

Workers, Pogroms, and the 1905 Revolution in Odessa

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The wave of anti-Jewish pogroms that swept the Pale of Settlement after the issuance of the October Manifesto in 1905 reflected the tensions and emotions that characterized popular unrest in that revolutionary year. In the two weeks following the tsar's granting of fundamental civil rights and political liberties, pogroms, directed mainly at Jews, broke out in hundreds of cities, towns, and villages, resulting in deaths and injuries to thousands of people.¹ In the port city of Odessa alone, the police reported that at least 400 Jews and 100 non-Jews were killed and approximately 300 people, mostly Jews, were injured, with some 1,632 Jewish houses, apartments, and stores incurring damage.²

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¹ A. Linden writes that 660 pogroms occurred between October 18 and 29. See his article "Die Dimensionen der Oktoberpogrome (1905)," in *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*, 2 vols., Cologne and Leipzig, 1910, vol. 1, p. 187. Shlomo Lambroza in a more recent study revises Linden's figures downwards. He states that 657 anti-Jewish pogroms occurred from October 1905 to January 1906. Howard Mehlinger and John Thompson write that approximately 150 pogroms occurred in October alone, resulting in some 4,000 deaths and 10,000 injuries. They note, however, that not all of these pogroms were directed against Jews. Shlomo Lambroza, "The Pogrom Movement and Anti-Semitism in Russia, 1903–1906" Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1981, p. 117, and Howard D. Mehlinger and John M. Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution*, Bloomington, IN, 1972, p. 58. See also V. P. Obninskii, *Polgoda russkoi revoliutsii*, Moscow, 1906, p. 42, and E. Maevskii, "Obshchaia kartina dvizheniia," in Iu. Martov, P. Maslov, and A. Potresov, eds., *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii*, vol. 2, pt. 1, St. Petersburg, 1909, pp. 97 and 103, esp. n. 3.

² These figures undoubtedly underestimate the true extent of the damage. City hospitals and clinics, for example, treated 608 persons during the pogrom; these figures do not include injured persons who received treatment elsewhere. Other estimates range from 302 Jewish victims, cited in the article on the 1905 Odessa pogrom in *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*, vol. 2, p. 130, to over 1,000, the figure given by the Soviet editors of Sergei Witte's memoirs. Maxim Vinaver, a prominent St. Petersburg lawyer, wrote in 1907 that over 400 were killed and approximately 2,000 were wounded, and the Jewish newspaper *Voskhod* reported that over 800 were killed and another several thousand were wounded. "Vsepodanneishii otchet Senatora Kuzminskogo," in *Materialy k istorii russkoi kontr-revoliutsii*, vol. 1, *Pogromy po ofitsial'nykh dokumentam*, St. Petersburg, 1908, pp. clxvi–clxvii (hereafter cited as Kuzminskii Report); *Voskhod*, no. 44/45, November 11, 1905, p. 16; S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 3, Moscow, 1960, p. 615; Maxim Vinaver, "La situation à Odessa," at the Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Dossier: URSS IC-1. Odessa.

Despite the havoc wreaked by these pogroms and the impact that they had on the course of revolutionary events, historians have failed to examine the October pogroms.³ No other Russian city in 1905 experienced a pogrom comparable in its destruction and violence to the one unleashed against the Jews of Odessa. Examination of the Odessa pogrom sheds light on the broader issues of the Revolution of 1905, particularly the character of worker unrest and protest. Since ethnicity often acted as a divisive force in workers' movements, the ethnic heterogeneity of the Odessa work force provides the opportunity to study how ethnic tensions and antagonisms affected worker solidarity and the capacity for collective action in 1905.⁴

Identifying pogromists and their motives and pinpointing the specific reasons for the outbreak and timing of anti-Jewish violence are two of the most perplexing issues in an analysis of pogroms. Examination of the political, social, and occupational bases of pogromist behavior will help determine why certain groups were prone to participate in pogroms. This article examines the political developments leading up to the October 1905 pogrom in Odessa and analyzes the chain of events that triggered the attack on the Jews of that city. It also seeks to explain why certain occupational groups—unskilled day laborers and policemen, in particular—figured prominently in the pogrom. The 1905 pogrom in Odessa resulted from the combination of several factors. Among the long-term factors were economic competition between Jewish and non-Jewish day laborers, long-standing ethnic and religious antagonisms, the prominence of Jews in the commercial affairs of Odessa, and the mistreatment of Jews, expressed in discriminatory legislation and policies, by the central government and local authorities. More immediate factors included the general course of political events and developments in 1905, specifically the polarization of the political spectrum into militant pro- and anti-government forces, and the role of civilian and military officials in promoting an atmosphere conducive to a pogrom.

Notwithstanding Odessa's well-deserved reputation as a bastion of liberal and enlightened attitudes towards its Jewish residents, anti-Semitism had assumed ugly and violent forms several times in the nineteenth century. Serious pogroms in which Jews were killed and wounded, and Jewish houses and businesses suffered substantial damage, had occurred in 1821, 1859, 1871,

³ The major exceptions are Lambroza and *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*, the massive two-volume study prepared by Zionist organizations cited in note 2. See also Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *Antisemitismus und reaktionäre Utopie: Russischer Konservatismus um Kampf gegen den Wandel von Staat und Gesellschaft, 1890–1917*, Hamburg, 1978, pp. 87–98.

⁴ See Ronald G. Suny, *The Baku Commune, 1917–1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution*, Princeton, 1972, for an excellent study of how class and nationality affected the labor movement in another ethnically mixed region of the Russian Empire.

1881, and 1900. Anti-Jewish sentiment was common among Odessa's Russian population, as gangs of Jewish and Russian youths often engaged in bloody brawls. At Eastertime, in particular, rumors of a forthcoming pogrom circulated annually through the city's Jewish community.⁵

These pogroms stemmed in part from deep-rooted anti-Jewish feelings, but religious hatred sometimes combined with economic factors to spark pogroms. The increasing prominence of Jews in the commercial life of the city and structural changes in the economy played no small role. After mid-century, Jewish merchants, taking advantage of the bankruptcy of several leading Greek trading firms, began to encroach upon the Greek monopoly of the export trade; like other ethnic and religious communities in the city, they gave preference in employment to their coreligionists. Consequently, Greeks were supplanted by Jewish workers and fell into straitened economic circumstances.⁶ These developments, along with the rumor that Jews had desecrated the Greek Orthodox Church and cemetery, fanned the flames of anti-Semitism, driving many Greeks, sailors and dockworkers in particular, to participate in the pogroms of 1859 and 1871.

Greeks were not the only residents of Odessa who perceived Jews as an economic threat. According to some Russian inhabitants, exploitation by and competition with Jews figured prominently as the causes of the 1871 pogrom. Some complained that "the Jews exploit us," while others, especially the unemployed, blamed increased Jewish settlement in Odessa for reduced employment opportunities and lower wages. One Russian cabdriver, referring to the Jews' practice of lending money to Jewish immigrants to enable them to rent or buy a horse and cab, complained, "Several years ago there was one Jewish cabdriver for every hundred Russian cabdrivers, but since then rich Jews have given money to the poor Jews so that there are now a countless multitude of Jewish cabdrivers."⁷

The growing visibility of Jews enhanced the predisposition of Russians to blame Jews for their difficulties. Russian residents of Odessa could point to the steady growth of the city's Jewish population during the nineteenth century—from approximately 14,000 (14 percent) in 1858 to nearly 140,000 (35 percent)

⁵ The best and most thorough English-language account of pogroms before 1905 in Odessa is provided in Steve Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881*, Stanford, 1985. See also Lambroza, "Pogrom Movement," pp. 275–277. For accounts in Russian, see D. Kogan, "Pervye desiatiletia evreiskoi obshchiny v Odesse i pogrom 1821 goda," *Evreiskaia starina*, 1911, no. 3, pp. 260–267; M. Morgulis, "Bezporiadki 1871 goda v Odesse," *Evreiskii mir* 2 (December 1910): 42–66; *Opisanie odesskikh ulichnykh bezporiadkov v dni sv. Paskhi 1871 goda*, Odessa, 1871. The 1900 pogrom is described in "Khronika vnutrennei zhizni," *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 1900, no. 8, pp. 159–162, and *Budushchnost'*, no. 30, July 28, 1900, and no. 34, August 25, 1900.

