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## THE KISHINEV\* POGROM OF 1903 IN THE RUSSIAN SOCIO-POLITICAL NARRATIVE

### ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the study of the Russian socio-political narrative regarding the tragedy in Kishinev in 1903. By “narrative” in this study, the author means, first of all, what was expressed in the press by the authorities, public figures, and correspondents whose publications were addressed to the Russian-speaking readership. Among the most frequently discussed topics are the search for the main culprit, the reasons for the pogroms, and the actions of the authorities. The main sources used are periodicals expressing the views of different political forces of the Russian Empire. The author concludes that the boundaries of ideological orientation were blurred in statements about the Kishinev tragedy. The conviction that the pogroms were organized and prepared in advance matured more and more among those who spoke publicly, but not all those who spoke out pointed to the authorities as the main organizer. The Russian socio-political narrative regarding the Kishinev tragedy was supplemented by a “Western” narrative: as a result, confidence in the government’s involvement in Russian society grew stronger.

### KEYWORDS:

Kishinev pogrom, anti-Semitism, narrative, Jewish question, periodicals, public opinion

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\* Now the city is called Chişinău.

The Kishinev pogrom in April 1903 shook the whole world community. This was reflected not only in the numerous rallies that took place in Europe and the United States, but also in the stormy discussion of the tragedy in the press. The predominant attitude of the foreign press in the spring and summer of 1903 was condemnation of the local and central governments, which were seen as the main culprits. Points of contact for foreign and Russian (liberal) socio-political accounts were certain aspects of the heated discussion: the behaviour and reaction of the Russian government, the direct involvement in the tragedy of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vjačeslav von Plehve, the spontaneity/premeditation of the pogrom, and the role of the press in inciting hatred amongst the local Christian population.

In his study of the Białystok pogrom and public reaction to it, modern Polish historian Artur Markowski noted that the idea that the state was responsible for the pogrom arose among Russian Marxists and liberals who opposed the tsarist regime. This idea was firmly entrenched in both public opinion and historiography and had become, as the scholar put it, a “scientific paradigm”.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that a similar pattern “works” in the context of the Kishinev pogrom. Eventually, the same aspects of the tragedy became central to Russian and foreign scholars throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

To date, there is a fairly extensive historiography of the phenomenon of anti-Jewish violence and aggression in Europe in modern and contemporary times. In particular, these are the works of contemporary historians Helmut Walser-Smith,<sup>2</sup> Werner Bergman and Christhard Hofmann.<sup>3</sup> In these works, the authors reflect on the role of rumours as a pretext for pogroms. There is also a certain tradition in the study of anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire in general and the Kishinev pogrom in particular. This includes works by Edward Judge and Shlomo Lambroza<sup>4</sup> that have already become classics in the world of academic Jewish studies. The goal of many researchers in studying the Kishinev pogrom has been to reconstruct the events and the authorities’ policies by analysing the official documentation, police officials’ correspondence, and court materials. A recent monograph by Steven Zipperstein<sup>5</sup> in the centre of the narrative describes, on one hand, all possible causes and preconditions of the tragedy; on the other hand, it describes the role of the events in Kishinev in the spring of 1903 in

<sup>1</sup> Artur Markowski, *Przemoc antyżydowska i wyobrażenia społeczne. Pogrom białostocki 1906 roku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> *Exclusionary Violence. Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, ed. by Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Šlomo Lambroza, ‘Pogromy 1903–1906 godov’, in *Pogromy v rossijskoj istorii Novogo vremeni*, ed. by Džon D. Klier and Šlomo Lambroza (Moskva: Knižniki, 2016), pp. 207–53; Ėdvard Džadž, *Pascha v Kišineve. Anatomija pogroma* (Kišinev: Liga, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Steven J. Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: Liveright, 2018).

the further development of the Jewish diaspora and its collective memory. According to the Zipperstein, the geography of the pogrom played an important role in the further spread of news about it throughout the world: Kishinev was the place of residence of many influential Zionists and was a well-known city in Russia. Methodologically, the closest to our study is the work of the British historian Sam Johnson, who examined the methods of presenting information about the Jewish pogroms from 1881 to 1919 in the English-language press. Compared to the first wave of pogroms, according to her observations, the Kishinev pogrom received more rapid and detailed press coverage with an emphasis on physical brutality.<sup>6</sup> Since the US reaction to the Kishinev tragedy was quite severe, a study on the American public's reaction to it was published a year later.<sup>7</sup>

Even in the extensive historiography on the pogroms, the reaction of Russian society to the event was only of secondary importance. This has led to an incomplete understanding of the behaviour of both the authorities and society. Meanwhile, the press had a fairly strong influence on its readership because, in the absence of legal public order and representative institutions in Russia before 1905, periodicals were considered the sole expression of the feelings of various social groups. A detailed study of the history of press coverage of various ideological currents will make it possible to draw a holistic picture of the contradictions in society and even trace how the authorities behaved towards Russian society. As a result of this special study, we expect to come to a comprehensive and complex understanding of the Russian socio-political narrative regarding the tragedy in Kishinev. By "narrative" in this study, we mean primarily what was expressed in print by the authorities, public figures, and correspondents whose publications were addressed to the Russian-speaking readership.

Publications on the Kishinev tragedy can be divided into several types. Firstly, there were articles containing detailed accounts of events by correspondents from Kishinev. Depending on the author's goals, these had different emphases: descriptions of people's reactions, atrocities and so on. Secondly, some articles gave an overview of the situation in the city after the pogrom: the nervousness of the population, the beginning of the investigation. Thirdly, there were analytical articles – statements by individual authors and attempts to make sense of the pogroms. Often there were also reprints of reports from other publications in special columns. Later, publications describing the judicial investigations also appeared. We pay

<sup>6</sup> Sam Johnson, 'Uses and Abuses: Pogrom in the Anglo-American Imagination 1881–1919', in *Jews in the East European Borderlands: Essays in Honor of John D. Klier*, ed. by Eugene M. Avrutin and Harriet Murav (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), pp. 147–65.

<sup>7</sup> Cyrus Adler, *The voice of America on Kishineff* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1904).

attention to the placement of these articles in newspapers, the frequency of mentions of the pogrom in the press, the moments of activation of attention to the event, the authors' accents and reactions to the news, and the emotional colouring and rhetoric of these texts.

The reaction of Russian society to the pogrom became part of Russian and foreign studies. However, some of them only focused on the reactions of individuals,<sup>8</sup> while others relied on a rather limited list of periodicals.<sup>9</sup> The press organs most frequently cited by historians were *Novoe Vremja*, *Bessarabec*, and *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, probably due to the fact that these were the most prominent representatives of the two opposing ideologies and, accordingly, they held diametrically opposed viewpoints. This study takes a closer look at the statements of individual public figures and cultural figures and attempts to analyse the Russian narrative of the Kishinev pogrom in a wide range of periodicals expressing the views of different social forces in the Russian Empire, including *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik*, *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, *Kur'er*, *Russkie Vedomosti*, *Iskra*, *Osvoboždenie*, *Russkoe bogatstvo*, *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, *Pravo*, *Graždanin*, and others. Chronologically, we limit ourselves to June 1903, when mention of the pogrom almost completely disappeared from the press. In other words, we are interested in the initial reaction of Russia's various social forces to the tragedy.

