



"True Russian Heroes." Postcard with satirical drawing of Krushevan (left) alongside extreme nationalists V. Gringmut and V. Purishkevich.

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Sages of Zion, Pavel Krushevan, and the Shadow of Kishinev

Have you forgotten that, luckily, there are still anti-Semites? And, thank God, that there are still pogroms from time to time? However much you're assimilated in a hundred years, you'll be set back ten times as much by a single day's pogrom. And then the poor ghetto will be ready to take you back in.

—MIHAIL SEBASTIAN, *For Two Thousand Years*

No one would be held more responsible for Kishinev's riot—in the weeks just after its eruption, that is—than Pavel Krushevan. Newspaper headlines in Europe and the United States flaunted this Moldavian-born publisher, novelist, and short-story writer without need for identification. The cascade of accusations leveled in the months preceding the pogrom in his Kishinev newspaper, *Bessarabets*, including the charge of Jewish ritual murder, singled it out as Russia's most notorious hate sheet. For years after the Kishinev pogrom, Vladimir Lenin still referred to arch-reactionaries as Krushevans; Yiddish songs orig-

inating in World War II cited him alongside the latest, most murderous oppressors of the Jews.¹

Krushevan had so hungered for just such notoriety—infamy, he readily admitted, was far superior to anonymity—acknowledging already in adolescence that he cared for nothing so much as for his name to be widely known. Yet once his moment passed, the most consequential of his accomplishments would soon be overlooked or, at best, only fleetingly acknowledged. His role as Kishinev's Svengali was sidelined when in mid-May 1903 the Plehve letter surfaced, with Krushevan now largely dismissed as a government stooge, as a hoodlum shielding true criminals in the upper reaches of officialdom. More surprisingly, his role as publisher of the first version of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has also tended to be overlooked. Rarely is he more than mentioned in passing in the huge body of literature on the infamous text, arguably the most influential antisemitic one ever produced. And considerable evidence has surfaced indicating that Krushevan's contribution to the document was still more critical: He was almost certainly its author or coauthor, writing it in response to the unseemly, destructive hubbub in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom.

Released by Krushevan in nine consecutive installments in late August and early September 1903 in his St. Petersburg newspaper *Znamia*—with an introduction and afterword clearly written by him—this inaugural version fell into obscurity while the text itself, albeit revised somewhat, was reissued in book form six times over the course of the next five years. One indication of the curious inconspicuousness of Krushevan's version is that Herman Bernstein's pioneering study of the text, *The History of a Lie*, published in 1921, made no reference to it at all, and he seems to have been unaware of its existence. Norman Cohn's influential

1967 book, *Warrant for Genocide: The World Jewish Conspiracy and The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, dismissed Krushevan as "a typical pogromshchik."²

"Peter Krushevan," declared the *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune* (misstating his first name) in June 1934. "That black name is not easily forgotten." Contrary to the newspaper's claim, he mostly was. Momentarily he was then revived in the mid-30s because of the mention of Krushevan's *Znamia* version in the 1934–35 Bern trial when Swiss Jews brought the disseminators of *The Protocols* to court seeking to stop its publication. Rarely was it cited later. The authorship of *The Protocols* would be widely attributed to the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, with the likes of Krushevan viewed as marginal, as rabble-rousers on the fringe of the Russian right. The many book-length versions of *The Protocols*, soon translated into numerous languages, entirely overshadowed Krushevan's serialized text, published in a tough-to-acquire newspaper and available at the time only by subscription.³

Krushevan's death from cancer at the age of forty-nine in 1909—after releasing his version he never spoke again of the text—also contributed to its obscurity. Though a public figure in both St. Petersburg and Kishinev, at the helm of the best-oiled branch of the *Soiuz Russkogo Naroda*, the Union of Russian Peoples (the Black Hundreds), and elected to the Second Duma in 1907, Krushevan nonetheless spent his life mostly behind the scenes at his writing desk or his printing presses. (At the time of his death he owned two, which took up nearly all the space in a sparsely furnished St. Petersburg apartment.) His reclusiveness was, if anything, only reinforced by a botched assassination attempt on him on a crowded St. Petersburg street in June 1903.⁴

