

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction: the Russian Empire and its Jews

---

I'll tell you something that I don't like to tell everybody. Do you want to know what comprises the grounds for the secret organization of the Nihilists? It's the Poles and the Jews.

Count N. P. Ignatiev (12/24 August 1881)<sup>1</sup>

On 19 February 1880, Emperor Alexander II celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession to the Russian throne. It was a fete held under a cloud, since only a fortnight earlier a terrorist explosion in the Winter Palace had narrowly missed killing the tsar. What were conscientious policemen doing as the empire faced a terrorist offensive? P. A. Cherevin, the chief of gendarmes and acting head of the Third Section, the security police, expended time and resources in pursuit of an imaginary international Jewish conspiracy. On 6 April 1880, he wrote to the governors-general of the provinces comprising the Pale of Jewish Settlement to urge them to search out a "universal Jewish kahal," a body with objectives which were "inimical to the Christian population." This kahal, said to rely upon the support of all Jews, capitalists and proletarians alike, was described as an important source of material support for the revolutionary movement.<sup>2</sup>

Cherevin's Judeophobia obsession was fully shared by General N. P. Ignatiev, soon to be his chief as the newly appointed minister for internal affairs. In 1880 Ignatiev declared that

There is in St. Petersburg a very powerful Polish-Yid group, under whose direct control are banks, the stock exchange, the Bar, a large part of the press and other public activities. By many ways and means, legal and illegal, they have enormous influence upon the bureaucracy, and the whole course of affairs. In its individual parts this group is linked to the plunder of the Exchequer and to sedition. . . . While propagating blind imitation of Europe, people of this group deftly maintain a

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Zainochkovskii, *Krizis samoderzhavna na rubezhe 1870-1880-kh godov* (Moscow, 1964), 380.

<sup>2</sup> TsDIAK, f. 442, op. 830, d. 4 (1881), l. 60. After conducting the requisite investigation, the Kiev provincial authorities reported that, far from being an underground conspiracy, the kahal was an officially approved Jewish benevolent organization, raising funds for projects to commemorate the imperial anniversary: *ibid.*, d. 141 (1880), ll. 1-13ob.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 2 Introduction: the Russian Empire and its Jews

neutral position, and easily use extreme manifestations of sedition and embezzlement in order to recommend their own prescription for treatment: the broadest rights for Poles and Jews, and representative institutions on the Western model. Any honest voice of the Russian land is drowned out by Polish–Yid cries, which assert that only the “intellectual” class should serve, and that Russian demands should be rejected as backward and unenlightened.<sup>3</sup>

Ministerial office made Ignatiev no less reticent in voicing such opinions. In August 1881, he confided to the Austrian ambassador that Poles and Jews were “the grounds for the secret organization of the Nihilists,” as quoted above.

The reorganization of the secret police, which transformed the old Third Section into the new Okhrana did not put an end to this idiosyncratic use of police resources. In the summer of 1881, the Okhrana made an extensive investigation of a phantom “International Jewish Convention,” which was reportedly holding meetings on the frontiers of Russia, filled with sinister intent. The Vilna division of the Okhrana sent a special agent to shadow an elderly rabbi around the streets of Königsberg, in the hope of uncovering the conspirators and blocking their presumed plans to import revolutionary contraband into Russia.<sup>4</sup>

At first glance, such sentiments in the mouths of the foremost defenders of law and order in the empire augured ill for the fate of the Jewish population. They were symptomatic of the concern, unease, and ambivalence that now characterized official attitudes toward the Jews. Jewish settlement in the Russian Empire was slightly more than a century old, dating from the first partition of Poland in 1772 when newly annexed Jewish communities were given the legal status of a tolerated religious minority. What came to be known as the Jewish Question in Russia was an amalgam of Western enlightenment suppositions about the Jews, mediated through the realities of the declining Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Very real, but less important in actually shaping policies, was a matrix of homegrown Russian beliefs and prejudices about the Jews. Such prejudices were overridden by the practical need to deal with a compact, culturally distinct Jewish population. By the end of the nineteenth century, this population exceeded five million people, concentrated in the strategically sensitive Russian–Polish borderlands.