The pogrom in Kishinev took place on 6–7 April 1903. The first official report on the event was published on 10 April in the Internal News section of *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik*.<sup>10</sup> The report was quite brief, was not highlighted by any distinctive headline, and was lost among the other news of the day. The events were described by the authorities as “riots” in which a crowd of workers attacked Jews. The report emphasized that the police had made efforts but were unable to stop the riots. In the following days, exactly this interpretation of the events was adopted in journals of different ideological orientations in the provincial news or correspondent sections: *Sankt-Petersburgskiye Vedomosti*,<sup>11</sup> *Russkie Vedomosti*,<sup>12</sup> *Pravo*,<sup>13</sup> *Novoe Vremja*,<sup>14</sup> *Graždanin*,<sup>15</sup> and many others. In this way, the authorities tried to spread their view of the events as widely as possible.

On the basis of the first publication expressing the official opinion, information spread abroad in the following days. The second article in *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik*, which indirectly referred to the events in Kishinev,

<sup>8</sup> Jumi Nakagava, 'Publicističeskie proizvedenija russkich literatorov o kišinevskom pogrome', *Vestnik RGGU. Serija: Istorija. Filologija. Kul'turologija. Vostokovedenie*, 9 (2007), 223–35.

<sup>9</sup> Džadž, *Pascha v Kišineve*.

<sup>10</sup> *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik*, 82 (1903).

<sup>11</sup> *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 96 (1903).

<sup>12</sup> *Russkie vedomosti*, 100 (1903).

<sup>13</sup> *Pravo*, 16 (1903).

<sup>14</sup> *Novoe vremja*, 9722 (1903).

<sup>15</sup> *Graždanin*, 28–30 (1903).

appeared on 16 April. It announced the situation of increased guarding of Kishinev and the county, but already – as if taken out of context – without mentioning the reason.<sup>16</sup> Only readers who had followed the news in other newspapers had an inkling of the motives behind the need for such protection. While other journals actively discussed the events in Kishinev over the next few months, *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik* remained silent on the subject, citing only occasional small articles that were lost in the general mass of other reports. According to the contemporary American historian Edward Judge, the government held back from interpreting the events for a long time because it had been surprised by them. It is possible, however, that the initial reluctance to publicize the pogrom indicates a desire not to involve the public in the problem. News of the event would also have clashed with the general orientation of *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik* and its editor-in-chief at the time, Platon Kulakovskij; therefore, a positive image of the authorities was maintained and ideas in the spirit of orthodoxy and autocracy were propagated.

Of course, the most active newspaper in terms of frequency of publications on the pogrom was *Bessarabec*. This is due to the location of the event and the increased interest of its editor-in-chief, Pavolakij Kruševan, in the Jewish question and his attempt to support and defend the official position as well as himself against the accusations of inciting hatred among the local population against the Jews that were directed at his newspaper. In articles containing the first information about the tragedy, *Bessarabec* made no mention of either incitement or police inaction, emphasizing the spontaneity of the events. Moreover, while there were discussions about what had happened, articles appeared in the mentioned publications that tried to draw public attention also to the Christian victims of the pogrom.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the Jews themselves were declared the perpetrators of the tragedy. In the opinion of *Bessarabec*, popular anger that had long accumulated under the oppression of “exploiters”<sup>18</sup> had found an outlet in the pogrom. A similar position was taken by the pro-government *Novoe Vremja* of Aleksej. Suvorin, who had long been known for his openly anti-Jewish statements and whose publication was delivered to the Emperor's desk every morning. For these two publications, the pogrom served as an additional excuse to continue the traditional statements on the painful Jewish question. *Novoe Vremja*, for example, was outraged at the fact that as a result of the new law of 10 May, which restricted the ownership of land by Jews outside the settlement line, the landed property in these provinces was in Jewish hands. The rhetoric

<sup>16</sup> *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik*, 87 (1903).

<sup>17</sup> *Novoe vremja*, 9730 (1903).

<sup>18</sup> *Bessarabec*, 96 (1903).

of the text – with the ingrained cliché that “circumventing laws has always been a special talent of the Jews” – is not surprising.<sup>19</sup>

Within a week of the first report in *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik*, articles in other newspapers and magazines began to gain momentum. However, in most publications these articles also got lost in the general mass of information, both in their placement and in the absence of a striking, distinguished or eye-catching title. In mid-April, the attention of the Russian public was riveted on several important events for the Empire: the stay of the Emperor and his family in Moscow, preparations for the celebration of the bicentenary of Saint Petersburg, the transfer of the body of the Russian diplomat Grigorij Ščerbina to Russia, and the Emperor's visit to the grave of Michail Katkov. Many publications even preferred to write about the state of the harvest or minor incidents, occasionally mentioning the situation in Kishinev in columns devoted to domestic news.

Related articles in the Russian press peaked in the middle to second half of April 1903, gradually subsiding by June. The very first articles in the press were filled with detailed coverage of the chronology and topography of the riots, but these were not always accompanied by the personal opinions of the authors. The aim was to get the word out about the fact. They included eyewitness accounts as well as evidence of the pogrom that correspondents had managed to see in Kishinev. After the first information about the pogroms appeared in the press, the attention of articles shifted to the possible causes of the tragedy and the role of the local society in the disturbances. Synchronously with other publications, *Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, which observed principles of religious tolerance at the time and generally regularly reported on issues related to foreigners and non-Russian beliefs, tried to look into this issue. This newspaper accused the newspaper *Bessarabec* of systematic persecution of Jews, which led to pogroms like the one in Kishinev, without naming<sup>20</sup> and later pointing at Kruševan.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, *Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti* directed accusations of inaction at the authorities, police, and intellectuals, who only observed and walked around and “did not lift a finger to stop the riots”.<sup>22</sup> At the end of April, *Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti* published an analytical article about the causes of the pogrom that unambiguously identified as the main culprit Kruševan and his newspaper *Bessarabec*, which promoted incitement of hatred among Christians, who had lived peacefully with the Jews for many years. However, the author tried to find the reason for this not just in Kruševan's anti-Semitism, but also

<sup>19</sup> *Novoe vremja*, 9763 (1903).

<sup>20</sup> ‘Zametki’, *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 100 (1903).

<sup>21</sup> ‘V dopolnenie k užasajuščim vestjam iz Bessarabii’, *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 109 (1903).

<sup>22</sup> ‘Kišinev (ot našego korrespondenta)’, *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 100 (1903).

in the economic situation: it was the nobility-landowners who benefited from cooperation with *Bessarabec* due to the economic crisis of the turn of the twentieth century and the strengthening of the trade and industrial stratum, which consisted significantly of Jews.<sup>23</sup> *Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti* along with *Russkie Vedomosti* and *Novosti* were among the first to write about the atrocities and physical abuse of the victims during the pogroms, giving a frightening description of how the victims were massacred with various implements, and an overview of the disfigured and mutilated bodies seen by reporters in the mortuary.<sup>24</sup> In this way, they tried to attract the attention of the readership by means of an emotional impact.