For someone so hungry for recognition, such self-protectiveness was counterproductive and no doubt contributed

to the excision of his name from nearly all accounts of *The Protocols*, among the most influential works of contemporary life. Certainly no other antisemitic work would come to enjoy the document's endurance. In contrast, say, to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* or the turn-of-the-twentieth-century bestseller Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*—these relegated either to the back shelves or the domain of misfits and cultists—*The Protocols* continues to draw widespread attention. In recent years a well-publicized Egyptian television series was built around it. Countless websites in a host of languages foreground its teachings, with the document given visibility in the presidential campaign of Donald Trump and its talk—peppered lavishly with Semitic names—of the mysterious cabal in control of the world's finances.⁵

Only recently have its origins been traced to the impact of the Kishinev pogrom, with Krushevan identified as its sole or collaborating author. The evidence is persuasive, and this heightened attention has occurred, coincidentally, as he has captured great prominence as a pioneer of pro-Russian, anti-Western sentiment in Moldova and the surrounding post-Soviet region. He is now touted as an early, singularly incisive exponent of "Christian socialism," which is seen as a healthy antidote to liberalism's anonymity, its soullessness, and its susceptibility to the machinations of Jews.⁶

Krushevan's vision is now embraced, at least in its broad strokes, in large swaths of Moldova and elsewhere nearby as a reasonable response both to late-imperial Russia's mounting ills and to the region's current malaise as well. Apologists claim that Jews contributed significantly toward making these ills intolerable because of their large numbers, malevolent financial aptitude, and insistence on operating as a monolith—a veritable kingdom

with their own selfish interests. Jewry's dangerous insularity, it is argued, would have been challenged by any healthy state: It should have been challenged, as Krushevan urged, in the last years of the Romanovs—and must be now.

With regard to Kishinev's 1903 massacre, such accounts see it as a scuffle born of great economic frustrations that soon got out of hand if only because of the aggressive response of Jews. Refusing to acknowledge responsibility, Jews immediately took advantage of it, pumping the world's press with grossly exaggerated, one-sided accounts overlooking their own culpability, cashing in on relief funds. Amid all this they did so much damage to Russia's reputation that it was defenseless by the time the Bolsheviks sought to take control.⁷

This recent spate of apologetic work now exists alongside new scholarship by the German historian Michael Hagemester, the Italian Slavic specialist Cesare G. De Michelis, the linguist Henryk Baran, and others who have reassessed Krushevan's contribution to *The Protocols* saga. He was a central figure in a small group hailing from Bessarabia and nearby regions smarting from—and intent on retaliation for—the pogrom's slings and arrows, which they blamed on the Jews. The actual words they produced in their text they knew, of course, to be inaccurate, but its message they were certain was nonetheless true. And they were equally certain that they had just seen its insidious impact right up close in Kishinev: a Jewry so committed to conquest, so effective that it willingly sacrificed its own in the planning of the pogrom, and capable of transmuting all this into a tale of anti-Jewish persecution.⁸

Ever since embarking on this book, I have found myself keenly intrigued by Krushevan. Capable of producing the vilest, most

contemptible trash, Krushevan also wrote work of distinction, even beauty. He was rightly depicted during his lifetime as a sensitive, yielding man and a hysteric; a rank pogrom monger and yet also Bessarabia's most distinguished intellectual. His evocation of Bessarabia's landscape in a full-length book on the region—the first of its kind and released shortly before the Kishinev pogrom in 1903—is skillfully executed, a moving depiction of the quiet, undramatic wonders of the province's meadows, rivers, and woods. The most celebrated of his novels—he wrote several—*Delo Artabanova*, a psychological crime thriller, was recently reissued in a handsome Russian edition. A Russian-language novel picturing him as *The Protocols*' author appeared in the late 1980s. Umberto Eco's villain in his 2010 novel, *The Prague Cemetery*, built around the writing of *The Protocols*, is undoubtedly modeled on him. ("And who are the capitalists? The Jews, the rulers of our time," Eco has his character muse. ". . . I shall write a book about it. Who are the Jews? They're all those who suck the blood out of the defenseless, the people. They're Protestants, Freemasons. And of course, the people of Judah.") An oversize edition of a substantial part of Krushevan's extensive, long-neglected nonfiction, accompanied by a book-length introduction in which charges of antisemitism are blithely dismissed, appeared in Moscow in 2015. Here and elsewhere in recent Russian-language descriptions he is identified as a seminal pro-Russian intellectual whose reputation was unfairly savaged by those, particularly Jews, unsympathetic to Russia and its destiny. "I have heard so many diverse views of him," wrote Sergei Urussov in his memoirs, "that his moral physiognomy is not clear in my mind."⁹