Two fundamental assumptions underlay Russia’s Jewish Question: The first was that the conditions of Jewish social and economic life in the empire constituted a set of problems that required resolution. The second

<sup>3</sup> P. A. Zaionchkovskii, “Popytka sozyva zemskogo sobora i padenie ministerstva N. P. Ignat’eva,” *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 5 (1960), 127.

<sup>4</sup> GARF, f. 102, op. 1881, d. 1483 (1881), ll. 1–9.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

was that these problems were resolvable through a program of targeted reforms. The shortcomings of the Jews were encapsulated in two slogans, “religious fanaticism” and “economic exploitation,” the latter usually seen as deriving from the former. The Russian concept of Jewish “religious fanaticism” mirrored certain obvious features of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, such as their persistent difference in dress, language, and religious and communal organization. Russians assumed that the Jews considered themselves to be not only a chosen people, but also endowed with a God-given superiority over the despised non-Jews. They were a people apart, devoid of loyalty to the state or any commitment to a proper civic relationship with the non-Jewish population. A recurrent theme in the Russian discussion of the Jewish Question was their assumed arrogance, reinforced by a system of male education that was thought to inculcate anti-Christian interpretations of the Talmud. These would furthermore encourage and justify unreserved economic exploitation based on cheating and exploiting the non-Jews. It was believed that such anti-social activities were collective in nature and were justified and directed by the leaders of the Jewish community. Another recurrent theme in Russian discussions was the supposed continuation of this formal communal leadership, the *kahal*, abolished in 1844, as an illegal underground structure. Judeophobe commentators claimed that Jews raised petty trade, middleman activity, usury and tavern-keeping, seen as quintessentially parasitic forms of living at the expense of others, to art forms. In this perspective, it was the mutual support provided by the *kahal* that ensured that Jews were more than a match for any competitor, even the arch-exploiter of the Russian village, the *kulak*. Commentators differed as to whether Jewish faults were innate, deriving from the very nature of Jewish religious belief, or constituted a response by the Jews to centuries of religious persecution. In either case, state and society shared a consensus that Jews could be – must be – reformed, and transformed into good subjects of the realm.<sup>5</sup>

A reform agenda dominated Russia’s Jewish policy until the eve of the pogroms, although each monarch pursued the general objective in his or her own way. Under Emperor Alexander I (1801–25), the state codified the legal status of the Jews. A comprehensive statute in 1804 sought to regulate all aspects of Jewish life. The statute employed both coercion and concessions to encourage Jews to pursue more “productive” economic activities. Especially targeted were Jewish distillers and tavern-keepers whom the government sought to drive out of peasant villages and to resettle in

<sup>5</sup> These themes are explored in my book *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question, 1855–1881* (Cambridge, 1996; hereafter *IRJQ*).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 4 Introduction: the Russian Empire and its Jews

agricultural colonies or factory settlements.<sup>6</sup> The embeddedness of the Jews in the economic and social life of the imperial borderlands ensured that, despite legislative initiatives, Jewish economic life remained largely unchanged until the peasant emancipation of 1861. The most substantial transformation in the life of the empire's Jews in the nineteenth century – a demographic explosion accompanied by widespread pauperization – derived from forces largely outside the direct control of the Russian state.<sup>7</sup>

The policies of Emperor Nicholas I (1825–55) reflected his ambition to standardize all aspects of Russian life along military-bureaucratic lines. Thus, the Jews were made eligible for military service on equal terms with other Russian subjects of the equivalent social estate. As noted above, the *kahal* system of autonomous local Jewish self-government was abolished. Jews who were perceived to be engaged in productive undertakings were granted a moderate extension of civil rights. Greater effort was expended on devising restrictions for unproductive, “useless” elements of the Jewish population. Nicholas' most remarkable initiative was the creation of a state-sponsored Jewish school system, extending from primary schools to institutes designed to train progressive teachers and rabbis. This educational system produced a cadre of Russianized Jewish intellectuals who played a significant leadership role in the secular life of Russian Jewry.<sup>8</sup>

The reign of Emperor Alexander II (1855–81) was dominated by the “Great Reforms,” initiated by the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and accompanied by extensive efforts to promote the economic, social, and political modernization of the empire. The rights and prerogatives of “productive” Jews, such as urban artisans, large-scale merchants, and those with specialized skills or high levels of secular education, were extended.<sup>9</sup> Parallel initiatives sought to control or restrict the activities of “unproductive” elements such as tavern-keepers.