Perhaps the most active in covering the events in Kishinev was the liberal newspaper *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, which determinedly raised the most acute and topical problems of society. Headlines such as “Kishinev pogrom”, “Kishinev tragedy”, “Disaster in Kishinev” “shouted” about the event, attracting the reader’s attention by being clearly distinguished from the whole text. For *Novosti*, this tragedy was an additional opportunity to discuss the most interesting issue for the editorial office: the Jewish issue. This newspaper already had quite a lot of experience in covering the Jewish problem and daring controversies with the anti-Semitic press. In the days immediately after the pogrom, almost every issue of *Novosti* published several articles about the Kishinev tragedy under different headings. Unlike other periodicals, however, the editorial board’s main focus was public opinion, and articles in other publications, such as *Kievljanin*, *Južnyj kraj*, *Sankt-Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, *Kur'er*, and *Russkie Vedomosti*. *Novoye Vremja* and *Bessarabec* deserved the most attention from the *Novosti* editors, in whose opinion these two publications were the main perpetrators of anti-Jewish sentiment. The authors of articles in *Novosti* boldly accused both newspapers of “applauding the shameful catastrophe”.<sup>25</sup> Thus, *Bessarabec* was reproached by *Novosti* for incorrect factual data about the pogroms and hypocritical and ostentatious compassion for the victims.<sup>26</sup> For its accusations against *Novoye Vremja* and *Bessarabec*, *Novosti*’s editorial board was even prepared to be punished and showed solidarity in its views on the pogrom with *Kur'er*, *Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, and *Russkie Vedomosti*. The second main cause of the pogroms, according to *Novosti*, was the ignorance of the population, which easily succumbed to fantastic rumours about Jews.<sup>27</sup>

In April–June 1903, the figure of Kruševan became the most mentioned in liberal public opinion in the Russian press in the light of

<sup>23</sup> ‘K Kišinevskomu pogromu’, *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 111 (1903).

<sup>24</sup> ‘Nam pišut iz Kišineva’, *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 103 (1903).

<sup>25</sup> ‘K Kišinevskomu pogromu’, *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 119 (1903).

<sup>26</sup> *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 100 (1903), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 103 (1903); *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 106 (1903).

the Kishinev tragedy. Even if an article did not mention his name directly, it was Kruševan, editor-in-chief of *Bessarabec*, who was understood by the anti-Semitic press to have fomented the Kishinev riots. Moreover, almost all witnesses during the investigation emphasized Kruševan's role in inciting hatred against the Jews.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, after the pogrom the attention of the Moscow Democratic *Kur'er* was also drawn to the statements of the main culprit in its opinion, namely Kruševan. The newspaper *Kur'er* considered defending the oppressed and persecuted citizens as a possible solution to the problem for "truly cultural Russian people".<sup>29</sup>

From Kruševan and his newspaper's accusation, the moderate opposition *Russkie Vedomosti* leaned more and more towards analysis of the origins of the pogroms. This newspaper saw the event as a clearly planned and systematically prepared action, blaming the police, who were unwilling to stop the riots.<sup>30</sup> The attention of the authors of several articles focused on descriptions of the crowd's atrocities and crying over the disfigured bodies of relatives. According to this publication, if the press was to be seen as the main culprit, then it should have been opposed by the press that fostered the brightest feelings in man-humanity, legality and justice.<sup>31</sup>

The liberal journal *Vestnik Evropy*, a sister publication to *Russkie Vedomosti*, refused to blame the Judeophobic press for the disaster. A historical excursion into the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia allowed the authors of *Vestnik* to identify a pattern: the pogroms, in their opinion, occurred during a period when restrictive political measures against the Jews became more acute. *Vestnik* noted that the zealous emphasis on specific newspapers' responsibility "overshadows other deeper causes of unfortunate phenomena".<sup>32</sup> A similar position was taken by the sister magazine of *Vestnik*, namely *Russkaja mysl'*.<sup>33</sup>

A periodical, *Pravo*, which expressed the collective opinion of the legal community and was a platform for the political self-organization of liberal lawyers who were interested in the Jewish question only from a legal point of view, often published various controversial cases concerning the legal status of Jews. In April 1903, however, this newspaper stood out with an article by the lawyer and politician Vladimir Nabokov. His article "Kishinevskaja Banja"<sup>34</sup> appeared when many periodicals had already commented on the Kishinev tragedy and was probably another attempt to summarize the views of the Russian liberal public. Nabokov wrote about the enormity of the tragedy that

<sup>28</sup> Klara Žignja, 'Processy po delam o Kišinevskom pogrome 1903 god: vidnye rossijskie advokaty protiv sudebnoj vlasti', *Tiroš. Trudy po iudaike, slavistike, orientalistike*, 5 (1998), 175–210 (here: 199).

<sup>29</sup> *Kur'er*, 60 (1903).

<sup>30</sup> 'Kišinevskij pogrom', *Russkie vedomosti*, 106 (1903); *Russkie vedomosti*, 107 (1903).

<sup>31</sup> *Russkie vedomosti*, 107 (1903).

<sup>32</sup> *Vestnik Evropy*, 6 (1903), p. 826.

<sup>33</sup> *Russkaja mysl'*, 5.9 (1903), p. 218.

<sup>34</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, 'Kišinevskaja krovavaja banja', *Pravo*, 18 (1903).



took place in Kishinev. Acknowledging the preparation of the pogroms in advance and the lack of an attempt to suppress the riots – and also blaming the anti-Semitic press – he went further in his reasoning. The main blame lay, in his words, with the “regime of oppression and disenfranchisement” in which tense relations between the Christian and Jewish populations were maintained; in the idea that a Jew is to blame for being a Jew; and that idea of impunity for oppressing Jews was being promoted.<sup>35</sup> It was for the publication of this article that *Pravo* was first cautioned.<sup>36</sup> Despite this censorship, part of this sensational article by Vladimir Nabokov was quoted in the *Russkaja Pressa* column of the newspaper *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, *Pravo* seldom published articles about the Kishinev pogrom. It generally displayed a standard set of government-approved messages about the tragedy, including an official denial of the existence of a widely discussed letter from Minister von Plehve to the Bessarabian governor.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to Nabokov's publication, the speeches of some members of the Russian intelligentsia became well-known in society. Three weeks after the pogrom, the writer Lev Tolstoy wrote a letter to the dentist Èmanuil Lineckij of Yelizavetgrad, which was later published in Berlin in a separate pamphlet that included statements regarding the tragedy by progressive representatives of Russian society.<sup>39</sup> In the letter he described his attitude to Jews as being fraternal and based on his Christian outlook. Tolstoy declared the authorities responsible for the tragedy and mentions the preaching of lies and violence by the Russian government as the cause. In circles close to Saint Petersburg and Moscow Imperial universities, the idea emerged of sending a telegram to the mayor of Kishinev protesting against the pogrom. The planned text of the telegram was as follows: “Deeply shocked by the atrocity to which the Jews of Kishinev have fallen victim, we express our horror at what has happened; we feel searing shame for Christian society and immeasurable indignation against the vile instigators of the dark mass”.<sup>40</sup>

Tolstoy edited this collective appeal, which was signed by many academic and cultural figures. Among those who supported the appeal, the philosopher and publicist Sergej Trubetskoj is particularly worth mentioning because he expressed his true opinion about the pogrom in his memoirs, and it clearly differed from the main idea of the protest.<sup>41</sup> Trubetskoj ruled out the idea that there was one main culprit or cause behind the Kishinev tragedy and saw its main cause as the defects of the administrative and

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> *Pravo*, 19 (1903).