⁶ On the displacement of Greeks by Jews in the commercial life of Odessa, see G. Blümenfeld, "Torgovo-promyshlennaia deiatel'nost' evreev v Odesse," *Voskhod*, no. 4, April 1884, pp. 5–6, and no. 5, May 1884, pp. 2–3.

⁷ *Opisanie odesskikh ulichnykh bezporiadkov v dni sv. Paskhi 1871 goda*, pp. 10–11.

in 1897—as a threat to their numerical domination.⁸ In addition, the increasingly prominent role played by Jews in the commercial and industrial life of the city after the Crimean War also contributed to resentment against Odessa's Jewish community. In 1886, for example, firms owned by Jews controlled 70 percent of the export trade in grain climbing to over 90 percent by 1910. Overall, Jewish brokerage houses handled over half of the city's entire export trade at century's end. Moreover, thirteen of the eighteen banks operating in Odessa in 1910 had Jewish board members and directors, while at the turn of the century Jews comprised approximately half of the members of the city's three merchant guilds. Nevertheless, the perception that the growing Jewish presence was accompanied by a corresponding growth in the "exploitation" of Russians by Jewish capitalists had less basis in reality than was commonly believed. Not only did the proportion of Jews in Odessa level off after 1897, remaining at about a third until the outbreak of the First World War, but the majority of enterprises under factory inspection in Odessa were owned by foreigners and Russians, many of whom employed primarily Russian workers. In addition, Jews owned in 1911 only 17 percent of the real estate parcels in the city, while non-Jews controlled about half of all large commercial enterprises. The bulk of the wealth in Odessa still remained in the hands of non-Jews.⁹

Furthermore, wealthy Jews could not enter the leisured propertied class or translate their wealth into political influence. Only a handful of Odessa's Jews worked for the Imperial government, the judiciary or the municipal administration.¹⁰ Contrary to popular perceptions prevalent among many non-Jews both in Odessa and throughout Russia, Odessa was not controlled by its Jewish residents. Indeed, they were disenfranchised after 1892, when the central government deprived Jews of the right to elect representatives to the city council and limited Jewish representation to six appointed members of the sixty-man council.¹¹

The vast majority of Jews eked out meager livings as shopkeepers, second-hand dealers, salesclerks, petty traders, domestic servants, day laborers, workshop employees, and factory hands. I. Brodovskii, in his study of Jewish poverty in Odessa at the turn of the century, estimated that nearly 50,000 Jews were destitute and another 30,000 were poverty-stricken. In 1905 nearly 80,000

⁸ A. A. Skal'kovskii, *Zapiski o torgovykh i promyshlennykh silakh Odessy*, St. Petersburg, 1865, p. 12; *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii, 1897 g.*, vol. 47, St. Petersburg, 1904, pp. 2–3.

⁹ A. P. Subbotin, *V cherte evreiskoi osedlosti*, St. Petersburg, 1890, pp. 212–230; "Odessa," *Evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 12, St. Petersburg, 1910, pp. 59–62; Bliumenfeld, "Torgovo-promyshlennaia," no. 4, pp. 1–14, and no. 5, pp. 1–14; Patricia Herlihy, "Greek Merchants in Odessa in the Nineteenth Century," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 3/4, 1979/1980, pt. 1, p. 419; "Odessa," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, New York, 1905, pp. 378–380.

¹⁰ *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii, 1897 g.*, vol. 47, Table 22, pp. 136–149.

¹¹ *Voskhod*, no. 4, January 29, 1904, pp. 23–26; no. 5, February 5, 1904, pp. 1–5; and no. 4, January 27, 1905, pp. 15–16.

Jews requested financial assistance from the Jewish community in order to buy matzoh during Passover, a telling sign that well over half of the Jews in Odessa experienced difficulties making ends meet.¹²

Despite this disparity between popular perception and the reality of Jewish wealth and power, a reversal in Odessa's economic fortunes at the turn of the century strengthened anti-Jewish sentiments among its Russian residents. Russia entered a deep recession as the great industrial spurt of the 1890s faltered. In turn, Odessa's economy suffered a setback due to the decrease in the demand for manufactured goods, the drop in the supply of grain available for export, and the drying up of credit. Weaknesses and deficiencies in Odessa's economic infrastructure complicated matters. Conditions continued to deteriorate as the year 1905 approached, due to the outbreak of war between Russia and Japan in 1904. Trade, the mainstay of Odessa's economy, declined and the city's industrial sector entered a period of retrenchment.¹³

Although anti-Jewish sentiments in Odessa usually remained submerged, many residents feared that gentile-Jewish hostilities could explode in a matter of hours. During major labor demonstrations or strikes, organizers often felt compelled to exhort workers not to direct their anger at the Jews, but to present a united front of Jew and Russian against the employer. More important, organizers had to allay fears among the general public that demonstrations and strikes might develop into pogroms.¹⁴ The fear that strikes and demonstrations would degenerate into anti-Semitic violence served to curb labor militance. For example, the 1903 May Day rally never materialized because many potential participants, Jews and non-Jews alike, feared that a march through Odessa would unleash a pogrom.¹⁵ Employers also understood that religious animosities could be used to hinder worker solidarity. Owners of enterprises with mixed labor forces sometimes encouraged Russian workers to direct their anger at Jewish coworkers.¹⁶

During the first half of 1905 tensions between Jews and Russians ran particularly high. Fomented in part by the sentiment that Jews were not

¹² I. Brodovskii, *Evreiskaia nishcheta v Odesse*, Odessa, 1902, pp. 5–6; *Iuzhnoe obozrenie*, no. 2784, March 22, 1905.

¹³ Robert Weinberg, "Worker Organizations and Politics in the Revolution of 1905 in Odessa," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1985, pp. 36–45.

¹⁴ In February 1905 a Russian worker assured the Odessa Jewish community that Russian workers were not "wild animals ready to unleash a pogrom." *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 47, February 19, 1905.

¹⁵ *Poslednie izvestiia*, no. 229, May 21, 1905. See the 1904 report of the Odessa factory inspector who observed that workers refrained from striking because they were aware that worker militance "could lead to a Jewish pogrom." Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv SSSR (TsGIA), f. 23, op. 29, d. 80, ll. 14–14ob.

¹⁶ *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 241, November 2, 1905; *Proletarskoe delo*, no. 5, October 10, 1905.

contributing to the war effort against the Japanese, these resentments nearly reached a breaking point in the spring. As in previous years rumors of a pogrom had circulated among the Jewish community during Orthodox Holy Week in April. In the past, Jews had not taken precautions, but in 1905 they mobilized. Using the self-defense groups that they had formed in the aftermath of the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, Jews armed themselves. Just before Easter the National Committee of Jewish Self-Defense distributed a series of leaflets threatening non-Jews with armed retaliation in the event of a pogrom. The committee urged all Jews to join self-defense brigades and prepare to counter any attack on Jewish lives and property. Men were told to arm themselves and women were encouraged to prepare solutions of sulfuric acid. D. B. Neidgart, the city governor and brother-in-law of the future prime minister P. A. Stolypin, afraid of the potential for public disorders, even agreed to publish the appeals of the National Committee of Jewish Self-Defense in his office's daily newspaper in order to publicize the preparedness of the Jewish community to resist a pogrom with force.¹⁷

Such fears appeared once again in June in the aftermath of a general strike and the disorders occasioned by the arrival of the battleship *Potemkin*. On June 13 Cossacks shot several workers from metal-processing and machine-construction factories who had been on strike since the beginning of May. Workers retaliated on June 14 by starting a general strike and attacking police with guns and rocks. The arrival of the *Potemkin* during the night of June 14 diverted the workers from confrontation with their employers and the government. On June 15, instead of intensifying their strike, thousands of Odessites jammed the port district in order to view the battleship and rally behind the mutinous sailors. By late afternoon, some members of the crowd began to ransack warehouses and set fire to the harbor's wooden buildings. Although the sources do not allow a precise determination of the composition of the rioters, arrest records reveal that non-Jewish vagrants, dockworkers, and other day laborers comprised the overwhelming majority.¹⁸ The military tried to suppress the unrest by cordoning off the harbor and opening fire on the trapped crowd. By the next morning nearly 2,000 people had died, victims of either the soldiers' bullets or the fire that ravaged the harbor.

