence toward the 50,000 Jewish residents of Kishinev in the province of Bessarabia. Krushevan warned Christians against exploitation by the Jews.[16] He alleged that a Christian child had been murdered by Jews in the town of Dubossary for the approaching Passover rituals. This resurrection of the old blood libel allegation incited brutal anti-Jewish attacks in Kishinev on April 6th, the eve of Passover. The rampage continued through the following day, and in the aftermath almost 50 Jews were killed and several hundred injured. Over 1,200 shops and houses were looted and destroyed, and nearly 2,000 families were left homeless.[17] The military garrison allowed the riotous mob to ransack the Jewish

[16]Schapiro concedes the possibility of "some latent, indigenous or natural antisemitism" that was "based on primitive prejudice." But he counters the view that the Jew was often seen as a merciless exploiter of innocent Christians and thereby elicited hatred. He responds, "Jews and Russians often lived side by side in amity. The great pogroms were organized in the sense that the hooligan ringleaders were brought in by the authorities from other areas to start them, and in that the local authorities encouraged the inclinations of local hooligans to plunder, by making it plain that violence against Jews could be carried out with impunity." "Introduction," Jews in Soviet Russia, 2. Harrison Salisbury is much more blunt, "How did the pogroms start? There was really no mystery about them. They were carried out at the instigation and with the official but secret collaboration of the Czar's authorities." Black Night, White Snow: Russia's Revolutions 1905-1917 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978), 101.

[17]Martin Gilbert, Exile and Return: The Struggle for a Jewish Homeland (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1978), 59. For photos, see Zvi Gitelman, A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present (New York: Schocken Books & YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1988), 30-32.

community,[18] while Black Hundreds[19] bolstered by the tsarist Okhranka, the secret police force, encouraged the bloodthirsty rabble.

Worldwide reaction to this outbreak was intense. Mass demonstrations ensued in London, Berlin, Paris, and especially in New York. A few prominent Russian intellectuals, including Leo Tolstoy, voiced their protest and accused the government with complicity. Under pressure, the government responded with token trials of some of the perpetrators, but in reality did nothing to offset the continuation of antisemitic violence. Contrarily, local officials received authorization to give the attackers a free hand and to protect them from the Jewish self-defense.[20] Thus, in spite of Jewish attempts at resistance,[21] the pogroms went on unabated. Jews were killed in Kiev, in the Caucasus, and in Moscow. Later in the year, in September, an outbreak

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[18]After summarizing the antisemitic policies of the tsar and his advisors, Salisbury concludes, "Count Musin-Pushkin, commander of the Odessa Military District, carried out a personal investigation of the slaughter. He satisfied himself that no pogrom would have occurred or could have occurred had the local authorities called upon the military garrison to intervene–as was their duty. They made no call and the troops stayed in their barracks. It was Pushkin's opinion that the pogrom had been carried out with the toleration if not the actual permission of Plehve." Black Night, White Snow, 102-103.

[19]This is a general name for tsarist groups like the Union of the Russian People and the Double-headed Eagle Society. Slutsky, "Pogroms," 13:697.

[20]Ibid., 13:698. At Odessa, beleaguered Jews rose up and formed an important Jewish self-defense league.

[21]One poem by Simeon Samuel Frug, quoted by Salo Baron, The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets (2nd ed.; New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), 58-59, captured the need for Jews to champion their own cause.

> *The wholly dead may patient wait, But there's a people sick and gray,*
> *Not wholly dead, not wholly living; Are saviors sent to such as they?*
> *No savior from without can come, To those that live–and are enslaved,*
> *Their own Messiah they must be, And play the savior and the saved.*

occurred at Gomel. Here, self-defense groups, organized by Zionist socialist parties and the Jewish Bund, saved property and lives with effective counter resistance measures. But the purges continued, because the blame continued. The summer witnessed the issuance of another suppressive tsarist statute. All Zionist meetings on Russian soil were forbidden. Shortly thereafter, unknown agitators disseminated the myth of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy in a document known as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.[22] The people of the Torah were falsely accused of attempting to upset whatever semblance of harmony existed in Russian society through an incredulous exaggeration of Jewish world dominion![23]

What really troubled the tsarist regime was the constant internal fight to prop up old autocratic policies in a rapidly evolving technological society, the steady rise in discontent among the masses who craved true democratic freedom, and importantly the conduct of affairs in the Far East and military failures in the Russo-Japanese War. This latter involvement, the "small victorious war" of Vyacheslav von Plehve and the liberals, followed on the heels of the pogroms of 1903 but were also a prelude to the outbreaks of 1904 and 1905. Like the pogroms, the war turned into a miscalculated attempt to redirect revolutionary zeal. But not only did military

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[22]Gilbert, Exile and Return, 59-60. Berk says the *Protocols* was "the most ferocious and effective piece of anti-Semitic literature of the modern period and one that most probably originated deep in the bowels of the Okhrana." Year of Crisis, Year of Hope, 182. For a brief introduction and an edited text, see Richard S. Levy, Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1991), 147ff.