<sup>37</sup> *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 115 (1903).

<sup>38</sup> *Pravo*, 21 (1903).

<sup>39</sup> Lev Tolstoj, *Pis'ma po povodu Kišineva* (Berlin: Izdanie Gugo Štejnica, 1904), p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> Cited from: Nakagava, 'Publicističeskie proizvedenija russkich literatorov o kišinevskom pogrome', p. 224.

<sup>41</sup> Sergej Trubetskoj, 'Na rubeže', in *Trubetskoj S.N. Sobranie sočinenij Kn. Sergeja Nikolaeviča Trubetskogo*, 6 vols (Moskva: Tipografija G. Lissnera i D. Sopko, 1907), I, p. 480.

governor's office, which needed to be reformed. At the end of May, the Russian press published a letter from Tolstoy to David Shor, famous musician and teacher, in which Tolstoy expressed his astonishment at the beastliness of the crowds, the false Christians, and a sense of disgust at the instigators of the riot.<sup>42</sup>

A little later, Tolstoy sent a telegram to American newspapers in which he pointed out that the fault of the government was above all its policy that made Jews a separate caste, as well as the indoctrination of the Russian people into idolatry instead of Christianity.<sup>43</sup> On the whole, however, Tolstoy condemned the discriminatory laws against the Jews.

If Tolstoy was outraged with the government, the writer Maksim Gorky, also famous as a Judophile, blamed the pogrom on the entire cultural society. By the time of the Kishinev pogrom, Gorky already had a long history of fighting against anti-Semitism and the anti-Semitic press. In his article "Protest against Society", Gorky stressed that cultural society had not only failed to act during the pogrom but had also allowed an anti-Jewish narrative to be disseminated for many years. Among the disseminators, he named famous publishers and newspaper employees Aleksej Suvorin, Visarion Komarov, Pavolakij Kruševan, and Sergej Šarapov. After the arrest of the perpetrators of the tragedy, Gorky pointed out that the mob that had smashed the Jews was "a hand" led by people of cultural society.<sup>44</sup>

One of the most high-profile works about the Kishinev pogrom was an essay, 'House No. 13', by the writer and public figure Vladimir Korolenko, who had long defended and had sympathy for the Jews. He wrote this essay a few days after having interviewed eyewitnesses himself, when the consequences of the catastrophe remained in the town and the atmosphere remained tense. He wanted to share with the reader all the horror he had passed through when experiencing this atmosphere. The essay is written in the style of a reportage, with most of it devoted to a description of the pogrom. Korolenko reproduces in some detail the various interactions between the people during the pogrom, but he shifts the focus periodically to the inhumanity of the pogromists. He identifies several categories of perpetrators, calling on them to confess guilt: murderers, instigators, connivers, false accusers against Jews, irresponsible people.<sup>45</sup> Unlike Gorky and Tolstoy, Korolenko does not directly address the instigators; however, he does show the inaction of officials – the policeman and the priest. Korolenko is more interested in human psychology in general, both as a pogromist and as an observer.

<sup>42</sup> *Kur'er*, 88 (1903).

<sup>43</sup> Nakagava, 'Publicističeskie proizvedenija russkich literatorov o kišinevskom pogrome', p. 225.

<sup>44</sup> Tolstoj, *Pis'ma po povodu Kišineva*, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Vladimir Korolenko, *Dom № 13* (Berlin, 1904), p. 49.

Despite some differences in views on the causes of the pogroms and the identification of the main culprit, the liberal publications and individual public figures shared several points of common ground. For example, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, *Russkie vedomosti*, *Vestnik Evropy* and other publications referred to the pogrom wave of the 1880s and were convinced that the Kishinev pogrom surpassed all previous ones.<sup>46</sup> What many commentators had in common was the harsh, emotionally coloured and vivid rhetoric of their texts. The events in Kishinev were compared to the bloody events of the Middle Ages and the destruction of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the nineteenth century.

The use of the word “pogrom” in the Russian narrative of the 1903 tragedy is ambiguous. The contemporary British historian Johnson noted that it was a special Russian term which expressed the extraordinary nature of the actions caused by the behaviour of the Tsarist regime against the Jews.<sup>47</sup> However, she stresses that the pogrom was otherwise similar to previous similar events. On the one hand, Johnson’s thoughts confirm the fact that the word “pogrom” was avoided by the authorities, both in public utterances and in official but internal documentation hidden from public view. On the other hand, *Novoe vremja*, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, and other publications were not afraid to use the word “pogrom”. Accordingly, it was most likely not about the meaning of spontaneity, but about the threat to the individual. In their words, the authors conveyed the meaning of pogroms primarily as a natural disaster – probably reflecting all their power and man’s physical powerlessness in the face of danger. Rioters were described as “thugs”, “troublemakers”, “ignorant elements” and “savage mobs of scum”. Comparing the rioters and their behaviour to animals also shines a light on the low cultural level of Russian society.

In this context, among the intelligentsia and the liberal press, a separate line in the Russian narrative about the events in Kishinev is the problem of the ignorance of the masses and the cultural level of humanity, which was able to raise its hand against the same humanity again. *Sankt-Peterburgskiye Vedomosti*, *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta* and the largest provincial newspaper in Kharkov, *Južnyj kraj*, noted with regret that this was still possible and that “vile instincts” had taken over. To prevent such a catastrophe in the future, it was proposed to work on raising the spiritual level of the population – to teach about love, mercy, tolerance – and in this the church should play a major role.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> ‘Posle Kišinevskogo pogroma’, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 113 (1903); *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 101 (1903); *Vestnik Evropy*, 6 (1903), p. 827; *Russkie vedomosti*, 107 (1903).

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, ‘Uses and Abuses’, p. 154.

<sup>48</sup> *Južnyj kraj*, 6699 14 April 1903; *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 103 (1903).