During these disorders rumors of an impending pogrom once again surfaced, as right-wing agitators attempted to incite Russian workers against the

¹⁷ Both the correspondent for the Bund's newspaper and local officials stated, however, that they had not seen any printed material inciting Russians to attack Jews. *Poslednie izvestiia*, no. 240, July 10/June 27, 1905; Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii SSSR (TsGAOR), *f.* 124, *op.* 43, *d.* 298, 1905, *ll.* 1–2; Kuzminskii Report, p. 102; J. Sh. Hertz, "Di ershte russlender revolutsie," in G. Aronson, S. Dubnow-Erllich and J. Sh. Hertz, eds., *Di geshikhte fun Bund*, vol. 2, New York, 1962, p. 74; *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni*, no. 14, April 10, 1905, p. 24, and no. 17, May 8, 1905, pp. 25–27.

¹⁸ See Weinberg, "Worker Organizations and Politics," chap. 5, for details of the June unrest. See *Odesskii listok*, no. 161, July 2, 1905, for the names of people arrested.

Jews.¹⁹ On June 20, only a few days after the massacre, a virulently anti-Semitic, four-page broadside entitled *Odesskie dni* appeared. The tract blamed the Jews, in particular the National Committee of Jewish Self-Defense and secondary school students, for the recent disorders and tragedy at the port. Accusing these Jews of fomenting the unrest and enlisting the support of unwitting Russians, the author of the broadside stated that Jews initiated the shootings on June 14 and 15 and were responsible for setting fire to the port.²⁰

Jews found it difficult to dispel the accusations expressed in *Odesskie dni*. While many reports of Jewish revolutionary activity were exaggerations or even fabrications, Jews were behind much of the social and political ferment enveloping Odessa. During the summer the police arrested several Jews for making and stockpiling bombs. Jews also figured prominently among the 133 Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries pronounced politically unreliable, arrested or exiled after the June Days. In addition, a leaflet distributed throughout the city, apparently by a Bundist organization, urged Jews to arm themselves, struggle for civil and political freedom and overthrow the autocracy.²¹ Jews also organized rallies at the university and directed student strikes and public demonstrations. Like others throughout the empire, Odessa's university became the locus of anti-government activity after the tsar in August granted administrative autonomy to Russia's universities, thereby removing these institutions from the jurisdiction of the police. Jewish youths, students, and workers filled the ranks of the crowds that attended the rallies at the university in September and October, and Jews actively participated in the work stoppages, demonstrations, and street disorders that overwhelmed Odessa in mid-October. On October 16, a day of major disturbances, 197 of the 214 persons arrested were Jews.²²

These events confirmed many high-ranking police and other officials in the belief that Jews were a seditious element. Government officials in Odessa had a history of blaming Jews for fomenting trouble in the city. At the turn of the century, for example, the municipal governor even asked the Ministry of Internal Affairs to limit Jewish migration to Odessa in the hope that such a measure would weaken the revolutionary movement.²³ These attitudes of

¹⁹ *Poslednie izvestiia*, no. 242, July 25/July 12, 1905.

²⁰ *Odesskie dni* can be found in the Bakhmeteff Archives at Columbia University, Zosa Szajkowski Collection, Oversized Folders.

²¹ At the empirewide level, Jews constituted, by 1900, 30 percent of those arrested for political crimes. See the 1986 University Lecture at Boston University by Norman Naimark, *Terrorism and the Fall of Imperial Russia*, Boston, 1986, p. 4. See *Otvēt na odesskie dni i gg. Odessity*, Odessa, 1905, for one attempt to refute *Odesskie dni*. For the leaflet see TsGAOR, f. 102, OO, d. 5, ch. 4, 1905, ll. 193–194. On the arrests of Jews, see TsGAOR, f. 102, OO, d. 106, ch. 2, 1905, ll. 54–61, 68–69ob., 76–78ob., and 80–81; *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 167, July 26, 1905; *Iuzhnye zapiski*, no. 29, July 17, 1905, pp. 61–62.

²² Kuzminskii Report, p. cxxv.

²³ TsGIA, f. 1284, op. 194, d. 68, 1902, l. 4ob. See also Frederick W. Skinner, "Odessa and the Problem of Urban Modernization," in Michael F. Hamm, ed., *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, Bloomington, IN, 1986, p. 228.

Odessa's officials, along with the legacy of discrimination against Russian Jewry and governmental tolerance or at times sponsorship of anti-Jewish organizations and propaganda, signaled to anti-Semites that the authorities in Odessa would probably countenance violence against Jews.²⁴ When combined with economic resentments and frustrations as well as religious prejudices, the belief that Jews were revolutionaries helped create an explosive situation. To those residents of Odessa alarmed by the opposition to the tsar and government, Jews were a convenient target for retaliation.

Politics in Odessa polarized during 1905 as anti- and pro-government forces coalesced and mobilized. Militant right-wing organizations like the Black Hundreds and patriotic student groups consolidated their ranks; in addition to the organized revolutionary parties that had been active for years in Odessa, radical student groups also emerged as significant political forces. The stage was set for a confrontation between the forces of revolution and reaction. The pogrom occurred in the context of this unrest and the feverish atmosphere in Odessa and throughout Russia. During the week before the pogrom, public calm in Odessa was disturbed by bloody confrontations pitting the populace against soldiers and police.

On October 15, a day after the police injured several high school students who were boycotting classes in sympathy for striking railway workers, radical students and revolutionaries appealed to workers to start a general strike. They collected donations for guns and ammunition, and representatives of the city's three Social Democratic organizations visited factories and workshops. Reports also circulated that students and revolutionaries were organizing armed militias. On October 16, students, youths, and workers roamed the streets of Odessa, building barricades and engaging the police and military in pitched battles. The troops summoned to suppress the demonstrations encountered fierce resistance, as demonstrators behind barricades greeted them with rocks and gunfire. Military patrols were also targets of snipers. The troops retaliated by opening fire, and by early evening the army had secured the streets of Odessa. The police disarmed and arrested scores of demonstrators, systematically bludgeoning some into unconsciousness.²⁵

October 17 passed without any public disturbances or confrontations, but life did not return to normal. The military continued to patrol the city, while schools and many stores remained closed. Even though not all workers

²⁴ This viewpoint is developed more fully in the work of Hans Rogger. See especially his "The Jewish Policy of Late Tsarism: A Reappraisal," recently republished in Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, Berkeley, 1986, p. 33.

²⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the events leading up to the pogrom, see Weinberg, "Worker Organizations and Politics," pp. 261–275. Some of the relevant sources are: TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *op.* 5, *d.* 3, *ch.* 49, 1905, *op.* 5, *d.* 3, *ch.* 56, 1905, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, *lit.* A, 1905, and *op.* 233, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, 1905; Kuzminskii Report, *passim*; *Revoliutsionnoe gnezdo. Iz istorii Novorossiiskogo universiteta*, St. Petersburg, 1909; *Odesskie novosti*, no. 6767, October 15, 1905, and no. 6769, October 26, 1905; *Iuzhnoe obozrenie*, no. 2948, October 15, 1905, and no. 2950, October 26, 1905.

responded to the appeal for a general strike, at least 4,000 workers—many of whom were Jewish—walked off their jobs either voluntarily or after receiving threats from other workers already on strike. Groups of workers congregated outside stores that opened for business, singing songs and drinking vodka. At the university, professors and students, along with representatives of revolutionary parties, began to form armed militias.²⁶

The storm broke on October 18. News of the October Manifesto had reached Odessa officials on the previous evening, and by the next morning thousands of people thronged the streets to celebrate. As one university student exclaimed, “A joyous crowd appeared in the streets—people greeted each other as if it were a holiday.”²⁷ Jews were joined by non-Jews in vigorously and enthusiastically celebrating the granting of civil rights and political liberties.