Just months before completing this book, I found it possible to clarify at least some of these mysteries. This is because of my

discovery of a cache of Krushevan's personal papers, including a startlingly frank adolescent diary, brought from Moldova years ago by the journalist Mikhail Khazin and kept since the mid-1990s on a shelf in his Brookline, Massachusetts, apartment a few blocks from Fenway Park. When I asked Khazin—a handsome, earnest, gentle man of eighty-five—whether he had ever visited Fenway, he looked at me with some surprise.

Khazin was also a remarkably trusting man: After I spent a few hours with him and his wife, Luda, Khazin suggested that I take the papers with me—they were bunched together in an oversize white folder—and seek to find them a suitable archival home. On my way the next evening to Chişinău, I was soon faced with the need to estimate the value of the personal papers of the likely author of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* at a FedEx shop, where I packed them up for shipping back to California.

How Khazin was given these papers is part and parcel of the stormy story, the mayhem of the last years of Soviet rule. Born in Soroki near Krushevan's birthplace, he had long been fascinated by the man.¹⁰ (It was common practice among Jews during his childhood, Khazin told me, to call dogs "Krushevany.") Writing in the 1980s about the history of a psychiatric hospital just outside Chişinău, where he lived most of his adult life, he discovered that among the inmates was the nephew of Krushevan, described as suffering from hereditary insanity. On the nephew's death, the director of the sanitarium offered the documents to Khazin, who then brought them with him to the United States when he left Chişinău—along with most of the region's Jews—in the 1990s.

Stuffed into the folder was a mass of documents among which were several singularly embarrassing ones. How the nephew came to have them remains unclear, but it seems plausible that as a trusted relative—the orphaned nephew idolized Krushevan,



Portrait of Mikhail Khazin.

something of a surrogate parent who died when he was fifteen—his uncle gave him these items for safekeeping once he knew that he was nearing his end. Included was correspondence as to why he had so resisted marriage, a diary with startling confessions that would likely have caused considerable discomfort if made public, and proof of financial chicanery, serial bankruptcy, and the like. Alongside this mass of documents detailing near-fiscal ruin and sexual secrets was an ornate letter of commendation from the tsar's clerk complimenting Krushevan on the publication of his 1903 Bessarabia volume.

Drawing on this rich, previously unknown material, the recent

scholarship of De Michelis and Hagemester, and little-used sources in Hebrew and Yiddish, we can now open up Krushevan's career on the road to Kishinev and its immediate aftermath in ways impossible before. It is now clearer why his shadow would loom so large in the pogrom's immediate wake, and how intimate a link there was between composition of *The Protocols*, in which he played a central role, and the 1903 massacre. Even as the details of Krushevan's culpability for the Kishinev pogrom or *The Protocols* fell into obscurity, his name retained its capacity to elicit the greatest contempt.

Hence when Sholem Aleichem sought in 1905 to capture the quintessence of antisemitic fanaticism, it was Krushevan and his infamous newspaper *Bessarabets* that he used as the most obvious and extreme examples. His short story "Two Anti-Semites" is built around the machinations of an all-too-clever Jewish traveling salesman with an undeniably Jewish face who has so tired of the intrusions of other Jewish train passengers that he hits on the idea of hiding himself behind *Bessarabets*. He finds a copy of the paper and then drapes it across his face as a sure way of keeping all, Jews as well as Russians, from talking to him. Sholem Aleichem reminds his readers that this newspaper is the handiwork of "a certain ugly anti-semite named Krushevan . . . a man who never rests nor sleeps in his tireless search for new ways to warn the world against the dreaded disease Judaism—and who is loathed by nearly everyone." The ploy works at first until, unsurprisingly, the paper slips off the sleeping man's face, revealing the Jew beneath it.¹⁰

¶

In the privacy of his diary at the age of seventeen, written in a florid hand (he would always pride himself on his splendid pen-

manship), Krushevan acknowledged having overpowering obsessions: despair over his poverty; envy of the rich; nightmares of crabs devouring humans. At that time, he was living with relatives in Odessa, having dropped out of school, and was eyeing the local rich with a mixture of disdain and intense envy.¹¹