<sup>6</sup> John D. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the Jewish Question in Russia* (DeKalb, 1986), 136–43.

<sup>7</sup> See B. Mironov's efforts, using the UN Human Development Index, which measures longevity, literacy, and gross income, to evaluate the situation of Russian Jewry. Despite a Jewish lag in income and physical development, Mironov concludes that “on the Index of Human Development, Jews ranked higher than Russians”: “122 goda vroz,” *Ab Imperio*, 2 (2002), 582–3.

<sup>8</sup> For the most important examination of these trends and initiatives, see Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia, 1983). For the concept of the “Russian Jewish intelligentsia,” see John D. Klier, “The Russian Jewish Intelligentsia and the Concept of *Shiianie*,” *Ethnic Studies*, 10 (1993), 157–74.

<sup>9</sup> These policies have been described as “selective integration” by Benjamin Nathans in *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002) and less sympathetically as “homeopathic” medicine in S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, II (Philadelphia, 1918), 157.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

As a general rule, when the various components of the Great Reforms were first put in place they included no special provisions for Jews. The major exception was a ban on Jews acquiring peasant land. Education was fully open to Jews, making possible careers in the liberal professions and, to a limited degree, in the civil service. Jews could sit on the juries of the new Russian courts, and a number of Jews attained prominence at the Bar. The rules that created local rural and urban self-government (the *zemstvo* system) contained no ban on Jewish participation, although the *zemstvo* system was not introduced into many of the provinces of the Pale of Settlement due to fears that it would be dominated by Polish landowners. The first version of the military reform of 1874, which introduced the principle of universal military service for all social estates, made no special provision for the way in which Jews were to be drafted. Jews were, for a brief time after the abolition of serfdom, allowed freely to buy and lease agricultural land.<sup>10</sup> The restrictions governing Jewish settlement and mobility within the Pale were relaxed. In the early Reform Era, Jews even became the subject of sympathetic concern for the leaders of public opinion. Proposals for the complete emancipation of the Jews were widely mooted in the press.

In retrospect it is easy to see the deep residue of suspicion toward the Jews which accompanied these well-intentioned reforms and which led to their almost immediate attenuation. The nationalist revolt of the Poles in 1863 focused Russian attention on the Russian–Polish borderlands, where the Jews were an integral part of the rural economy. A series of anti-Polish measures, collectively known as Russification, were extended to include Jews, who were seen as economic allies of the Poles.<sup>11</sup> The Russian government retained a paternalistic concern for the newly emancipated peasantry, and feared that the Jews were exploiting the unsophisticated and ignorant rural inhabitants, thus reducing them to a “Jewish serfdom.” Restrictions on landownership and rural tavern-keeping followed. A widely held perception that Jews avoided military service led to more stringent recruitment procedures specifically for Jews.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This did not, however, extend to peasant properties sold at auction for tax arrears. As part of the official response to the Polish January Uprising of 1863, though after some hesitation, the government also restricted Jewish purchases of gentry land in much of the Pale. See Klier, *IRJQ*, 301, 484, nn. 1, 2.

<sup>11</sup> John D. Klier, “The Polish Revolt of 1863 and the Birth of Russification: Bad for the Jews?,” *Polin*, 1 (1986), 91–106; Theodore Weeks, “Russification: Word and Practice, 1863–1914,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 148, 4 (2004), 471–89; Darius Staliunas, “Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwestern Region After the Uprising of 1863–1864?,” *Kritika*, 5, 2 (2004), 273–89.