At first the crowds were peaceful, but the quiet did not last long. Soon after the demonstrations began, several individuals began to unfurl red flags and banners with anti-government slogans. Others shouted slogans like “Down with the Autocracy,” “Long Live Freedom,” and “Down with the Police.” Apartment dwellers draped red carpets and shawls from their balconies and windows, while groups of demonstrators forced passersby to doff their hats or bow before the flags. In the city дума building, demonstrators ripped down the portrait of the tsar, substituted a red flag for the Imperial colors and collected money for weapons. The city governor also reported that one group of demonstrators tied portraits of the tsar to the tails of dogs and then released them to roam the city.²⁸ The mood of the demonstrators grew more violent as the day wore on. Mobs of demonstrators—primarily Jewish youths, according to official accounts—viciously attacked and disarmed policemen. By mid-afternoon Neidgart had received reports that two policemen had been killed, ten wounded and 22 disarmed, and that many others had abandoned their posts in order to avoid possible injury.²⁹

The clashes were not limited to attacks on policemen by angry demonstrators. Toward the end of the day tensions between those Odessites who heralded the Manifesto and those who disapproved of the concessions granted by the tsar had reached a breaking point. Angered over being forced to doff their caps and outraged by the sight of desecrated portraits of the tsar, supporters of the monarchy gave vent to their anger and frustration. They demonstrated their hostility

²⁶ TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, *lit.* A, 1905, *ll.* 36 and 40, and *op.* 5, *d.* 3, *ch.* 49, 1905, *ll.* 63, 64*ob.* and 123; Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxxviii–cxxix, cxxxii and 58; *Revoliutsionnoe gnezdo*, p. 16.

²⁷ Kuzminskii Report, p. 97.

²⁸ The incident involving the dogs is disputed in *Voskhod*, no. 51/52, December 30, 1905, p. 27. Some of the more relevant sources on the events of October 18 are: Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxxxiv–cxxxv, 110–111, 138–139, 186, and 196–198; TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, *lit.* A, 1905, *ll.* 42, 45*ob.* and 83, *op.* 233, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, 1905, *ll.* 60–61, and *op.* 5, *d.* 3, *ch.* 49, 1905, *ll.* 63*ob.* and 123*ob.*–124.

²⁹ TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, *lit.* A, 1905, *l.* 45*ob.*; Kuzminskii Report, pp. 126, 168, 177–180, and 198.

not by attacking Russian workers celebrating in the streets, but by turning on the Jews, for they viewed them as the source of Russia's current problems. Clashes occurred throughout the day as groups of armed demonstrators, chiefly Jewish students and workers, fought with bands of gentiles. These instances of violence, which marked the beginning of the infamous October pogrom, testified to the deep-seated national animosities in Odessa. The pogrom was the culmination of trends that had been unfolding in the city for several weeks.

Armed confrontations originated near the Jewish district of Moldavanka in the afternoon and early evening of October 18. The clashes apparently started when a group of Jews carrying red flags in celebration of the October Manifesto attempted to convince a group of Russian workers to doff their caps to the flags. Harsh words were exchanged, a scuffle ensued, and then shots rang out. Both groups scattered, but quickly reassembled in nearby streets and resumed their fighting. The clashes soon turned into a pogrom, as Russians indiscriminately attacked Jews and began to vandalize and loot Jewish homes, apartments and stores. The military on October 18 was equally vigilant in its efforts to restrain both gentile and Jewish rioters, vigorously suppressing the disturbances. Cossacks soon arrived on the scene and restored order by early evening.³⁰

The pogrom began in full force the next day, October 19. In mid-morning hundreds of Russians—children, women, and men—gathered in various parts of the city to ready themselves for marches in display of their loyalty to the tsar. This demonstration had the earmarks of a rally organized by extreme, right-wing political organizations like the Black Hundreds, which had emerged earlier in the year. Day laborers, especially those employed at the docks by the Moscow Customs Artel and the Russian Steamship and Navigation Company, comprised a major element of the crowd that assembled at the harbor. They were joined by factory and construction workers, shopkeepers, salesclerks, workshop employees, and vagrants.³¹

Most of the marchers assembled at Customs Square at the harbor, where flags, icons, and portraits of the tsar were distributed. The marchers also passed around bottles of vodka. Plainclothes policemen reportedly handed out not only vodka, but also money and guns.³² Onlookers and passersby joined the procession as the demonstrators made their way from the port to the city center. Singing the national anthem and religious hymns, they stopped at the municipal

³⁰ TsGAOR, f. 102, OO, d. 1350, ch. 30, lit. A, 1905, l. 42ob.; Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxlvii and 104; *Izvestiia Odesskoi gorodskoi dumy*, no. 3–4, February 1906, p. 312.

³¹ On the large number of dockworkers, day workers, and vagrants who were in the procession, see N. N. Lender (Putnik), "Revolutsionnye buri na iuge. ('Potemkin' i oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia v Odesse)," *Istoricheskii vestnik*, vol. 104, 1906, no. 6, p. 894; Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxlviii, 128, and 158; *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 261, November 25, 1905; *Odesskii pogrom i samooborona*, Paris, 1906, pp. 24 and 61; S. Semenov, "Evreiskie pogromy v Odesse i Odesshchine v 1905 g.," *Puti revoliutsii*, 1925, no. 3, pp. 119–120.

³² Kuzminskii Report, p. 105. One Jewish newspaper reported the existence of documents that revealed how plainclothes policemen paid pogromists from 80 kopecks to 3 rubles per day upon instructions of their superiors. *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni*, no. 43/44, November 11, 1905, p. 22.

duma and substituted the Imperial colors for the red flag that students had raised the previous day. They then headed toward the cathedral, stopping en route at the residences of Neidgart and Baron A. V. Kaul'bars, commander of the Odessa Military District. Kaul'bars, fearing confrontation between the patriotic marchers and revolutionaries, asked them to disperse. Some heeded his request, but most members of the procession continued their march. Neidgart, on the other hand, greeted the patriots enthusiastically and urged them to hold their memorial service at the cathedral. After a brief prayer service, the procession continued to march through the streets of central Odessa.³³

Suddenly, shots rang out, and a young boy carrying an icon lay dead. Most accounts of the incident assert that the shots came from surrounding buildings. No one knows for certain who was responsible for the shots, but evidence strongly suggests that they were fired by revolutionaries or members of Jewish and student self-defense brigades.³⁴ In any case, the crowd panicked and ran through the streets as more shots were fired from rooftops, balconies, and apartment windows. Revolutionaries and self-defense units organized by students and Jews threw homemade bombs at the demonstrators, indicating that they were ready to instigate confrontations. The shootings triggered a chain reaction. Convinced that the Jews were responsible for the shootings, members of the patriotic demonstration began to shout "Beat the Kikes" and "Death to the Kikes," and went on a rampage, attacking Jews and destroying Jewish apartments, homes, and stores.

The course of events was similar in other parts of the city; members of student and Jewish self-defense brigades fired on Russians who were holding patriotic processions and provoked similar pogromist responses. However, in Peresyp, a working-class district where no patriotic procession took place, the pogrom started only after pogromists from the city center arrived and began to incite local residents. By mid-afternoon a full-fledged pogrom had developed, and it raged until October 22.³⁵

The list of atrocities perpetrated against the Jews is too long to recount here, but suffice it to say that pogromists brutally and indiscriminately beat, mutilated, and murdered defenseless Jewish men, women, and children. They hurled Jews out of windows, raped and cut open the stomachs of pregnant

³³ Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxlviii-cl and 105; Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv SSSR (TsGVIA), f. 400, 16oe otd., op. 15, d. 2641, 1905, ll. 35-35ob.; TsGAOR, f. 102, OO, op. 5, d. 3, ch. 49, 1905, ll. 59 and 64ob., op. 233, d. 1350, ch. 30, 1905, ll. 60ob.-61, and d. 1350, ch. 30, lit. A, 1905, l. 47.

³⁴ One eyewitness testified, however, that the shots came from the crowd of patriotic demonstrators. Another eyewitness reported that he saw members of the patriotic procession discharge their revolvers into the air, but whether he is referring to the shootings in which the boy was killed cannot be determined. Kuzminskii Report, pp. 129 and 158; A. S. Shapovalov, *V podpol'e*, 2nd ed., Moscow-Leningrad, 1931, p. 122.