He wished, according to his diary, that he had been “born a lady.” He was passionately in love with a Cossack whom he described as his *krasavitsa* (the beautiful one).¹² On these pages he alternated between despair little short of manic—and dreams of grandeur. Fame, he declared, he desperately needed yet feared it would always be beyond his reach:

*Suffering souls, unfortunate desires
And the relentless swarm of heavy, black doom. . . .
When I die—I will die—I will die completely without a
trace. . . .
In my coffin with a nasal voice I will be reproached for a
worthless life.*¹³

Krushevan was born in 1860 to an impoverished nobleman in the village of Gindeshty, near the town of Soroki in northeastern Bessarabia on the Dniester River—the same rustic, remote region described so poignantly by a contemporary of Krushevan’s, Shlomo Hillels, in his Hebrew novel. Urussov wrote: “I know of no town in Russia to be compared with Soroki. . . . The varying shades of light, and the picturesque indentations in the gradually ascending river-bank.” With little if any formal education until his adolescence, Krushevan mastered French and read widely, embarking at the age of fourteen on a “literary journal”—as he titled it on its cover—a notebook that included a sampling of his unfinished essays and fiction. Leo Tolstoy was his earli-

est inspiration—literary as well as political—whom he eventually rejected as he moved rightward: His politics well into his twenties were conventionally liberal, his cultural inclinations unremarkable.¹⁴

From the start, however, his favored themes were financial decline, family humiliation, and above all the terrible, mysterious forces that undermine the best of intentions. He was essentially self-taught, tutored in his childhood, it seems, but with the bulk of his learning picked up on his own. By the time that he started gymnasium in Kishinev, he showed little capacity for patience; schoolmates would remember him as a “maniac.” (One of them was Jacob Bernstein-Kogan, whom Krushevan would later identify as a key figure in that most nefarious of plots, the Jewish design to overthrow the world.) At sixteen or seventeen Krushevan left school, moving to Odessa (he would later insist that the city, despite its multiethnic reputation, was unambiguously Russian) and returning to Kishinev a few years later. There he worked as clerk for the city *duma*, or council.¹⁵

In his writings he described his early home life only fleetingly. His father seems to have been a distant figure, and his mother died when he was still quite young. He treasured his memory of her and was raised by a stepmother, along with a younger step-sister named Anastasia. In an unfinished memoir written in old age by his nephew, it is mentioned—though this appears nowhere else in work on Krushevan—that his stepmother was Jewish.¹⁶

The nephew, Pavel Epiminovdovich Krushevan, who was fifteen at the time of his uncle’s death, remained deeply devoted to him, continuing to see Krushevan as a model and a hero. His memoir was designed as no less an exculpation of Krushevan’s legacy than a tale of the nephew’s life under Romanian and Soviet rule. (He served in the Romanian army, worked later as

an engineer, and loathed the Soviets.) It seems inconceivable that he would include information about Krushevan's intimate Jewish links if it was untrue. Yet no one else familiar with Krushevan, including the Jews acquainted with him at his Kishinev gymnasium who later wrote about him so disparagingly, ever mentioned his father's remarriage to a Jewish woman. It is not unlikely that they never knew of it, and that although he often aired details of his unhappy childhood, he excluded all mention of this odd, discordant detail.¹⁷

There is no doubt, however, that Krushevan spent his life well into his twenties surrounded by Jews. Soroki at the time of his youth was 60 percent Jewish, with nearly all its retail stores in Jewish hands and many of them sporting Yiddish signs. The region's larger commercial concerns too were intimately linked with those of Odessa; many Jews traveled between the two towns, negotiating the purchase of local produce and arranging for its transport. Soroki's liquor shops and taverns (much like those in Kishinev) were nearly all owned by Jews and packed with peasants and laborers during the long winter months.¹⁸

Later, too, once Krushevan set out to work as a journalist (after leaving the clerkship at Kishinev's city duma), he was hired by newspapers—at most of them doing hack jobs such as reporting on crime and local scandals—in Vilna and Minsk, two of the most densely populated Jewish towns in the Pale of Settlement. True, at the time Krushevan's political views were progressive, and he did much to seek the attention of Russia's leading liberal-leaning journals. His stepsister, Anastasia, would later insist that Krushevan's hatred of Jews only started after he was jilted by a Jewish girl—though this seems unlikely in view of his passionate declaration of love for the Odessa Cossack. Others ascribed his