[23]To be sure, radical revolutionary elements among the Jews captured the attention of the authorities, but nothing as forceful as the *Protocols* suggest. At best, the government ploy to so bait the Jews was an aberration.

extension to the Far East fail to arrest extremist zeal, it further exacerbated the deteriorating spiral of anti-tsarist events that in turn inflamed governmental attempts to diffuse responsibility by hurling abuse on the Jews. More pogroms were inevitable.

Responding to the heightened intensity of revolutionary enclaves, the reactionary apparatus, with full government backing,[24] renewed anti-Jewish sentiment among the populace and escalated terrorist acts in the Pale and elsewhere. In the fall of 1904, raw army recruits prior to their deployment to the East joined with local riffraff in a series of attacks at Smela, Rovno, and Aleksandriya.[25] In 1905, pogroms erupted at Theodosiya in the Crimea (February), in Melitopol (April), in Zhitomir (May), at Kiev (July), in Belostok and once again at Kishinev (August), and at Odessa[26] and Ekaterinoslav[27] (October). The Jews suffered throughout the year as a result of the intransigence of the tsar who was unmoved by the plethora of voices calling for

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[24]The thesis that the tsar and his officials actively planned and ordered the pogroms is challenged on sociological and psychological grounds in John Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[25]Slutsky, "Pogroms," 13:697.

[26]While the name of Kishinev has become synonymous with the word pogrom, Odessa remains historically the most "pogrom-prone" town in Russia. Some of the reasons for this include explosive population growth during the last half of the nineteenth century, sharp increase in ethnic diversification, rapid changes in economic and social structures, and bands of day-laborers who were homeless and who drifted from place to place. See Patricia Herlihy, Odessa: A History, 1794–1914, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, ed. Omeljan Pritsak (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 299ff.

[27]Workers in Ekaterinoslav, which is in the Ukraine's iron and coal belt, instigated a forceful general strike in October 1905. Many of the striking laborers participated in the pogroms a few days later. According to Charters Wynn, this pattern of radical activism and antisemitic violence characterized the Russian working class as a whole. See his Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms: The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870-1905 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

reform. In February of 1905, Tsar Nicholas II had retired conveniently to Tsarskoe Selo outside Petrograd in order to avoid confrontation with a peaceful but determined march on the Winter Palace. When some 200,000 men, women, and children led by Orthodox priest Georgi Gapon approached the palace, a nervous guard opened fire. Pandemonium broke out, and the ensuing carnage netted over 500 dead and thousands wounded. Bloody Sunday, as it came to be called, engendered general bedlam in Russian society–riots, strikes, terrorism, assassinations–of which the Jewish pogroms were a decisive part. The common misconception was that the Jews were responsible for the chaos. At the very least, this was the propaganda advanced by the government. But the Jewish diversion was a delusion. These actions solved nothing for the government which was itself rotten to the core. About the middle part of the year, the government found itself teetering toward the brink of total collapse. The final blow came when the Japanese destroyed the Russian Pacific fleet at Tsushima and subsequently demoralized the Russian army at the Battle of Mukden. This resulted in a complete breakdown of confidence in the monarchy, and concessions were in order. Reluctantly, Nicholas acknowledged the first ever constitution in Russia, the so-called October Manifesto, that authorized an elected parliament or Duma.

With proclamation of the manifesto, spontaneous jubilation erupted throughout Russia. Many Jews expected to receive quick emancipation, but instead they received pogroms. Tsarist

loyalists,[28] often headed by local civil and ecclesiastical leaders, who also strongly disliked liberals and radicals, organized street processionals that in some places burgeoned into violence against the Jews. Simon Dubnow described the "customary procedure" in graphic terms.