Many publications' main emotional reaction to the tragedy was a sense of shame. Even opposing publications such as *Kur'er* pointed to the sense of shame of all honest Russian people.<sup>49</sup> Veselovskij, a writer for *Novosti*, described his feelings in the same way: "If I wanted to define my state of mind in one word, I would say that I am ashamed".<sup>50</sup> The far-from-Judophile newspaper *Kievljanin* also pointed to a sense of shame about the behaviour of Christians.<sup>51</sup>

The last interpretation of the Kishinev tragedy from a conservative position was presented by Prince Meščerskij in his newspaper *Graždānin*. He stated that blaming the government was a vile slander that had been launched in Europe for political purposes and that the government could not be indifferent to the beating of anyone in the streets. As proof of this, he cites the fact that the director of the police department, Lopukhin, had arrived in Kishinev within two days. He calls the riots accidental, born out of popular passions.<sup>52</sup> The originality of his statements lies only in a comparison with the Poltava-Kharkov agrarian peasant disturbances of 1902 and the Andizhan disturbances of 1898. In regards to the latter, the government circles in the capital tried to portray them as not an imperial problem but a local one. Meščerskij notes that the Kishinev tragedy in no way surpassed these events, and in this way he tried to downplay the scale of the tragedy. Given the general thrust of *Graždānin*, which expressed the interests of a conservative section of Russian society, his point of view is quite understandable. Moreover, in the early twentieth century, Prince Meščerskij began to draw closer to the tsar, who resumed the government subsidies to this magazine in 1902. Meščerskij himself was awarded the rank of a real State Councillor.<sup>53</sup>

The Kishinev pogrom provided yet more impetus for an open discussion of the traditional domestic problems of the Russian Empire, in particular those of power. Meščerskij also discussed the nature of Russian gubernatorial power in *Graždānin*. He spoke about the dismissal of the governor von Raaben and notes the special responsibility and complexity of the post of the governor in the empire. He also argued for the strengthening of the governor's power. It is noteworthy that in the discussion regarding the dismissal of the governor there was nothing about the context and reasons for von Raaben's dismissal.<sup>54</sup> What was probably implied was that the reader was well-informed and there was widespread verbal discussion of the event.

<sup>49</sup> *Kur'er*, 60 (1903).

<sup>50</sup> Moisej Sluckij, *V skorbnyje dni* (Kišinev: Tipografija M. Averbucha, 1930), p. 71.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> 'Reči konservatora. Pis'mo k evreju', *Graždānin*, 50 (1903), p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Anna Kajl', "'Graždānin" knjazja V.P. Meščerskogo', *Izvestija Saratovskogo universiteta. Novaja serija. Serija: Istorija. Meždunarodnye otnošenija*, 11.1 (2011), 8–15.

<sup>54</sup> 'Dnevnik', *Graždānin*, 37 (1903).

The monarchist *Moskovskie vedomosti* also touched on the problem of power. This newspaper shifted its focus from directly accusing the administration of inaction to a more in-depth analysis of the reasons for this particular behaviour of local officials. According to the editors, there was no strong provincial authority in Kishinev at the time of the tragedy, and it was a mistake to hand it over to the military at the most decisive moment. The problem of national relations in Kishinev was compared to the situation in Finland, where Swedish propaganda had also penetrated, but which was handled by a strong governor, Nikolay Ivanovich Bobrikov, thus preventing an inter-ethnic conflict that had been brewing for a long time.<sup>55</sup> In several articles in *Moskovskie vedomosti*, the authors noted that the local peasants were so electrified by anti-Jewish rumours that only a strong government could have stopped this mob.

The police background of Plehve, who had defeated the terrorist organization *Narodnaja Volja* and established strict censorship, was one reason for the irreconcilable attitude towards him in liberal and opposition circles. The Kishinev events were another opportunity for the revolutionaries to speak out rather sharply against the government. For example, after the pogroms the Kishinev committee of the RSDLP distributed a leaflet around the city which condemned the government. Of course, the basic idea of the leaflet was a call to fight against the autocracy, which had brought the population of the empire to a miserable and dire state and, most importantly, educated a huge mass of ignorant people capable of brutal murder.<sup>56</sup> Several issues of the illegal revolutionary newspaper *Iskra* were devoted to analysis and discussion of the Kishinev tragedy. The first and most elaborate article, called “The Last Map of Tsarism”, was by Georgij Plekhanov. It displayed all the intolerance for the intelligentsia, which Plekhanov called “the scum of humanity”. Both Lenin and Plekhanov had a particular hatred for Plekhanov, whom they had previously referred to as a “cunning police fox”. Like the editors of *Liberation*, Plekhanov compared Plehve to Ignatyev in his anti-Jewish policy. Plekhanov pointed to Plehve as the main culprit of the tragedy; he stressed that the government only pretended to be unable to deal with the pogromists. And, of course, his conclusion as a representative of the revolutionary movement was legitimate: the workers must oppose anti-Semitism, which is specifically propagated “from above”.<sup>57</sup> The following articles emphasize the involvement of the police in organizing the pogroms. Eyewitness accounts are cited as evidence, and the atrocious

<sup>55</sup> ‘Sila razumnoj vlasti’, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 117 (1903).

<sup>56</sup> ‘Listovka Kišinevskogo komiteta RSDRP «Kto vinovnik kišinevskoj reznici?»’, in *Rabočee dviženie v Moldavii. 1895 – fevral’ 1917*, ed. by V. Žukov and Jurij Ivanov (Kišinev: Štiinca, 1985), p. 72.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Poslednjaja karta carizma’, *Iskra*, 39 (1903).

physical abuse of the victims is emphasized.<sup>58</sup> Anti-Semitism was deliberately and artificially cultivated in the police environment. But the deeper reason is the accumulated dissatisfaction of the masses with the situation in the country, which was only fuelled by the authorities and the police. In Zhytomyr, the crowd rushed on the Chinese, thus it was only a distraction of the population from the real problems, and to the cries of “beat the Jews”, the crowd responded with “beat the police”.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps the strongest anti-government stance could be expressed by the anti-monarchist magazine *Osvoboždenie*, published in Stuttgart under the leadership of Peter Struve. This magazine served as one of the main sources from which the foreign press drew information about Russia. Having learned about the pogrom, Struve was horrified: he perceived the incident as an attempt by Plehve to channel the social contradictions in the least dangerous direction for the authorities.<sup>60</sup> His reaction to the pogrom was the publication of a special anthology by *Osvoboždenie*'s editors that contained eyewitness accounts, official documents and statements by the Russian public. The special feature of this special topical collection was that the information was supported by photos of the victims of the pogroms. The authors repeated the already widespread idea that someone was in charge of organizing the pogroms: “someone’s sinister hands were felt”.<sup>61</sup> The Minister of Internal Affairs was compared to Ignatyev in repeating the sad anti-Jewish policy: “The Minister-Horse Doctor resurrected in the person of Plehve”.<sup>62</sup> Another article explicitly pointed out that the pogrom had definitely been organized in advance, suspecting that the perpetrators were people close to the government.<sup>63</sup> The very presentation of information in the government’s official report on the pogrom gave the impression to the Western press of an admission that the authorities and the police had failed in their tasks.<sup>64</sup>

This collection differs from the rest of the pogrom coverage in perhaps two ways: firstly, the explicit orientation in the articles towards the Western “civilized world” and its assessment of events in “uncivilized” Russia; secondly, the idea that the government saw the Jews primarily as a revolutionary element. Thus, in the preface to the collection, Struve singles out the government, which widely “developed anti-Jewish propaganda and wanted to expose the participation of some of its elements in the revolutionary movement against the Jewry”.<sup>65</sup> For Struve, the pogrom

<sup>58</sup> ‘Kišinevskie sobytija’, *Iskra*, 39 (1903).