Krushevan in his twenties.

antisemitism to utilitarianism, the desire to prevail as a newspaperman once he gained control of *Bessarabets*.¹⁹

Neither argument, however, explained the ferocity and overall toxicity of his antisemitism. Krushevan's turn in the early 1890s or so was in line with a general embrace of Russian conservatism on the part of many intellectuals who would also show a new antipathy for Jews, appalled as they were by Jewish radicalism's excesses. Many now expressed fear of the empire spiraling into anarchy and the doubt that Jews, so numerous among its fiercest radical opponents, would ever be capable of true integration.²⁰

Still, Krushevan's loathing of Jews stood out as his most singularly defining belief. Perhaps his stepmother's origins were a cause. His sister's marriage saga—this, too, overlooked in treatments of Krushevan—may well have reinforced these convictions: Anastasia, eventually renamed Sarah, would marry a Jewish student in Kishinev and run away with him to the United States.

The story of his sister's marriage was first mentioned briefly in an American Russian-language newspaper in 1934, revealing that she was living in Baltimore as a Jew. Soon *Forverts* followed up with a fuller—perhaps also rather embellished—version. There it was described how Anastasia met a Jew named Efim (or Efraim) Borenstein at a Kishinev student ball, soon fell in love, and fled to the United States, settling in Baltimore. She was pictured with her head covered in the traditional mode of a religious Jewish woman, smiling broadly, and describing thirty years of marital bliss. Why she decided to tell her story at that point, she did not say. Perhaps it had to do with the Bern trial at much the same time, during which Krushevan's name was suddenly, and after so many years, frequently cited.²¹

The Jewish press accounts were packed with readily disprovable details, however. It was claimed that she was born into wealth and that Krushevan's father had divorced his first wife. Once Anastasia fell in love, according to *Forverts*, she escaped with her beloved, hiding in a forest. The family insisted that Jews had kidnapped her for ransom, and Krushevan placed a notice in the press, threatening to murder her Jewish kidnappers. This reportedly was what persuaded the young couple to escape abroad. Settling first in New York, they finally married. The husband worked running a synagogue as a sexton (despite the couple having lived together out of wedlock in the forest). Fearful of Anastasia being recognized as Krushevan's sister, they decided to

move to a mixed neighborhood in Baltimore with few Jews, where they had lived ever since.²²

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After Krushevan returned to Kishinev in 1897 to take control of the struggling daily *Bessarabets*—eight pages in length, produced at first in his apartment—he would enjoy the most productive period of his life. Though nearly always in debt and often unable to pay his paper suppliers, he managed to put out the multipage daily, sprinkled generously with articles written by himself under various pen names, and a weekly literary magazine also full of his own writings.²³

By the time he took charge of *Bessarabets*, Krushevan had published in 1896–97 the most ambitious of his books, *Chto takoe Rossiia?* (What Is Russia?). Traveling by train and reporting on conversations with other passengers, he sought to capture the full expanse of western Russia's social and cultural landscape on the cusp of the new century, with special attention to the region's many Jews. Krushevan's antisemitism was here in full view. At the heart of the book's many lengthy disquisitions about Jews was the message that the Jewish march toward world hegemony clashed with Russia's existence and must be stopped. This battle was nothing less than a struggle for Russia's survival—a viewpoint all but identical to the one espoused in *The Protocols*.²⁴

The book's unnamed narrator—clearly Krushevan himself—is affable, a touch naive, and prone to sudden outbursts that disarm and never alienate. He is a man of strongly held beliefs, eager to draw people into conversation and candid on all topics, and especially his feelings about Jews. And he manages to sway most of those he meets, including Jews, with the most objectionable of his opinions.



MAP OF THE JEWISH PALE OF SETTLEMENT AND RUSSIAN POLAND

Practically all the Jews in Russia—95 per cent. or even more—are confined to the fifteen governments of the Pale and the ten governments of Poland, which altogether constitute only one twenty-fourth part of the Russian Empire. The vast majority of them are still further restricted to the towns and townlets of the Pale, an area forming a two-thousandth fraction of Russian territory, although in point of actual numbers the ratio of the Jewish population of the Empire is to the Russian as one is to twenty-four.