<sup>12</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, 342.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

The brief vogue of Judeophilia in the early Reform Era gave way to an articulate strain of hostility to Jews, known in Russia as “Judeophobia.”<sup>13</sup> Judeophobia encompassed a diverse range of opinions. Some adepts based their criticism of the Jews on objective realities, such as the concentration of the Jews in tavern-keeping and petty trade, or their apparent reluctance to fulfill their military service obligations. At the other extreme were those who went far beyond the observed realities of Jewish life to promulgate the Blood Libel (the claim that Jews ritually murdered Christian children) or belief in a vast Jewish conspiracy against Christian civilization, led by the “international kahal.”<sup>14</sup> The Jews were not without their defenders, and the Judeophobe publicists were challenged by Jews and non-Jews – “Judeophiles” – who asserted the necessity of continued reform in order to solve the Jewish Question.

By the end of Alexander II’s reign, debates within the government made it apparent that there would be changes in the existing legal situation of the Jews, but the exact direction was impossible to foresee. This situation derived from the fact that suggestions for the resolution of the Jewish Question did not follow neat ideological fault lines. A number of conservative Judeophobe newspapers advocated the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, on the grounds that it was only just that the burden of Jewish exploitation should be borne by all regions of the empire. Some liberal newspapers, in contrast, fearing for the welfare of the peasantry, opposed the release of the wily and industrious Jews from the Pale at a time when the cultural level of the peasantry made them an easy target for exploitation. Some Russifiers equated the Jews with the Poles, while others argued that the Jews, who could always be relied upon to favor the strong, would support Russian imperial interests.<sup>15</sup>

Most of these viewpoints merely recapitulated longstanding debates. One new theme, which had important repercussions for the future, could also be detected. Throughout the Reform Era, Judeophobes and Judeophiles alike had differentiated the Jewish population. On the one hand were the Jewish masses, generally perceived as being religiously fanatical, dirty, and obscurantist, isolated from non-Jewish culture, ready to employ any expedient in the mundane struggle for existence. Changing their status was the key to resolving the Jewish Question. Juxtaposed to them was the Jewish intelligentsia, educated

<sup>13</sup> I use the term “Judeophobia” throughout this study to characterize negative Russian attitudes toward the Jews. For the relationship of Russian Judeophobia and Western antisemitism, see John D. Klier, “Russian Judeophobes and German Antisemites: Strangers and Brothers,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 37, 4 (1989), 524–40.

<sup>14</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, 417–49.

<sup>15</sup> See my article “Why Were Russian Jews Not *Kaisertreu*?” *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2003), 41–58.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

and acculturated, and free from the worst faults of their “little brothers.” Indeed, aware of the shortcomings of the Jewish masses, educated Jews could be counted upon to act as allies in the struggle of the Russian state against Jewish ignorance, superstition, and exploitation, just as the Russian intelligentsia fought to raise the level of their own “dark masses.”

On the eve of the new era ushered in by Alexander II’s assassination, this demarcation was breaking down. While acculturated Jews had been willing publicly to criticize the shortcomings of the Jewish masses, they were unable to accept the discoveries of the more extreme Judeophobes, such as the ritual murder charge, the alleged existence of an international kahal, or the reality of an organized collective of Jewish exploiters, led by a group of emergent Jewish capitalists. The rise of an articulate Judeophobe press increasingly forced Jewish intellectuals into the role of defenders of the Jewish masses against the more extreme changes made against them. As a consequence, Judeophobes began to taunt Russian Jewish intellectuals with the claim that they themselves were part of the vast Jewish conspiracy to undermine Russian state and society.<sup>16</sup>

The Judeophobe discovery of the treachery of the Jewish intelligentsia was exacerbated by another phenomenon, the increased entry of Jews into the public educational institutions of the empire. In areas of concentrated Jewish settlement, such as the dynamic port city of Odessa, Judeophobes claimed that Jews were “driving Christians from the school benches” and “filling up the schools.” The exceptional statistics for a few Odessa school districts were extrapolated for the empire as a whole. In 1880, an editorial in the Judeophobe St. Petersburg newspaper *Novoe vremia* gave a name to this campaign: “*Zhid idet!*” – “The Yid is coming!” For *Novoe vremia* and its allies, education had become just another weapon for Jewish exploitation. A perusal of the annual reports of the governors of the Pale of Settlement reveals that this campaign was having its desired effect, as governors called for a limitation on the admission of Jews to state schools.<sup>17</sup>