> In connection with the manifesto of October 17, the progressive elements would arrange a street procession, frequently adorned by the red flags of the left parties. . . . Simultaneously, the participants in the "patriotic demonstration" –consisting mostly of the scum of society, of detectives and police officials in plain clothes–would emerge . . . carrying the portrait of the Tzar under the shadow of the national flag, singing the national hymn and shouting, "Hurrah, beat the Zhyds! [Jews] The Jews are eager for liberty. They go against our Tzar to put a Zhyd in his place." These "patriotic" demonstrators would be accompanied by police and Cossack patrols (or soldiers), ostensibly to preserve order, but in reality to enable the hooligans to attack and maltreat the Jews and prevent the victims from defending themselves. As soon as the Jews assembled for self-defense, they would be driven off by the police and troops. Thereupon, the "patriotic" demonstrators . . . would break up into small bands and disperse all over the city, invading Jewish houses and stores, to ruin, plunder, beat, and sometimes slaughter entire families.[29]

The worst massacres happened at Odessa and in Ekaterinoslav. Nearly 700 pogroms occurred during the last half of October–over 650 in the Ukraine and Bessarabia, about 25 outside the Pale of Settlement, a handful in Belorussia, and surprisingly none in Poland and Lithuania. Most of these pogroms lasted only a few days, but approximately 800 Jews were killed.[30] The violence

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[28]Slutsky notes that "the most prominent participants were railway workers, small shopkeepers and craftsmen, and industrial workers." "Pogroms," 13:698.

[29]Quoted by Gitelman, Century of Ambivalence, 34. Compare Leo Motzkin, "Prototyp des Pogroms in den achtziger Jahren," Die Judenpogrome in Russland (1910), 18-20, quoted by Alex Bein, The Jewish Question: Biography of a World Problem, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press, 1990), 259-260.

[30]Gitelman, Century of Ambivalence, 34. Salo Baron estimates about 1,000 dead, at least 7,000 wounded, and property damage of 62 million rubles, or about 31 million dollars. The Russian Jew, 57.

spilled over into 1906. In Bialystok, about 80 Jews lost their lives in June, and at Siedlce in August another 30 were killed. After the first Russian revolution, the pogroms stopped until the collapse of the old regime in 1917. Thus, the Jews were purged.

Jewish refinement came throughout this period.[31] Thoughts of assimilation were abandoned,[32] and Zionist leaders like Theodor Herzl openly discussed the possibility of another homeland for the Jews with the British, the Germans, the Russians, and the Turks.[33] The Uganda scheme developed during this time, as well as speculation about other possibilities such as Argentina. More important was the actual physical movement of Jews. A noticeable climb in emigration rates corresponded to the rash of pogroms. Jonathan Frankel observed that "Jewish emigration from Russia to the United States rose according to standard estimates from 37,011 in

[31]Jewish socialist opposition to Zionism by the Jewish Bund, the Jewish Socialist Labor Party, the Zionist Socialist Labor Party, and the Poale Zion should be seen as part of the process of refinement. A remarkable Yiddish culture blossomed as a result of the socialist desire to build a Jewish society that did not rely on the traditional Hebrew and its religious associations. See Goldhagen, "Jews, Political and Economic Conditions," 258. On this literary renaissance, compare Baron, The Russian Jew, 151ff.

[32]See Gitelman's discussion, Century of Ambivalence, 24ff. Jonathan Frankel rightly contrasts the Jewish political mood of 1905-6 with that of 1881-2, which he labels paradoxical, and then argues for a shift from liberation through national exodus to liberation through revolution. "Then [1881-2] the debate had been whether and how to organize a collective escape from Russia. Now [1905-6] the issue was in what form the Jewish people should participate in the Russian insurrection." He affirms that "the messianism concealed in modern secular ideology once more merged with the messianism implanted in the popular consciousness by religious teaching and folk traditions to produce an apocalyptic mood." But this reading of the Jewish political mood of 1905-6 surely ignores the emigration data. Likewise, it portrays a strictly secular viewpoint of Jewish anticipatory hopes. Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 134.

[33]See Gilbert's remarks, Exile and Return, 52ff.

1900 to 77,544 in 1904; 92,388 in 1905; and 125,234 in 1906."[34] Yet immigration to Western Europe or to America was a far cry from an *Aliyah* to Zion. Global conditions for Jewish return to the land of their spiritual roots had not been fulfilled. Refinement was not yet complete. Unfortunately, for the Jews of Russia and the Holocaust, further refinement still lay in the future.

Meanwhile, abuse against the Jews continued. Antisemitic sentiments gained ground in the Duma, in the press, and in institutions of education. After a 1910 bill legislating abolishment of the Pale of Settlement was defeated, restrictions on Jewish travel outside the Pale were tightened. Over a thousand Jewish families were forced to leave Kiev, which was physically inside the Pale but not technically or legally a part of it. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* circulated wildly. Quotas for secondary schools and in the universities were rigidly maintained, and Jewish students were denied verification of study by schools they had attended. Even some cultural institutions, such as the Jewish Literary Society, were forced to close.[35]

In the summer of 1911, an incident of "bloodless pogrom" against Jews arose when Mendel Beilis, age 37, was accused of the murder of Andrei Yushinsky, age 12.