Map of western provinces.

His travels take him across Russia's western provinces, crisscrossing by train the Pale of Settlement. He takes these journeys reluctantly, he admits, and always feels an alien, eager to leave the region as quickly as possible to rejoin "his own." Mus-ing as the train nears the Pripet Marshes outside Pinsk, he finds himself in conversation with a landowner, and the talk turns to whether either Jews or Poles might ever fit into Russia. As they speak the narrator revels in the glorious countryside in an area nonetheless swarming with Jews. The contrast between nature's overwhelming beauty and its relentless pollution by Jews is stark: "On the west, an entire lake spills out, decorated with a purple sunset. On the north, lapping at the distant shores, the Dnieper reflects this purple with scarlet shimmers. The boundless steppe, shrouded in rose-colored fog, sinks into the approaching twilight of autumn evening."²⁵

Others are soon drawn into the exchange, including an artilleryman and two Jewish businessmen from Gomel. The traveler expresses pleasure that the other passengers are willing to speak about these matters candidly, since the press has either been bought off by Jews to hide their misdeeds or has decided to ignore the issue entirely out of despair that it could ever be aired honestly. Truthfulness about Jews tends to be avoided, he says, because it is so often criticized as "savage" or "disgusting," but such conversation is more necessary now than ever before.²⁶

The narrator continues, insisting that energy and resources have been expended on resolving the Jewish question with no concrete results. Russia has sought so hard to address it honestly, but Jews and their sympathizers have done all in their power to obstruct such efforts. The fact, he says, that this issue continues to loom large—indeed, that it remains intractable—sickens Russians, since all that is required for the problem to be resolved is

for the Jews to allow themselves to be absorbed into Russia. Their *shtetl*, or assimilation, would settle the issue for all time. Had Russia employed (as it could have) the fullest and most vigorous range of options, he argues, the dilemma would have been solved long ago. But Russians are peaceful and refuse to resort to brutal methods even when justified. This may well now need to be reassessed, because Jews constitute the empire's only sizable group that insists on separation from all others.²⁷

One of the Gomel businessmen, the owner of a large pharmaceutical concern, interrupts. He admits that he is the beneficiary of the ready access to higher education Russia provides to Jews. Speaking with a "solid, rich baritone, nearly without an accent," he makes the case for lifting restrictions on Jews, including those limiting their ability to purchase land. Only then, when they are given the opportunity to "utilize the land [on] which they stand and the air that others are permitted to breathe freely," can they be expected to embrace Russia without reservation.²⁸

The traveler reacts angrily. It is precisely these privileges, he retorts, that had already been granted to Jews, who then squandered them, taking advantage of the freedom bestowed on them and using it to manipulate Russia's economic well-being. True, he admits, Russians also engage in questionable economic practices, but in contrast to Jews they continue nonetheless to remain loyal to the nation. This is not true of Jews, who remain loyal only to their own. These traits, coupled with an unnaturally keen commercial ability sharpened over the generations, make Jews better able to exploit others while protecting their narrow parochial interests. Over time, he argues, they have lost all capacity to work the land or to live in the way that healthy people readily do.²⁹

Moreover, the narrator continues, never have Jews sought to remedy this dreadful situation. Instead they dream of a "Jewish

stardom," always thinking of themselves while dismissing everyone else. Never are they willing to admit that there is anything of value in the Christian world, and their obstinacy is something extraordinary to behold. They persist in their isolation from the larger world despite the humiliations they have suffered since the time of Titus, and the hatred leveled against them everywhere they have lived: "Just think! Can there be a greater curse or a greater punishment" than the loss of all links to the land, all love of it, and being completely stripped of any connection to the rest of humanity? Yet all their energy has been concentrated on commerce, shutting themselves off from all except their own. Is it any wonder that they are the target of "hostility and pogroms"?³⁰

Yet, he says, there is nothing new to Jewry's self-imposed alienation: Jews have inspired hatred as far back as Kiev in 1092. Nothing has changed since then: "Remember Darwin's idea . . . that by the laws of heredity, with time humankind will lose its left hand which is increasingly atrophied? Jews are the left hand of the organism of humanity."³¹