It was hard for contemporaries to gauge the impact on public policy of polemics for and against the Jews. Signs emanating from official spheres offered little guidance. In 1879, for example, on the occasion of a rare meeting of the government’s Rabbinic Commission, some Jewish communal leaders became convinced that the state was about to announce the total legal emancipation of the Jews. On the basis of discussions with the director of the Office for Foreign Cults in the Ministry of Internal

<sup>16</sup> Klier, *IRŹQ*, 350–69.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 403–7. See examples from around the Pale in A. I. Georgievskii, *Po voprosu o merakh otноситel’no obrazovaniia evreev* (SPb, 1886), 205–22.



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 8 Introduction: the Russian Empire and its Jews

Affairs, the veteran writer, publicist, and civil servant L. O. Levanda predicted imminent emancipation in the Lyck-based Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Maggid*.<sup>18</sup> The latter's chief Russian rival, the St. Petersburg *Ha-Melits*, went so far as to claim that a specific emancipatory decision had already been made.<sup>19</sup>

Out of the public eye, a special commission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs also considered the future status of the Jews. A memorandum submitted to the commission by two officials, N. A. Nekliudov of the Ministry of Justice and V. D. Karpov from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, argued for the outright abolition of the Pale of Settlement.<sup>20</sup> These sentiments appeared to be bearing fruit. Early in 1880, a routine query to the governors about the number of Jews residing outside the Pale had resulted in the hasty expulsion of illegally settled Jews by officials who wished to be seen as fulfilling their duties. The minister of internal affairs, L. S. Makov, intervened with a directive that became known as the "Makov Circular" of 3 April 1880. All Jews who were illegally settled outside the Pale prior to 3 April, he ordered, were allowed to remain in place.<sup>21</sup>

Yet not all was sweetness and light. The recommendations of Nekliudov and Karpov for abolition of the Pale were not accepted by the tsar. In symbolic balance with the Makov Circular, the government announced in 1880 that the territory in southern Russia known as the Don Cossack Host was to be closed to further Jewish settlement. Officials feared that Jews were exploiting and corrupting the Cossacks, the local peasant-military caste.<sup>22</sup> The liberal sentiments of Karpov were not shared inside his own ministry, where the police chief Cherevin was in search of Jewish conspiracies. A number of bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education rallied around the call for percentage norms for the entry of Jews into state schools. Public education, of course, had heretofore been seen as a useful vehicle for the attainment of Jewish acculturation and integration. Increasingly, even those Jews who had passed through the *cursus honorum* of higher education were being viewed with a critical eye. The commander of the Warsaw Military District recommended the exclusion of Jewish doctors from the forces, albeit without a public announcement. A year later the commander of the Vilna Military District made a similar request, but saw no need for secrecy – it should be openly announced that Jewish doctors evaded their service responsibilities.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Ha-Maggid*, 8:19/II/1879, 61. <sup>19</sup> *Ha-Melits*, 4:23/I/1879.

<sup>20</sup> Iu. I. Gessen, *Zakon i zhizn'* (SPb, 1911), 148–51.

<sup>21</sup> *Russkii evrei*, 22:28/V/1880; *Rassvet*, 19:8/V/1880. <sup>22</sup> Gessen, *Zakon*, 151–2.

<sup>23</sup> RGIA, f. 400, op. 5, d. 1650, ll. 70, 6–10ob.



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

If change was in the offing, it seems reasonable to assume that it would have been slow and modulated. After all, it had taken the full twenty-five years of Alexander's reign just to extend civil rights to elite categories of Jews. Moreover, even as these concessions came under attack, the state showed itself reluctant to rescind rights once given. This was all the more remarkable since Judeophobe prejudices were widespread at the highest levels of government, although occasionally challenged by a contingent of the tsar's liberal reformers. The crisis which broke over the empire in 1881–2 gave free rein to pent-up prejudices. In a climate of national emergency, the customary, glacial pace of Russian reform reached abnormal speeds. The ongoing Jewish Question proved no exception.