³⁵ See the reports of Kaul'bars and the head of the Odessa Okhrana. TsGVIA, f. 400, 16oe otd., op. 15, d. 2641, 1905, l. 35ob.; TsGAOR, f. 102, OO, op. 5, d. 3, ch. 49, 1905, l. 125ob.; Kuzminskii Report, pp. cl- cli, 152-153 and 170-171; *Odesskii pogrom i samooborona*, pp. 46-47.

women, and slaughtered infants in front of their parents. In one particularly gruesome incident, pogromists hung a woman upside down by her legs and arranged the bodies of her six dead children on the floor below her.³⁶

The violence and destruction were in large measure made possible by the failure of the authorities to adopt any countermeasures. Low-ranking policemen and soldiers failed to interfere with the pogromists and in many instances, in and out of uniform, participated in the looting and killing. At times policemen, seeking to avenge the attacks of October 16 and 18 on their colleagues, went so far as to provide protection for pogromists by firing on the self-defense units formed by Jews, students and revolutionaries. For their part, soldiers, concluding from the actions of the police that the pogrom was sanctioned by higher authorities, stood idly by while pogromists looted stores and murdered unarmed Jews. Some policemen discharged their weapons into the air and told the rioters that the shots had come from apartments inhabited by Jews, leaving the latter vulnerable to vicious beatings and murder. Eyewitnesses reported seeing policemen directing pogromists to Jewish-owned stores or Jews' apartments, while preventing the rioters from damaging the property of non-Jews.³⁷

Compelling evidence indicates that policemen acted, or failed to act, with the knowledge and tacit approval of their superiors. Neither Neidgart nor Kaul'bars took any decisive action to suppress the pogrom when disorders erupted. In fact, the head of the Odessa gendarmes admitted that the military did not apply sufficient energy to end the pogrom. The gendarmes chief stated that pogromists greeted soldiers and policemen with shouts of "Hurrah" and then continued their rampage.³⁸ It was not until the evening of October 20 and the morning of October 21 that Kaul'bars ordered his troops to shoot at pogromists as well as self-defense units. Considering that the pogrom was extinguished by October 22 primarily as a consequence of Kaul'bars's directive, one cannot help but conclude that quicker action by the military could have prevented the pogrom from assuming such monstrous dimensions. When the military acted to stop pillage and murder, as they did on October 18 and again on October 21 and 22, pogromists obeyed the commands to desist and disperse. Kaul'bars, defending his inaction before a delegation of city дума councilors on October 20, stated that he was unable to take any decisive action without the written request of Neidgart. Neidgart did not make such a request until the afternoon of

³⁶ Semenov, "Evreiskie pogromy," pp. 115–135; D. Hurvits, *Der blutiger pogrom in Odessa*, Odessa, 1905; A. Malavich, *Odesser pogrom*, London, 1906; *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni*, no. 41/42, October 28, 1905, pp. 11–14; *Voskhod*, no. 42/43, October 27, 1905, pp. 27–30, and no. 44/45, November 11, 1905, pp. 16–27.

³⁷ Kuzminskii Report, pp. cliii–clvi; N. Osipovich, "V grozovye gody," *Kandal'nyi zvon*, 1926, no. 3, p. 66; TsGVIA, *f.* 400, 160e *otd.*, *op.* 15, *d.* 2641, 1905, *l.* 38; Semenov, "Evreiskie pogromy," pp. 118 and 123; TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *d.* 2540, 1905, *l.* 94.

³⁸ TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *op.* 5, *d.* 3, *ch.* 49, 1905, *ll.* 65–65ob.

October 20. Consequently, pogromists enjoyed almost two full days of unrestrained destruction.³⁹

In his report on the pogrom in Odessa, Senator A. M. Kuzminskii faulted Neidgart for waiting until October 20 to request assistance from Kaul'bars. In addition, he castigated Neidgart for his decision to withdraw all police from their posts on the afternoon of October 18. The reasons for Neidgart's action are unclear, since his reports were contradictory and conflicted with accounts of other police officials and civilian leaders. In all likelihood, the city governor was seeking to protect the lives of policemen, for they were subject to attack by celebrants of the Manifesto. Having removed policemen from their posts, Neidgart instructed them to patrol the city in groups. He also tacitly approved the student militias and hoped they could maintain order in Odessa.⁴⁰ Kuzminskii concluded that the city governor was derelict in his duty because he did not make sure that the police patrols took vigorous action to suppress the disorders. According to Kuzminskii, Neidgart had left Odessa defenseless.⁴¹ The absence of police ready to maintain law and order on October 19 signified the surrender of the city to armed bands of pogromists and self-defensists and made for an explosive situation.

Both Neidgart and Kaul'bars defended the behavior of the police and military, given the intensity of the shooting and bombing. According to them, attacks by student and Jewish militias hampered efforts of policemen and soldiers to contain the pogrom. They accused the self-defense brigades of shooting not only at pogromists, but also at police, soldiers, and Cossacks. The police and military, therefore, had to contend first with the self-defense groups before turning their attention to the pogromists.⁴²

The police and military undoubtedly were the targets of civilian militias and were rightly concerned about their safety and security. Yet, as the pogrom gathered momentum, we can hardly blame the members of self-defense brigades for continuing shooting at soldiers and policemen, when many of them were actively participating in the violence. Moreover, Neidgart and Kaul'bars acted as though civilian militias were the only groups involved in the shootings, conveniently ignoring the fact that the actions of policemen and soldiers after the pogrom started were provocative and might compel Jews to defend themselves. It was not until the pogrom was in full swing that any official made an effort to stop it. Had the police and military genuinely applied their energies to halting the pogrom, the need for self-defense would have been reduced and attacks on

³⁹ TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, *lit.* A, 1905, *l.* 71; TsGVIA, *f.* 400, *16oe otd.*, *op.* 15, *d.* 2641, 1905, *l.* 37; Semenov, "Evreiskie pogromy," pp. 125 and 130; Kuzminskii Report, pp. 31 and 175–176.

⁴⁰ Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxliii, 42 and 129–130.

⁴¹ Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxxxviii–cxli, clxxiv–clxxvii, clxxxix–cxl, cxcvi–cci, 6–13, 18–22, 40–44, 120–121, 169–170, and 177. See also TsGAOR, *f.* 124, *op.* 49, *d.* 294, 1911, *l.* 81*ob.*

⁴² TsGAOR, *f.* 102, *OO*, *d.* 1350, *ch.* 30, *lit.* A, 1905, *l.* 85, and *op.* 5, *d.* 3, *ch.* 49, 1905, *l.* 65; TsGVIA, *f.* 400, *16oe otd.*, *op.* 15, *d.* 2641, 1905, *l.* 35*ob.*

soldiers and policemen would have dropped accordingly.

Like many government officials, Kuzminskii concluded that the Odessa pogrom was a spontaneous display of outrage against the Jews. Kuzminskii joined Neidgart, Kaul'bars, and other authorities in Odessa when he blamed the pogrom on political events in the city, in particular the emergence of a revolutionary movement in which Jews played a visible role. Unlike previous pogroms, which Kuzminskii attributed to national hatred and economic exploitation, the October disorders occurred as a result of the public behavior of Odessa's Jews, especially after the announcement of the October Manifesto. For government officials, then, patriotic Russians were seeking to punish the Jews for such treasonable behavior as desecrating portraits of the tsar and forcing bystanders to pay tribute to revolutionary flags. Kuzminskii defined the pogrom as an offshoot of the patriotic procession and blamed its excesses on the failure of Neidgart to adopt adequate countermeasures.⁴³

It is questionable, however, whether the pogrom was purely spontaneous. Many contemporaries blamed the civilian and military authorities, specifically Neidgart, for not only encouraging but even sponsoring the pogromists.⁴⁴ Kuzminskii himself collected evidence that points to police involvement in the planning and organization of the patriotic counter-demonstration and pogrom.⁴⁵ According to the testimony of L. D. Teplitskii, an ensign in the army, as early as October 15 and 16, policemen were proposing to use force against Jews as punishment for their role in instigating the current wave of strikes and disorders in Odessa. As one policeman told Teplitskii; "Jews want freedom—well, we'll kill two or three thousand. Then they'll know what freedom is." Teplitskii also testified to meeting a group of day laborers on the morning of October 18 who told him they had just received instructions at a police station to attack Jews that evening.⁴⁶ In working-class neighborhoods policemen and pogromist agitators went from door to door and spread rumors that Jews were slaughtering Russian families, urging Russian residents to repel the Jews with force. Policemen reportedly compiled lists of Jewish-owned stores and Jews' apartments to facilitate attacks.⁴⁷ Other evidence even suggests that policemen were instructed not to interfere with pogromists. An army captain informed Kuzminskii that a

⁴³ TsGAOR, f. 102, OO, op. 5, d. 3, ch. 49, 1905, ll. 66ob. and 124ob., and d. 1350, ch. 30, lit. A, 1905, l. 85ob.; TsGVIA, f. 400, 16oe otd., op. 15, d. 2641, 1905, l. 35; Kuzminskii Report, pp. cv–cvi, ccxv, cxlviii, and 4.