> A Christian boy had been murdered by a gang of thieves because he had incriminating evidence on the gang's activities. When the body was found in the Dnieper River, the reactionary press leaped to the conclusion that the boy had

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[34]Frankel, Prophecy and Politics, 135. William Mandel remarks, "Of all Americans with roots in [Russia], Jews are the most numerous, actually outnumbering the Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Armenians and all others *combined*." Soviet But Not Russian: The 'Other' Peoples of the Soviet Union (Palo Alto, CA: Ramparts Press, 1985), 307.

[35]Gilbert, Exile and Return, 72.

> been murdered by Jews for ritual purposes, a charge harking back to the Middle Ages.[36]

Thus, another case of blood libel commenced.[37] By the time Beilis came to trial in September of 1913, the police had long discovered the true perpetrators and Beilis was acquitted. The government, however, with its credibility under international scrutiny, refused to let the matter die. Nor did the world community. Like the affair of Alfred Dreyfus in France, the debate lingered in the press and on the streets for years. The mixture of mysticism, Judaism, and cannibalism in the popular mind would not let go.[38] For his part, Beilis decided to emigrate to Palestine. He had enough of Russia. On their arrival in February 1914, his family was greeted by Jewish schoolchildren with flags and flowers.

> "The Land of Israel," he later recalled in his memoirs, "had an invigorating effect on me; it gave me new life and hope. Nature itself, the life of the people, inspired me with vigor and the desire to live." In Jerusalem, the Arabs allowed him to visit the Al Aksa mosque, on the grounds that he was one of the "great Jewish heroes." He settled in Tel Aviv where, he wrote, "for the first time, I began to appreciate what the true Jewish life is. I saw for the first time a race of proud, uncringing Jews, who lived openly and unafraid."[39]

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[36]Gitelman, Century of Ambivalence, 35.

[37]"In 1882 a ritual murder trial was held in Tisza Eszlar (Hungary), and the same charge was made in 1891 at Xanten (Rhineland), in 1899 at Polna (Bohemia, the Hilsner affair), in 1891 at Corfu (Greece), in 1900 at Konitz (Western Prussia) and Vilna (Poland), and between 1911 and 1913 at Kiev (the Ukraine, the Beilis trial)." Bein, The Jewish Question, 256.

[38]See excerpts from Stephen Graham's article in the English Review, quoted by Gilbert, Exile and Return, 73-74.

[39]Gilbert, Exile and Return, 73.

Beilis had been blamed, purged, and refined. Although his suffering was great, it was good for him that he experienced life in the Promised Land. Other Russian Jews would not be so blessed.

The outbreak of the Great War posed particularly difficult problems for Russia's Jews. The combat zone cut through the heart of the Pale and physically divided it. Normal lines of communication and commerce were severed. Large numbers of people were displaced, and massive physical destruction created a virtual wasteland.

> The area became a huge bloodied battlefield. Jews in hundreds of communities were killed, maimed, put to flight, or made homeless. In characteristic fashion, the tsarist government both used and punished Jews at the same time. While some 500,000 Jews–10 percent of the Jewish population–served in the Russian army, military and civil officials were treating Jews as if they were the enemy. Not only were none of the disabilities imposed in the Pale lifted, but Jews were branded as spies, cowards, and deserters, despite the large numbers fighting in the battlefields and Jewish support of the war for the defense of Russia. . . . The Russian press began printing slanders, and unfounded stories circulated that Jews were giving aid and comfort to Germans. . . . The shocking incongruity of Jewish soldiers fighting for a country that was menacing their families was embarrassing to the Russian government and Allies, who were petitioned to denounce the expulsions and anti-Jewish barbarities committed by the military. But there was no improvement.[40]

After the first German invasion of Russia, from late 1914 to early 1915, over a half million Jews were forced to leave their homes in the northwestern provinces of the Pale–Kurland, Kovno, Grodno, and the Polish provinces. Possibly 100,000 Jews died from starvation and exposure during this time. By August 1915, the deteriorating situation forced the government to open up

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[40]Nora Levin, The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of Survival (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 1:28.

Russia's interior to the Jews, but with restrictions.[41] This large scale dislocation of Jews toward the southwest and especially into the Ukraine set the stage for the final round of pogroms brought about by the turbulent upheaval of the Bolshevik takeover and resultant Civil War.