As the Jewish population expands, with some five million of these "aliens" wedged up against Russia's western border, perilously close to Russia's enemies, it is imperative that the problem finally be resolved. The narrator argues that if Russia is to avoid the use of draconian measures, then the only alternative is for the Jewish intelligentsia to see to the thorough reeducation of their own people. They are the only ones capable of teaching Jews to shift their priorities toward useful, decent labor. It is their responsibility to press Jews to abandon their isolation, to recognize that the interests of Russians are the same as their own. The old, tired methods used by Jews for so long, he says, whereby they pay for good press, hide the truth, and spread hatred and lies, will only serve to deepen antipa-

thy. The traveler feels no hatred, only pity, toward Jews, but he certainly understands why so many despise them: "Russia has poured too much blood into its unification and can't tolerate a foreign element hindering its move toward full strength within its very core."³²

Jews sitting near the traveler are all but persuaded. One student admits that nearly everything the traveler has said is accurate, countering only that Jewry's bad traits are the by-product of age-old "isolation from the human family." The Gomel businessman is left utterly confounded. He acknowledges that if Jews cannot extricate themselves from the miserable residue of their history, then it is clear that Russia has no alternative but to turn its back on all constraint and to go after them with all the might and power at its disposal.³³

Later, Krushevan's *Bessarabets* would print still worse accounts of Jews, though it sought to be a newspaper that covered a full range of national and international affairs. The front page of one issue (picked up by Michael Davitt during his Kishinev stay), dated May 12, 1903, featured reports on Austria-Hungary, the United States, and the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of St. Petersburg. A chronicle of local government notices, a regular feature, appeared on page 2. Essays on the arts and literature were printed side by side with local news, much of it sober, straightforward, and dull.³⁴

By that time Krushevan had relinquished day-to-day control of the paper. In the pogrom's aftermath, the government tightened its hold and imposed greater control on media content. Even before the massacre, *Bessarabets* had covered the larger political and cultural scene, but its focus on Jews was relentless: "Zhidy

think about how best to rob the honor, the conscience, the truth of peasants" (March 17, 1903). "What is the source of the success of the Jews? It is their unification under one single corruption and their capacity to act collectively, all for one and one for all. And we can mirror them united into one guild, one brotherhood" (March 4, 1903). "Everywhere Jews live they figure among the bulk of deviants, counterfeiters, handlers of illegal documents, goods, food, wine, medical supplies, delicacies" (March 23, 1903). It was furthermore claimed that Jews had invented a way of producing wine without grapes, and that Jewish doctors were part of a secret syndicate designed to swindle innocent patients.³⁵

With the outbreak of the pogrom, the fame Krushevan had sought since his youth was finally his. In many quarters, of course, this was actually infamy, since Krushevan was now lambasted in Russia and abroad as being among Jewry's most powerful enemies. His lavishly illustrated guide to Bessarabia had elicited a commendation from the tsar. That volume was deemed so impressive that the new governor general, Urussov, regarded it as his main source of information about the province before his arrival. Krushevan had also recently received a handsome subsidy of five thousand rubles for the publication of *Znamia*. These expressions of sympathy reinforced the impression that Krushevan lived something of a charmed life and was supported generously by officialdom.³⁶

Yet barely three weeks after Krushevan received the tsar's laudatory letter, his debts were deemed so crushingly heavy that he was served with a bailiff's letter inventorying his belongings for auction. The list was strikingly meager: bits and pieces of furniture, including one chair, one table, a few bookcases, and two

printing presses, all stuffed into a modest flat on Gogol Street. He had sold *Bessarabets*, taking payment for the newspaper but managing nonetheless not to deliver it to its new owner; subscription payments were still in his hands. As a result legal proceedings were now initiated against him. In an undated letter Krushevan admitted to having incurred more than 11,400 rubles in debt. In compensation he offered the proceeds from the sale of his personal library.³⁷

Quite how he recovered, if at all, remains unclear. He would continue—even though he had sold *Bessarabets* when launching his new St. Petersburg daily—to serve as editor of the Kishinev paper. His new St. Petersburg publication was a four-page, large-size weekly available only by subscription because censors feared



Krushevan in 1900.