<sup>59</sup> ‘Vremena menjajutsja’, *Iskra*, 39 (1903).

<sup>60</sup> Ričard Pajps, *Struve: levij liberal, 1870–1905*, 2 vols (Moskva: Moskovskaja škola političeskikh issledovanij, 2001), I, p. 175.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Divide et Impera!’, in *Kišinevskij pogrom* (Stuttgart: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1903), p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Cui prodest?’, in *Kišinevskij pogrom*, p. 17.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Kišinevskaja bojnja i obščestvennoe mnenie civilizovannogo mira’, in *Kišinevskij pogrom*, p. 32.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Predislovie’, in *Kišinevskij pogrom*, p. 4.

was probably yet another reason to speak out against the government. He sharply condemned the policy of the government in the Jewish question and compared the situation of the Jews with that of beasts. However, not everything in these statements is obvious. He was a supporter of the assimilation of Jews, and, in his opinion, their resurgent ideas about the nation were only the result of the long restrictive policy of the Russian authorities.

The further behaviour of the government in public opinion, according to the logical conclusions of Edward Judge, was rather sluggish in defending its interpretation of the pogroms. During the second half of April, newspapers published news of the arrival in Kishinev of the director of the Police Department, Aleksej Lopukhin, to investigate what had happened. A few days later, newspapers published the news that Governor von Raaben had assembled and addressed the city's honorary citizens. This speech rather reflected his desire to justify himself: he blamed the disturbances on malevolent persons who had spread rumours about there being permission to beat up Jews, which, he was sure, could not have been granted as all subjects enjoyed the same protection of the state, regardless of their religion.<sup>66</sup> Even a small report on the governor's speech was echoed in several publications. Thus, in *Graždanin* Prince Meščerskij accused the governor of failing to address the public with calls for discipline during the pogroms in order to pacify them.<sup>67</sup> Prince Meščerskij's unexpectedly critical stance towards the local authorities can probably be explained by his close attention to the problem of the governorship and the local administration, which he had been most interested in for many years and in which he saw many shortcomings. This position was echoed by *Russkaja mysl'*, which did not adhere to any clear ideological line and allowed a wide variety of public figures to express themselves on its pages.<sup>68</sup>

Interest in the behaviour of the local authorities was evident in the press in connection with the behaviour of Kishinev City Council. At an emergency meeting of the Duma on 10 April, a proposal by the mayor of Kishinev to allocate funds from the city's savings for the benefit of the Jewish victims was not supported by the town councillors. Moreover, the mayors pointed out that there was a special "basket tax" for this purpose, and if *Novoe vremja* simply stated and retold this fact, then *Novosti* could not but express its opinion on this matter. *Novoe vremja* noted with indignation that the majority of the City Council's members had "failed" to compensate the victims of the pogroms. One article especially singled out a member of the City Council called Lato, who tried to assure the participants of

<sup>66</sup> *Južnyj kraj*, 7711 (1903); *Volyn'*, 92 (1903).

<sup>67</sup> *Graždanin*, 36 (1903).

<sup>68</sup> *Russkaja mysl'*, 5.9 (1903), p. 220.

the Duma session “that most of the Jewish victims would surely recover”.<sup>69</sup> Such behaviour was in line with the general thrust of the policy regarding the victims of the pogroms: it was forbidden to publish announcements in the press about collecting money for Jews.<sup>70</sup>

Despite the obstacles put in place by the authorities, newspaper and magazine editors took part in the creation of a relief fund for the victims of the pogroms. Considerable sums were collected by *Russkoe bogatstvo*, *Novosti*, *Severnyj Kavkaz*, and many other publications.<sup>71</sup> The news of the Kishinev tragedy spread in the provincial Russian press as well.

On 28–29 April, a notice issued by the Minister of Internal Affairs to governors, town governors, and police chiefs outlining the official version of the events of 6–7 April in Kishinev was published in many periodicals. It stated that the riots were caused by “the common people” and that the cause was “the strained relations between Christians and Jews in the Bessarabian province”.<sup>72</sup> The direct cause was the false accusations that the Jews had committed ritual murders, which turned the population against them. Remarkably, the circular was silent on the authorship of the rumours. From the sequence of events explained in this circular, it appears that the main motive was the aggression of a Jew who struck a Christian woman in the street. The authorities thus censured the Jews. The explanation put forward by the authorities for the failure of the police in this circular is also legitimate: there was a lack of normal leadership, and the governor had transferred authority for policing to military chiefs. The emperor had ordered the prevention of violence to be taken under his personal responsibility; various methods of self-defence were prohibited, and the civilian authorities had handed over their duties for restoring order to the military. There was also an attempt at censorial oppression by the authorities: *Pravo* and the Russian-Jewish *Voschod* newspapers were condemned for accusing the government of the tragedy. These censorship decisions alerted readers of many periodicals.<sup>73</sup>

The next significant events regarding the Kishinev tragedy that divided public opinion into “pro” and “contra” were the speeches of the church fathers Father Ioann of Kronstadt<sup>74</sup> and Antonij (Chrapovickij). The main message of both preachers was to pacify the population (the traditional message of this genre) and that the hatred in the Kishinev pogrom was a result

<sup>69</sup> *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 112 (1903).

<sup>70</sup> ‘Ukazanie Direktora Departamenta policii Načal’niku glavnogo upravlenija po delam pečati’, in *Kišinevskij pogrom 1903 goda: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, ed. by Klara Žignja and others (Kišinev: Ruxanda, 2000), p. 85.

<sup>71</sup> Jakov Kopanskij, ‘Vsemirnyj protest protiv Kišinevskogo pogroma 1903 goda (osnovnye aspekty)’, in *Kišinevskij pogrom 1903 goda: vzgljad čerez stoletie. Materialy meždunarodnoj naučnoj konferencii*, ed. by Jakov Kopanskij (Kišinev: Pontos, 2004), pp. 13–26 (p. 19).

<sup>72</sup> *Pravitel’stvennyj vestnik*, 98 28 April 1903.

<sup>73</sup> *Graždjanin*, 35 (1903); *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 7715 (1903).