⁴⁴ The standard view of the Odessa pogrom places much of the blame on the encouragement and connivance of local officials. See *Voskhod*, no. 47/48, December 1, 1905, p. 39; *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*; and Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation*, 2 vols., New York, 1976, vol. 2, pp. 76–88. The work of Hans Rogger has done much to absolve high-ranking government ministers and officials in St. Petersburg of engineering the pogroms.

⁴⁵ Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxlviii–cxlix.

⁴⁶ Kuzminskii Report, pp. 100–101.

⁴⁷ G. Achkanov, "Vospominaniia o revoliutsii 1905 goda," *1905 god. Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Odesse i Odesshchine*, 2 vols., Odessa, 1925–26, vol. 2, pp. 199–200; Semenov, "Evreiskie pogromy," pp. 116–117.

policeman had told him that his superiors had given their permission for three days of beating because Jews had destroyed the tsar's portrait in the municipal *duma*.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, no evidence indicates which police officials were responsible for these directives. Nor is there conclusive evidence linking Neidgart to the planning and approval of pogrom agitation or the pogrom itself. Considering Neidgart's efforts prior to October to avert unrest through patient negotiation and timely compromise with workers and employers, it would have been out of character for him to have approved, let alone planned, a major public disturbance. Like most government officials entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, Neidgart would have been hesitant to sanction any kind of public protest for fear of events getting out of hand.⁴⁹ To be sure, he knew about the patriotic procession and even welcomed it, but this does not warrant the conclusion drawn by many Odessa residents that the municipal governor had advance knowledge of the pogrom. In fact, Neidgart so feared an eruption of violence on October 19 that he requested Kaul'bars to withdraw permission for a funeral procession planned for that day by revolutionaries and radical students to commemorate the students killed on October 16.⁵⁰ Moreover, the quickness with which the authorities acted on October 18 to suppress street disorders clearly suggests that Neidgart and Kaul'bars were trying to avert a major conflagration.

Yet questions remain. Why did the police and military fail to act quickly on October 19 and 20? Why did Neidgart not prevent individual policemen from participating in the looting and pillaging? How can we explain his delay in officially requesting the assistance of the military and his callous refusal to heed the pleas of pogrom victims, including a rabbi and bank director, who begged him to intercede?⁵¹ Neidgart may simply have had no choice in the matter. Individual policemen had begun to abandon their posts even before he had issued his directive of October 18. Furthermore, they refused to return to their posts on October 21, despite the city governor's order to do so. Neidgart may have realized that he could not depend on a severely underpaid, understaffed, and disgruntled police force to maintain order in Odessa⁵² and that he could no longer control the actions of most members of the force. He turned to Kaul'bars for help only after the pogrom had reached such dimensions that it became clear that the student self-defense brigades were an ineffective check on the violence.

His sense of helplessness notwithstanding, Neidgart's behavior was certainly not blameless, and there is no doubt that his sympathies lay with the

⁴⁸ Kuzminskii Report, pp. cliii-cliv.

⁴⁹ On his role as a labor mediator, see Weinberg, "Worker Organizations and Politics," pp. 205-207.

⁵⁰ Kuzminskii Report, pp. cxlix, 3-4, 47, and 189-190.

⁵¹ Kuzminskii Report, pp. 123 and 156-157.

⁵² Neidgart reported in 1904 that the police were poorly paid and inadequately trained. TsGIA, *f.* 23, *op.* 20, *d.* 1, *l.* 174; Kuzminskii Report, pp. clxv-clxvi.

pogromists. In the midst of the pogrom Neidgart reportedly told a delegation of Jewish leaders: "You wanted freedom. Well, now you're getting 'Jewish freedom'."⁵³ From Neidgart's perspective, Jews were responsible for the city's disorders, and the pogrom was retribution. Thus, although Neidgart did not plan the pogrom or even, it would seem, possess prior knowledge of it, he generally sympathized with the actions of the mob and may have viewed attacks on Jews as an effective method of squelching the revolution.

Kaul'bars also shares the burden of responsibility for not acting more promptly to restore order. The military commander not only ignored reports that his troops were participating in the pogrom, but he even remarked to an assembly of Odessa policemen on October 21 that "all of us sympathize in our souls with the pogrom." Yet he tempered his remarks by acknowledging that neither his personal sympathies nor those of the police and military relieved these groups of the responsibility to maintain law and order and protect the Jews.⁵⁴ This conflict between personal values and official duty helps account for the failure of Neidgart and Kaul'bars to act more decisively.

Who were the other participants in the pogrom and why did they join the police in viciously attacking Jews? While available sources do not allow a precise determination, they do reveal that unskilled, non-Jewish day laborers, more than any other group (including the police), filled the ranks of the pogromist mobs. These workers were especially prone to anti-Jewish violence and, as we have already seen, played a significant role not only in the patriotic procession but in other popular disorders earlier in the year as well. A closer examination of their lives will provide insight into their motives.

Day laborers in Odessa led a precarious social and economic existence, suffering from irregular, impermanent work and low wages. Many were unmarried, male migrants to Odessa who lacked marketable skills and work experience. Large numbers of these day laborers came from the countryside, where rural poverty and overpopulation were driving many young peasants to the cities in search of work. Other day workers were Jews who had moved to Odessa in order to escape the destitution of life in the *shtetls* and small towns of the Pale of Settlement.

Competition for employment between Jewish and gentile day workers assumed special importance at dockside and in the railway depots, where thousands of unskilled day laborers vied for employment during the peak season

⁵³ S. Dimanshtein, "Ocherk revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia sredi evreiskikh mass," in M. N. Pokrovskii, ed., 1905. *Istoriia revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v otdel'nykh ocherkakh*, vol. 3: *Ot oktiabria k dekabriu. Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie natsional'nostei i okrain*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 171.

⁵⁴ Kuzminskii Report, pp. clxv and 124. In his report on the October disorders, Kaul'bars admitted that persons wearing military uniforms were part of the pogromist mobs, but he insisted that they had already been discharged from service. TsGVIA, f. 400, 16oe otd., op. 15, d. 2641, 1905, l. 38.

of commercial activity, which began in spring and lasted well into the fall. According to the 1897 census, slightly over 16,000 workers were unskilled day laborers without permanent jobs and specific occupations; they supplemented the city's sizable work force of dockworkers, porters, and carters during the peak season. Precise data do not exist, but most estimates of the number of dockworkers in Odessa at the turn of the century range from 4,000 to 7,000. One estimate places the number of dockworkers at 20,000. Approximately half of these workers were Jews, with another several thousand Jews employed as unskilled day laborers elsewhere in the city.⁵⁵

Even during the peak periods of port activity, owners of shipping companies, brokerage firms and warehouses never required the services of all dockworkers looking for work. During the summer few dockworkers worked more than fifteen days a month; job competition acquired even larger dimensions during the off-season or periods of slump and recession, when over half of all dockworkers were unemployed. It is estimated that, between 1900 and 1903, at least 2,000 dockworkers were unemployed at any given time.⁵⁶ More specifically, unemployment for longshoremen increased dramatically in the late 1890s and early 1900s when the labor market began to constrict as a result of crop failures, economic recession, the Russo-Japanese War, and Odessa's declining share of the export trade in grain. The last factor was due to the failure of Odessa to keep pace with the more modern and better-equipped harbors of other port cities of southern Russia. The use of conveyor belts at dockside, first introduced on a limited basis in the 1870s to facilitate the loading and unloading of freight trains and ships, began to limit employment opportunities for dockworkers and exert downward pressures on wages. The constricting labor market heightened job competition between Jewish and gentile dockworkers, culminating in 1906 and 1907 with shipowners, city authorities, and longshoremen setting up a hiring system that established quotas for the number of Jewish and non-Jewish dockworkers. There is evidence that tensions between Jewish and gentile dock-

⁵⁵ By 1884 there were over 1,700 Jewish dockworkers in Odessa; in some categories, such as those who weighed sacks of grain, Jews filled a majority of positions. Zvi Halevy, *Jewish Schools under Czarism and Communism: A Struggle for Cultural Identity*, New York, 1976, p. 21; TsGIA, f. 23, op. 20, d. 1, l. 173; TsGAOR, f. 102, d. 2409, 1903, l. 74, and 40e delopr., d. 84, ch. 12, t. 12, 1907, l. 279; *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii, 1897 g.*, vol. 47, Table 20, pp. 88–131, and Table 22, pp. 136–149; I. A. Adamov, "Rabochie i moriaki odesskogo porta v revoliutsionnom dvizhenii XIX i nachala XX stoletii," Candidate of Historical Science dissertation, Odessa University, 1940, p. 59; Ia. M. Shternshtein, *Morskoe vorota Ukrainy*, Odessa, 1958, p. 19; V. K. Vasil'evskaia, "Polozhenie portovykh rabochikh v Odesse," *Trudy Odesskogo otdela Russkogo obshchestva okhraneniia zdraviia*, fasc. 4, 1904, p. 37; M. Tsetterbaum, *Klassovye protivorechiia v evreiskom obshchestve*, Kiev, 1905, p. 27.