### Documenting the pogroms

A broad range of material, official, semi-official, public, and private, is available for the task of describing and evaluating the pogroms of 1881–2.

Archival materials from Europe, Israel and the United States constitute an integral component of this study. Particularly helpful have been the collections of the State Archive of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii [GARF]) in Moscow, the Russian State Historical Archive (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv [RGIA]) in St. Petersburg, and the Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kiev (Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukraïny, Kyiv [TsDIK]).<sup>24</sup>

GARF houses the police archives of the tsarist empire and much of the material I cite draws on fond 102 of this collection. There were various police departments, the most common of which was the Second; unless designated otherwise, all citations from fond 102 refer to this department. GARF also holds the material from the archive of the Sixth Police Department, which provided the basis for the most significant publication of pogrom-related documents, edited by S. M. Dubnow and Ia. Krasnyi-Admoni, in the period following the Revolution of 1917.<sup>25</sup> I have read these materials in both their published and archival guises in order to verify the text of the published version. For ease of reference, I provide citations from the material published by Krasnyi-Admoni, which is

<sup>24</sup> When referring to material from these archives, I follow the "Soviet" method of archival citation (see Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *Trophies of War and Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), xv–xvi): fond (f.) (record group), opis' (op.) (inventory), delo (d.) (file) (which I also use in place of edinitsa khraneniia (storage unit), used in some archives), chast' (ch.) (part), list (l.) (page), and obverse (ob). I have also included the date of individual documents within a file, where possible.

<sup>25</sup> The material in question is in GARF, f. 102, op. 38, d. 679, ch. 2; 681, chs. 1–3.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89548-4 - Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 10 Introduction: the Russian Empire and its Jews

designated *K-A*. Typescripts of the original archival documents, including some unpublished materials, are located at the Institute of Jewish Research (YIVO) in New York.<sup>26</sup>

Besides archival material, this study relies upon a comprehensive reading of the contemporary press in a variety of languages. The existing scholarship has universally emphasized the shortcomings of the press because of its subordination to the Russian censorship. As this study will demonstrate, official efforts notwithstanding, the censorship never succeeded in effectively imposing its will on the press. There was no consistency of purpose in this regard. Indeed, an important aspect of this period is the extent to which the government tried to use the press, at home and abroad, to serve its own ends. The problem of using the press as a source is not that it was censored and thus conveyed too little of events, but that it carried too much: Accounts were often hopelessly in conflict, with rumor reported as fact. Moreover, the greater the physical remove of a periodical from the scene of events, the less reliable or more contradictory its accounts tended to be. As a consequence it was often the uncensored foreign press that proved least reliable in its pogrom coverage. It may also be taken as a general rule that the ideology of a particular publication, rather than the influence of the censor, colored its reports.

Memoir literature has served as the major source for the master narrative of the events of 1881–2. Yet much of it was written long after the fact, and often with an ideological cast. I have tried to confirm specific details found in the memoir literature, even apparently minor ones, in order to provide a criterion for assessing the reliability of a particular account as a whole.

To what extent does this broad range of sources allow for a reconstruction of the events of 1881–2? The voluminous archival evidence documents the actions taken by the imperial administration before, during, and after the pogroms. Much of this material, such as encoded telegraphic reports from the scene of pogroms and urgent requests for information from the center, were generated in the very heat of events. There are duty orders and direct, handwritten commands from provincial authorities to subordinates involved in the repression of pogroms, as well as copies of their printed announcements and orders to the general public. Official reports exist for almost every pogrom, written both in the immediate aftermath and at some distance from the events they describe. There are secret denunciations of officials and private individuals, sent anonymously to provincial and national authorities,

<sup>26</sup> Tcherikower Collection, RG 81, pp. 74, 142–74, 381. Citations from archives outside the former Soviet Union, such as YIVO, the London Metropolitan Archives, or the archive of Alliance Israélite Universelle, follow the practice of the individual archive.