<sup>74</sup> *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, 8 (1903).



of forgetting the teachings of Christ. A particularly heartfelt sermon was that of Fr. Antony, who urged Christians to learn from the Jews' centuries-long commitment to observing their religious customs and traditions. To try to prevent such a tragedy in the future, the authorities decided to disseminate these sermons throughout Russia, therefore they were published in a separate booklet that the Jewish population helped to distribute. According to the contemporary Russian historian Maksim Khizhyi, these sermons did not appear in the periodicals, which only mentioned them.<sup>75</sup> However, we were able to find several articles in not only central but also provincial publications. In particular, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, *Volyn* and *Južnyj kraj* (Southern Region) fully or partially cited the sermons of Fr. Antony and Father Ioann of Kronstadt.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the newspaper *Novosti*, which closely monitored the behaviour of the anti-Semitic press, was even indignant that *Novoye Vremja* and *Bessarabec* did not mention the sermons at all.<sup>77</sup> Antony's appeal was published in the church press, in particular in the *Missionary Review*. In general, according to Khizhyi's conclusions, diocesan publications were overwhelmingly silent in their pages about the Kishinev tragedy.<sup>78</sup> This author mentions a sermon by a teacher at Ryazan seminary for his pupils that emphasized the historical fate of the Jewish people. We also managed to find a statement from Archimandrite Nikolaj that was published in the *Grodno diocesan gazette* six months after the tragedy. In his "Edification", this archimandrite essentially repeated the rhetoric of previous authors and priests and speaks of the sense of shame that the pogromists should feel before non-Christians and non-believers, urging the population to "live as Christians". It is noteworthy that he blamed not only ignorant "commoners" but also "educated people" for the negative image of the Jews among the Christian population.<sup>79</sup>

After condemning the pogroms and blaming Christians, Fr. Ioann earned the hatred of conservative circles in Russian society when he received a letter containing the following words: "Father Ioann, Judas. Hitherto respected by the Russian people, you are now the patron saint, servant and lackey of the Jews. You know only to drink the blood of Christians".<sup>80</sup> Such threats probably forced him to soften his initial unequivocal indignation and apologize to the Christians of Kishinev for "unilateralism". A later text by Ioann of Kronshtadt was quoted in the church periodical *Missionerskoe*

<sup>75</sup> Maksim Chižij, 'Archiepiskop Antonij (Chrapovickij) i evrei', in *Trudy po evrejskoj istorii i kul'ture. Materialy XXIII Meždunarodnoj ežegodnoj konferencii po iudaike*, ed. by Viktorija Močalova (Moskva: Centr naučnych rabotnikov i prepodavatelej iudaiki v vuzach "Sēfer", 2017), pp. 321–26 (here: 323).

<sup>76</sup> *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 112 (1903); *Volyn*, 92 2 May 1903; *Južnyj kraj*, 7715 3 May 1903, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 119 (1903); *Kur'er*, 64 (1903).

<sup>77</sup> *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 123 (1903).

<sup>78</sup> Chižij, 'Archiepiskop Antonij (Chrapovickij) i evrei', p. 321.

<sup>79</sup> 'Poučenie po povodu evrejskich pogromov', *Grodnskie eparchial'nye vedomosti*, 43 (1903), col. 429.

<sup>80</sup> Cited from: Nadežda Kicenka, *Svjatoj našego vremeni. Otec Ioann Kronštadtskij i russkij narod* (Moskva: NLO, 2006), p. 231.

*Obozrenie* and secular newspapers such as *Vestnik Evropy*. In this text, he stressed that the pogroms could not be only blamed on Christians as the Jews were also to blame. A few days later, *Missionerskoe Obozrenie* published a text in defence of Fr. Ioann in which the traditional anti-Jewish worldview was vividly expressed. It stated that the primary declaration that Christians were responsible for what had happened was erroneous, and the Jewish rabbis, “who held the dark mass in the age-old chains of the misanthropic Talmud”, were rebuked for using Father Ioann’s sermon and preaching to their own advantage.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, Father Ioann of Kronstadt’s erratic behaviour was condemned by the magazine *Russkoe bogatstvo*, which wrote that he had been easily persuaded by certain eyewitnesses that the Jews were guilty.<sup>82</sup> The newspaper *Vestnik Evropy* noted that there was not only a rapid change in Ioann of Kronstadt’s views but also a shift in the position of the Christians who considered themselves offended, emphasizing that the Jewish victims had already been compensated for their losses. The author resented the Christian view of money as equivalent to life and health.<sup>83</sup>

As the Russian-Jewish historian and social activist Semen Dubnov recalled, *Kishinev* became the battle cry of all social forces in both Russia and abroad.<sup>84</sup> The West’s heightened interest in the events in Kishinev was also linked to their intense anticipation of the Russian government’s reaction. This is due to the different perceptions of Russian and Western statesmen. The American and English authorities assumed that a similar case could not leave the entire Russian government in silence; there were mentions of the event in the Russian government press, and the sluggish reaction of the imperial authorities only convinced the West of the Russian government’s involvement in the tragedy.

An important incident that gave a new boost to the international debate on the Kishinev tragedy was the appearance of another publication that indirectly indicated the authorities as the perpetrator of the tragedy. In mid-May, the *Times of London* quoted a secret circular from Minister of the Interior Plehve to the governor of Bessarabia, von Raaben. From its contents, it follows that the governor had been notified of riots being prepared against the Jews. The Jews were called exploiters of the local population and a recommendation was given not to resort to the use of weapons if disturbances occurred.<sup>85</sup> This news infiltrated foreign public opinion and was reprinted in American, English and other European periodicals. The idea

<sup>81</sup> *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, 3 (1903), p. 1396.

<sup>82</sup> *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 6 (1903), p. 147.

<sup>83</sup> *Vestnik Evropy*, 7 (1903), p. 447.

<sup>84</sup> Semen Dubnov, *Kniga žizni: Vospominanija i razmyšlenija. Materialy dlja istorii moego vremeni* (Sankt-Peterburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 1998), p. 242.

<sup>85</sup> *Pravo*, 21 (1903).

that the Russian authorities had been involved in the pogroms was becoming more and more entrenched abroad. The same can be said of Russian society: gradually the conviction of the government's culpability spread.<sup>86</sup>

In the Russian press, the article in *Pravitel'stvennyj vestnik* which refuted the existence of the authorities' secret circular began to circulate quite widely. It was reprinted in both conservative and liberal publications: *Russkoye Bogatstvo*, *Pravo*, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, *Novoye Vremja*, and *Kur'er*. *Novoye Vremja* defended the government, calling the secret document an apocryphal story that had been concocted to incite the hostile attitude of English society towards the Russian government.<sup>87</sup> The authenticity of this circular was strongly opposed by "Moskovskie Vedomosti", but for Vladimir Gringmut, the author of an article about the Moscow authorities who was known for his very conservative attitude, it rather became a good additional reason for the ideological struggle with Peter Struve. He indicated Struve as the main distributor of this "falsified" document, confidently emphasizing that Russian liberals would not believe him.<sup>88</sup> Only a week later, Gringmut expressed disappointment at the silence of the liberal publications, especially *Novosti*, which had also bowed down to Struve.<sup>89</sup> Meščerskij's reaction to the secret circular was similar to Gringmut's. He noted that Struve had 'migrated to Stuttgart to preach his liberal opposition' but did not really understand Russian life and people.<sup>90</sup> He called the English *Times* newspaper "the organ of the Jews".<sup>91</sup> He generally accused the Jews of spreading slander about the circular in order to arouse the most malignant feelings in the Jewish people towards the Minister of the Interior.<sup>92</sup> *Južnyj kraj* picked up on this sentiment and added that the correspondent would also pay for the slander in his homeland.<sup>93</sup>

Support for this view came quite legitimately from Ol'ga Novikova, a writer close to conservative and government circles who vehemently criticized the *Times* of London. She described it as an empty commercial enterprise, chasing only material gain.<sup>94</sup> The same spirit continued to appear in *Moskovskie vedomosti*: in the dissemination of the secret circular, the authors saw intrigues against Russia which were beneficial to its internal enemies and, among others, the Jews. However, at the same time, the quiet behaviour of the Russian government was emphasized. Accusing Jews of having also picked up the lies of the foreign press, the authors noted that

<sup>86</sup> Sergej Urusov, *Zapiski gubernatora: Kišenev, 1903–1904* (Moskva: Izdanie V.M. Sablina, 1907).