⁵⁶ One observer of the Odessa port stated that dockworkers worked an average of 120 days per year. N. Shelgunov, *Ocherki russkoi zhizni*, St. Petersburg, 1895, p. 470. See also Adamov, "Rabochie i moriaki," p. 70; Vasil'evskaia, "Polozhenie," p. 44; *Opisanie odesskogo porta*, St. Petersburg, 1913, p. 40.

workers influenced the decision to establish this quota system.⁵⁷

Life for day laborers who lacked permanent work was made even more difficult by the hiring process. In order to work on a given day, day laborers placed their names on sign-up sheets that subcontractors for the shipping companies and import-export firms left at different taverns throughout the city. The prospects of finding work in this manner were slim, however. Prospective laborers had to arrive between 2 and 3 A.M. in order to ensure themselves a place on the lists, and those who were fortunate to find employment for a day had to give the subcontractor approximately a third of their earnings. Day laborers were paid on a piece-rate basis, usually earning 70 or 80 kopecks per day. After a long day's work, they returned to await payment at the tavern where their subcontractor conducted business; settling up often took until 10 P.M.⁵⁸ Given the extraordinary number of wasted hours, it is not surprising that many day laborers lacked the inclination to work every day. Even if they so desired, it was unlikely that they could find work because of the competition from other job seekers.

Although some day laborers lived in apartments with their families or other workers, many found their wages inadequate to rent a room or even a corner in an apartment and were forced to seek shelter in one of the crowded flophouses (ночлежные дома) that speckled the harbor area and poor neighborhoods of Odessa. At the turn of the century several thousand people—mostly Great Russian by nationality—slept in flophouses, with a sizable majority of them living in such accommodations for over a year and nearly half for over three years. In other words, many day laborers had become permanent denizens of night shelters. Indeed, many frequented the same flophouses day after day and even had their favorite sleeping corners.⁵⁹

Conditions in the night shelters were abominable.⁶⁰ Often they lacked heat

⁵⁷ Vasil'evskaia, "Polozhenie," pp. 41 and 44; *Opisanie odesskogo porta*, p. 40; *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 226, October 7, 1905, and no. 232, October 14, 1905; *Iuzhnoe obozrenie*, no. 2747, February 12, 1905; *Otchet Odesskogo komiteta trgovli i manufaktur za 1906 g.*, Odessa, 1907, p. 31; Brodovskii, *Evreiskaia nishcheta*, p. 13; TsGAOR, *f. 102, 4oe delopr.*, d. 84, ch. 12, t. 2, 1907, ll. 273, 275, and 279, and *4oe delopr.*, d. 84, ch. 12, t. 3, 1907, ll. 147–147ob., 224 and 349; *Odesskie novosti*, no. 6634, May 4, 1905.

⁵⁸ TsGAOR, *f. 102, OO, d. 4, ch. 10, lit. G, t. 1, 1898, l. 6*; L. O. Narkevich, "K voprosu o polozhenii bezdomnykh rabochikh v odesskom portu," *Trudy Odesskogo otdela Russkogo obshchestva okhraneniia zdavriia*, fasc. 4, 1904, pp. 111–113; Shternshtein, *Morskie vorota*, p. 26; *Odesskie novosti*, no. 6565, February 17, 1905.

⁵⁹ There were nine shelters in the harbor district: the city operated two, the other seven were in private hands. On day laborers in flophouses, see Narkevich, "K voprosu," pp. 103–131; Vasil'evskaia, "Polozhenie," pp. 36–49; *Otchety raspriaditel' nogo komiteta nochlezhnykh priiutov* from the 1880s to 1904.

⁶⁰ For descriptions of the appalling conditions, see Vasil'evskaia, "Polozhenie," pp. 47–48; S. Lazarovich, "Materialy k voprosu o nochlezhnykh domakh v g. Odesse," *Otchet o deiatel' nosti petropavlovskogo sanitarnogo popechitel' stva goroda Odessy za 1898–1899 gg.*, Odessa, 1900, pp. 214–217; Narkevich, "K voprosu," pp. 104–105; Chivonibar (A. Rabinovich), "Dikari" in *Bosiaki. Zhenshchiny. Den'gi*, Odessa, 1904; *Odesskii listok*, no. 267, December 1, 1885; *Odesskii vestnik*,

and washing facilities, and their residents usually bathed in a canal filled with the warm runoff water from the municipal electric plant, since there were no public baths in the port district.⁶¹ Night shelters were breeding grounds for infectious diseases and offered the lodger only a filthy straw mattress on a cold, damp, and hard floor.

Alcoholism was another contributing factor to the entry of day workers into the world of flophouses. As one twenty-year-old explained, he began sleeping in night shelters "because of vodka."⁶² Contemporary observers often characterized residents of flophouses as lacking the resolve to lift themselves out of these degrading surroundings. Like many other workers, they drowned their sorrows in vodka. Observers also commented that many day workers worked only in order to earn enough money to get drunk. The system of subcontracting encouraged heavy drinking since it invariably took place in taverns.⁶³ Alcoholism not only diminished the chances of finding work, but also robbed day workers of any desire to work on a permanent basis. Consequently, many of them could not disengage themselves from the crippling world of vodka and were happy to work one or two days a week, spending the rest of the week in a drunken stupor. As one observer noted, "Hope has died in their hearts—apathy has replaced it."⁶⁴

Dependent on the activity of the port for their livelihood, day laborers in general and dockworkers in particular were usually the first workers to feel the impact of downturns in the economy. During such times, lacking even the few kopecks that the night shelters charged, they often slept under the nighttime sky or in open barrels at dockside.⁶⁵ Hunger was such a constant factor in the day laborers' lives that they used a broad range of phrases to express its intensity. For example, "simple hunger" (гекохт простой) referred to hunger caused by not eating for one day. "Deadly hunger" (гекохт смертельный) lasted somewhat longer, and "hunger with a vengeance" (гекохт с распятием) was of "indeterminate length, whole weeks, months, in short, hunger that has no foreseeable end."⁶⁶

Many day laborers never established secure family and social roots and were never fully integrated into urban, working-class life. Even though many had lived in Odessa for years, their lives had a marginal and rootless quality.

no. 295, November 16, 1892.

⁶¹ L. O. Karmen, *V rodnom gnezde*, Odessa, 1900, p. iii.

⁶² Chivonibar, "Dikari," p. 46.

⁶³ Chivonibar, "Dikari," p. 34; Vasil'evskaia, "Polozhenie," p. 48; *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 36, February 8, 1905.

⁶⁴ *Odesskii listok*, no. 267, December 1, 1885. See also Narkevich, "K voprosu," p. 107.

⁶⁵ Z. V. Pershina, "Nachalo rabocheho dvizheniia. Pervye marksistskie kruzheniia v Odesse (1883–1895 gody)," in K. S. Kovalenko, ed., *Iz istorii odesskoi partiinoi organizatsii. Ocherki*, Odessa, 1964, p. 9.

⁶⁶ *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 36, February 8, 1905. It cannot be determined whether these expressions, which are a mixture of Yiddish and Russian, were used exclusively by Jewish day laborers.