The emancipation promised by the Bolsheviks in February 1917, that was received enthusiastically by Jews in Russia and abroad, was hardly realized.[42] By the end of 1917, pogroms had arisen in small towns along the war front. Unruly soldiers engaged in unrestrained looting. Illiterate peasants lashed out with vehement hostility. Throughout the Ukraine, the Jews were an easy target.[43] They were caught in between–in no man's land–just like during the Great War. Seized between the jaws of a steamroller revolution and the backlash of the *ancien regime*, they once again vicariously bore the penalty for Russian society's ills.[44] In the spring of 1918, as the Red Army retreated from the Germans, "strikes at the bourgeoisie and the Jews" broke out in Novgorod-Severski and Glukhov. In the spring of 1919, as the Ukrainian Army retreated from Kiev, they organized pogroms in Berdichev, Zhitomir, Proskurov, and the hamlet of Felshtin.

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[41]Ibid., 29.

[42]The Revolution failed to rouse real support from organized Jewish communities because of Bolshevik aversion to organized religion and opposition to Jewish national identity. Neither did Jews quickly align with anti-Bolshevik elements which were strongly antisemitic. But Lenin's denunciation of antisemitism, as well as Red Army protection of Jews in the Ukraine and parts of Belorussia, did neutralize some Jewish opposition to the new regime. Orbach, "Jewry, 1905-1921," 280.

[43]Richard Pipes gives a detailed overview of the events. Russia under the Bolshevik Regime (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 99ff.

[44]This dilemma is what Avrahm Yarmolinsky appropriately calls "Between the Hammer and the Anvil." The Jews and Other Minor Nationalities Under the Soviets, Vanguard Studies of Soviet Russia, ed. Jerome Davis (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), pp. 48ff.

The latter two locales witnessed a carnage of over 1,500 and at least 500 Jewish deaths respectively. Symon M. Petlyura, the Ukrainian prime minister and forces commander, was culpable.

Chaotic conditions reigned. Gangs of peasants commandeered by atamans battled the Red Army, gained control of entire districts, and terrorized the Jews. In May, more than 400 were killed in Trostyanets, and over the summer 5,000 Jews died in 40 villages. In the fall of 1919, the White Army decided to "strike at the Jews and save Russia." Vicious assaults erupted in areas of White Army occupation. One of the worse occurred at Fastov where about 1,500 men, women, and children were butchered. The commander, General Anton Ivanovich Denikin, was responsible. Even eastern Siberia and Mongolia were not immune from pogroms during this time of raucous frenzy. In those areas, Admiral Aleksandr Vasil'evich Kolchak and Baron R. F. Ungern von Sternberg were guilty. By 1920-1921, full scale vengeful anti-Soviet retaliations attempted to decimate entire towns. In Tetiev, about 4,000 Jews were killed and the town burned.[45] The conflagration of revolutionary civil war had set on fire the desire for Jewish annihilation. Neither the Revolution nor the Civil War was the fault of the Jews, but they received the blame and as a result they were purged.

When the slaughter ended, "more than 1,000 separate incidents affected the killing of Jews. Over 700 communities in the Ukraine were involved and several more in Russia. Between

[45]Slutsky, "Pogroms," 13:698-700.

60,000 and 70,000 Jews were murdered."[46] The Jews had tried to resist, but typically they were too weak to repel their attackers. A notable exception was the "Jewish Militia for War against Pogroms" in Odessa which did provide measurable relief.[47]

These pogroms did have some notable outcomes, though, like a renewed determination for the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people and a passion for a strong and autonomous Jewish force.[48] These longings, part of the refinement of the Jewish people, found partial fulfillment in the He-Halutz[49] movement and the Haganah[50] in Erez Israel. However, the blaming, purging, and refining were not complete. The Russian pogroms of the early twentieth century were, in the words of an old cliche, a prelude of things to come. They were only rehearsals for a greater drama.[51]

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[46]Johnson, History of the Jews, 451. Estimates of casualties vary between 50,000 and 200,000. See Pipes, Russia under the Bolshevik Regime, 112. Yarmolinsky adds that about 300,000 children were orphaned and at least 700,000 families suffered property damage. The Jews and Other Nationalities, 61.

[47]Slutsky, "Pogroms," 13:700.

[48]Ibid., 13:701.

[49]This youth "pioneer" federation assisted in the collective settlement or *kibbutz* movement in Palestine. See Yehuda Bauer, A History of the Holocaust (Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts, 1982), 145.

[50]The Haganah, from the Hebrew "to shield" or "to protect", was the illegal underground police force or military organization in Palestine.

[51]Bein, The Jewish Question, 259.

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