<sup>87</sup> *Novoe vremja*, 21 May 1903.

<sup>88</sup> Vladimir Gringmut, 'Podpol'noe zemstvo', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 142 (1903).

<sup>89</sup> Vladimir Gringmut, 'Zagraničnye basni o Rossii', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 148 (1903).

<sup>90</sup> Vladimir Meščerskij, 'Dnevnik', *Graždanin*, 44 (1903), p. 17.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Graždanin*, 39 (1903).

<sup>93</sup> *Južnyj kraj*, 7739 (1903).

<sup>94</sup> Ol'ga Novikova, 'Korrespondent Timesa', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 159 (1903).

“Only Russia’s worst enemies can sympathize with foreign interference in Russia’s internal affairs”.<sup>95</sup> The new Bessarabian governor, Prince Sergej Urusov, emphasized that, in Russia, Jewry in general was attributed great influence in the Western European press.<sup>96</sup>

The newspaper *Iskra* supported the truth of the Minister of the Interior’s secret circular, having the opinion that it was only further evidence of the Russian government’s culpability in the pogroms.<sup>97</sup>

Thereafter, the government expelled the *Times* correspondent Brehem from Russia, which was also reported in the Russian and foreign press. However, information spread in the foreign press about the rather rude treatment of Brehem and the police’s threat to expel him. In relation to this, an official denial was published in several newspapers: it said that the correspondent was being expelled under formalities prescribed by law.<sup>98</sup> *Novoye Vremja* pointed out on this occasion that the Russian government was too kind to foreign correspondents and that Braham’s removal only showed the Russian government’s desire to maintain good relations. Braham, according to this newspaper, was doing everything possible to spoil these relations.<sup>99</sup>

After June 1903, when the May coup in Serbia was all over the newspapers, there was even less mention of the Kishinev tragedy in the press. The only exception was *Novosti*, which in the three months after the pogrom wrote if not about the tragedy itself but about its moral and material consequences for the Jews and the local economy. Thus, at the beginning of May, this newspaper described a month of mourning during which the victims of the pogrom were again mourned, as well as about the situation of those who had fled from pogromists in other provinces.<sup>100</sup> All public attention now shifted to the official punishment and prosecution of the direct participants in the pogrom. *Novoe vremja* expressed dissatisfaction with the results of the investigation in mid-October and particularly lamented the fact that only Christians were in the dock.<sup>101</sup> *Novoe vremja* assured its readers that this mistake, which had transformed the local intelligentsia from defendants into witnesses, had been corrected and that the perpetrators would surely be punished.<sup>102</sup>

The authorities, of course, closely followed articles in various publications. Some of them were of particular concern. An issue of *Novosti*, as well as some other liberal publications, reported on the brutal physical slaughter

<sup>95</sup> ‘Amerikanskij otzvuk kišinevskogo pogroma’, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 169 (1903).

<sup>96</sup> Urusov, *Zapiski gubernatora: Kišenev, 1903–1904*.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Pravda li èto’, *Iskra*, 40 (1903).

<sup>98</sup> *Graždānin*, 45 (1903), p. 9; *Pravo*, 23 (1903), p. 1643.

<sup>99</sup> *Novoe vremja*, 21 May 1903.

<sup>100</sup> ‘K Kišinevskomu pogromu’, *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 131 (1903); ‘Vinnica’, *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 138 (1903).

<sup>101</sup> ‘Obvinjaemye po kišinevskomu pogromu’, *Novoe vremja*, 9920 (1903).

<sup>102</sup> ‘Iz Kišineva nam pišut’, *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*, 243 (1903).

of the victims by the mob. Apparently, the appearance of this information greatly alarmed the government because a doctor was given the task of examining the mutilated corpses mentioned in *Novosti*. The town doctor, in an official report, denied this and attributed the death of a child that had been mentioned in some articles to accidental suffocation by the mother as a result of confusion.<sup>103</sup> Referring to the article in *Novosti*, the same information about cruelty was repeated in a message from the acting Bessarabian governor Ustrugov to the director of the Department of Police.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, in articles in the Russian press in the spring and early summer of 1903, the Kishinev pogrom was generally not a particularly notable event. This may be due to both strict government censorship and the government's own reaction to the tragedy. The government's behaviour towards Russian society can instead be described as defensive: it responded rather rarely and weakly to accusations thrown by both Russian liberals and the foreign press. The rarest mentions of the pogrom and anything related to it in the official newspaper *Pravitel'stvennyj Vestnik* show the reluctance of the authorities to draw public attention to the pogrom. The Kishinev pogrom was an additional reason for the Russian socio-political forces in Russia and abroad to reflect once again on the sore points of the empire. The more frequently, boldly and vividly the tragedy was covered in the press, the more oppositional opinion was to the government. This was particularly evident in the publications *Osvoboždenie* and *Novosti i Birževaja gazeta*.

Most Russian periodicals agreed that the pogrom surpassed all other such events in terms of their brutality and the number of victims. On the whole, much in the pogrom narrative became common to the various publications. In other words, the boundaries of ideological orientation were blurred in statements about the Kishinev tragedy. Thus, both liberals and some conservatives were united in their condemnation of the nature of power in Russia. The emotional reaction of many activists was shame for certain strata of society: for some, it was the mad ignorant crowd, while for others it was the educated strata of society who had observed the tragedy or even encouraged the mob behind it. The conviction that the pogroms had been organized and prepared in advance grew more and more among those who spoke out publicly, but by no means everyone pointed to the authorities as the main organizer. The Russian socio-political narrative of the Kishinev tragedy was complemented by the "Western" narrative: as a result, confidence in government involvement in Russian society increased.

<sup>103</sup> 'Protokol zasedanija Bessarabskogo gubernskogo pravlenija po vračebnomu otdeleniju. 2 ijunja 1903 g.', in *Kišinevskij pogrom 1903 goda: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, p. 86.

<sup>104</sup> 'Soobščenie i. d. Bessarabskogo gubernatora Direktorju Departamenta policii. 1 ijulja 1903 g.', in *ibid.*, p. 116.

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