The faces of their workmates, employers, and those who slept near them in the night shelter changed daily. The lack of fulltime employment and permanent lodgings reduced the opportunities to form friendships and establish bonds either at work or at home. Even for day laborers who enjoyed the comforts of steady work and apartments life had an ephemeral quality, since many of them were seasonal migrants who never settled in Odessa. Day laborers found it difficult under such circumstances to promote and defend their interests in an organized and sustained manner.

Observers referred to day laborers as “peaceful people,” believing that “The day laborer is not terrifying when he’s had his fill; when the port is busy this Odessite is calm.”⁶⁷ This comment implies, however, that day laborers could be less than law-abiding and peaceful during times of economic hardship. An undercurrent of tension and discontent was clearly visible among day laborers, and there were times when they released their frustrations and anger in fits of rage and fury. Such incidents occurred twice in 1905, first in June and then again in October.

In Odessa pogromist behavior had both an ethnic and a class basis that reflected the complex relationship of long-term ethnic antagonisms, the structure of Odessa’s economy, and short-term political catalysts. The heritage of anti-Semitism made Odessa particularly ripe for a pogrom: the legal disabilities and mistreatment endured by the Jews of Russia engendered an attitude that accepted anti-Semitism and tolerated violence against them. Moreover, the domination of the grain trade by Jewish merchants predisposed many dockworkers against the Jews, whom they conveniently saw as the source of the troubles, particularly the lack of jobs, besetting the city and themselves. Consequently, when day laborers sought an outlet for their frustrations and problems, they focused on Jews. Without taking into account the hostile, anti-Jewish atmosphere in Odessa, we cannot understand why Russian day laborers at times of economic distress chose not to attack other Russian workers who competed with them for scarce jobs or Russian employers, but instead indiscriminately lashed out at *all* Jews, regardless of whether they were job competitors.

Similarly, the depressed state of the Odessa economy also helped set the stage for the outbreak of the pogrom. The particularly straitened economic circumstances of 1905 produced a situation especially ripe for anti-Jewish violence. Many day laborers were out of work and, owing to their lack of skills, unlikely to find employment. Unemployment and economic competition contributed to a growing sense of frustration and despair among many pogromists and helped channel their anger against Jews. Yet economic problems alone do not explain why Russian day workers decided to attack Jews in October 1905. In June, for example, dockworkers and day laborers exploded in a fit of wanton

⁶⁷ *Peterburgskii listok*, no. 166, June 29, 1905. I thank Joan Neuberger for this reference.

rage, but chose to challenge the authorities by destroying the harbor. In October these same workers directed their hostility and frustration toward the Jews, although material conditions had not substantially changed.

What had changed since the June disorders was the political atmosphere. The revolutionary climate of mid-October precipitated the pogrom. Many participants in the patriotic procession of October 19, especially members of the Black Hundreds and other organized groups, undoubtedly marched in order to express their support of the autocracy and disapproval of the October Manifesto. Yet many others, day laborers and dockworkers in particular, were less enticed by politics than by the vodka and money that the police reportedly offered. Certainly not all members of the procession and participants in the pogrom necessarily stood on the extreme right of the political spectrum, as the dockworkers' and day laborers' riot in June strongly suggests. For these people, the struggle between revolution and reaction, which inspired the more politically conscious, played a secondary role. Many may not have intended to assault the Jews and destroy their property, but were provoked by the shooting and bombthrowing of the revolutionaries and self-defense brigades. These actions help explain the virulence and intensity of the pogromists' attack—especially by the police—on their victims. Still others may have welcomed the pogrom because it afforded them the opportunity to vent some steam and, perhaps, acquire some booty. Thus, whatever the specific motivations of the various individuals involved in the pogrom, popular and official anti-Semitism and depressed economic circumstances set the stage by providing the necessary psychological and material preconditions, while the political climate of Odessa in 1905 helped trigger the pogrom.

By no means did all gentile workers participate or even sympathize with the bloodletting. Many Russian workers enlisted in self-defense units, while others sheltered their Jewish neighbors and friends during the terror. For example, members of the sailors' union armed themselves and patrolled the harbor to protect Jewish property. After the pogrom Russian self-defensists provided financial aid to pogrom victims and took vigorous action to punish pogromists and ensure that another pogrom would not occur.⁶⁸ Significantly, many of the Russian self-defensists were skilled workers from the same metalworking and machine-construction plants that supplied the workers who were active in the organization of strikes and the formation of district and city strike committees, trade unions, and, in December, the Odessa Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

⁶⁸ Kuzminskii Report, pp. 130–131; *Kommercheskaia Rossiia*, no. 237, October 28, 1905; no. 239, October 30, 1905; no. 240, November 1, 1905; no. 242, November 3, 1904; no. 244, November 5, 1905; no. 246, November 8, 1905; no. 251, November 13, 1905; and no. 270, December 6, 1905; *Odesskii listok*, no. 252, October 29, 1905; no. 269, November 18, 1905; and no. 276, November 26, 1905; *Odesskie novosti*, no. 6775, November 2, 1905; no. 6776, November 3, 1905; no. 6779, November 6, 1905; no. 6801, December 2, 1905; and no. 6804, December 6, 1905; *Iuzhnoe obozrenie*, no. 2954, October 30, 1905, and no. 2964, November 11, 1905.

Two reasons can be adduced to explain the reluctance of these workers to join ranks with pogromists. First, skilled metalworkers and machinists did not face serious employment competition with Jews, who rarely worked in metalworking and machine-construction plants. Despite the fact that Jews comprised a third of Odessa's population, Jews and Russians rarely worked in the same factory or workshop, or even as members of the same work gang at dockside. In fact, Jews and Russians were generally not employed in the same branch of industry. The exception, as we have seen, was unskilled day labor. Most factory workers were Russians and Ukrainians; Jews formed a small minority. As one observer, though surely exaggerating, suggested, "Make the round of all the Odessa factories and you will perhaps find ten or fifteen Jewish metalfitters or lathe operators; some factories don't hire Jews at all."⁶⁹ One estimate placed the number of Jews employed in factory production at between 4,000 and 5,000, with most working as unskilled and semiskilled operatives in cork, tobacco, match, and candy factories.⁷⁰

In addition, many of the factories employing skilled workers had a history of labor activism and a tradition of political organization and awareness. As Ivan Avdeev, a Bolshevik organizer in the railway workshops, told a meeting of his coworkers, the railway workshops formed a self-defense group during the pogrom to demonstrate that "the Russian worker values civil freedom and liberty and does not become a Black Hundred or a hooligan. On the contrary, he is capable of not only protecting his own interests but those of other citizens."⁷¹ Both the railway repair shops and the Henn agricultural tool and machinery plant organized self-defense groups; both factories had a heritage of labor radicalism and a close association with Zubatovism and Social Democracy. The presence of political organizers and propagandists may have muted the anti-Jewish sentiment of the Russian workers in these plants and imparted an appreciation of working-class solidarity that transcended ethnic and religious divisions.

To sum up, the social composition of the work force helped determine the form and content of popular unrest. At one end of the occupational spectrum stood the unskilled day laborers who were wont to engage in campaigns of violence and destruction. At the other end were the skilled, more economically secure Russian metalworkers and machinists who tended not to participate in the pogrom and were more inclined than the unskilled to channel their protest and discontent in an organized fashion. Even though skilled and unskilled workers in Odessa frequently resorted to violence as a way to achieve their objectives, they used violence differently. The violence and public disorder that often accompanied strikes by skilled workers, as in June, could radicalize the participants and pose a revolutionary threat. But worker militance and social unrest

⁶⁹ *Iuzhnoe obozrenie*, no. 2982, December 2, 1905.

⁷⁰ TsGIA, f. 23, op. 29, d. 80, l. 23.

⁷¹ *Odesskii listok*, no. 255, November 2, 1905.

also had reactionary consequences when Jews became the object of the workers' outrage and hostility. The pogrom served the cause of political reaction and counterrevolution by revealing how a potentially revolutionary situation could quickly be defused when the target of the workers' wrath was no longer the symbols of the autocracy. The October 1905 pogrom in Odessa illustrates how ethnic hostility was a potent force in workers' politics. Ethnic divisiveness was a centrifugal force that diminished the capacity of Odessa workers to act in a unified fashion. The pogrom defused the revolutionary movement in Odessa by dampening the workers' militance. Despite a resurgence of labor unrest in December, the fear of more bloodletting dissuaded workers from vigorously challenging their employers and the government.