its explosive content, especially its antisemitism. They had good reason to do so. It was there that Krushevan published serially a text attributed to the “World Union of Freemasons and Sages of Zion,” under the banner headline “The Program of World Conquest by Jews.” This, as he acknowledged in the document’s foreword, was his own description of what the text contained.³⁸

Known universally, albeit read sparingly, with its essential message a commonplace, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, as the document would soon be called, was translated into German, English, Swedish, Danish, Bulgarian, Finnish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Italian, Greek, and Arabic. In recent years it has become a mainstay of popular culture as the immediate backdrop to the wildly popular *Da Vinci Code* books and movies. *The Protocols’* belief in dark, hidden forces that have long controlled the destiny of humanity remains among the cardinal assumptions of conspiracy theorists throughout the world.³⁹

Why this continuing allure? In part, no doubt, it is the by-product of the document’s anonymity as well as its insistence that it was an authentic transcript. The authors never came forward to acknowledge it as their creation: Its authorship was attributed variously by its devotees to a member of King Solomon’s entourage, Theodor Herzl, Ahad Ha’am, or the chief rabbi of Stockholm. The fact that it purported to be the real and uncensored words uttered by an elder of the Jews gave it a rare immediacy. Its repetitiveness, which for some was a source of annoyance, was also a boon, because no more than a few pages were required for readers to absorb its message. This meant that even the illiterate or semiliterate could be readily acquainted with it if others read them just a page or two. And though it was written and first published in 1903, the text would rise to prominence only once Russia was in the grasp of the Bolsheviks and their explosive message

was getting a receptive hearing across Europe. As an accessible, readily digestible text with a tantalizingly mysterious authorship, *The Protocols'* horrifying message was tested amid the convulsions of war and revolution.⁴⁰

It has, of course, long been recognized as a forgery. Almost from the moment of its first widespread circulation, it was clear that it was lifted from an obscure anti-Napoleon III political satire: Maurice Joly's 1864 *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavelli et Montesquieu*. In 1921 the *London Times* published a three-part series featuring side-by-side passages from *The Protocols* and Joly's work, revealing that nearly 70 percent of its words—still more, as it happens, in the 1903 version published by Krushevan—were drawn verbatim from Joly. The fact that the *Times* saw the value in this exercise is a good indication of the credibility that the document had already achieved.⁴¹

The first mention of such a text had appeared in print a year before Krushevan's version. Mikhail Osipovich Menshikov, a well-known antisemite and journalist, described how in 1902 a "mysterious lady" came to him with it, saying she had managed to acquire the document—apparently stealing it—in Nice and had translated it from its original French into Russian. Menshikov said that he doubted its authenticity and refused to have anything to do with it.⁴²

Questions regarding its credibility were raised, as we will see, even by Krushevan. Why was it discovered in French? Why would the Jewish elder, whose voice is its centerpiece, admit to all the dastardly things he acknowledges in it? What relation were these protocols meant to have with the protocols of the Zionist movement published in German, not French? These and many other issues—aside, of course, from the verifiable fact that nearly the entire document was lifted from a book that had nothing at

all to do with Jews—have bedeviled the text's credibility from nearly the moment it first surfaced in the public arena. But for many people these questions were overshadowed by its rhetorical power, the prospect it provided for eavesdropping on the most horrible of Jewish voices—one who was willing to acknowledge his contempt for all, including the Jews, his plans for world conquest, and his map for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom.

Such enormous ambiguities have also done little to dampen the allegiance of the text's adherents, some of whom insist, contrary to all evidence, that Joly himself was Jewish—as if that were a test of its accuracy. And the secrecy surrounding its authorship—those who produced it were committed, of course, to sustaining its anonymity—helped to perpetuate the notion that the voice captured in the document contained the actual words of a vaulted Jewish leader: It is a text whose greatest thrill is in the purported access to the unvarnished talk of humanity's greatest foe.

Until recently it was widely assumed—beyond, that is, its most loyal devotees—that *The Protocols* had been stitched together by the Paris-based Okhrana chief Pyotr Rachkovsky and right-wing journalist Matvei Golovinskii, and that it was produced either at the time of the First Zionist Congress in 1897 or a year or two before then. Evidence supporting the claim, solidified in the wake of testimony at the Bern trial of 1934–35, in which Swiss disseminators of the tract were accused by leaders of the Jewish community of plagiarism and forgery, has subsequently been upended by conclusive linguistic and historical evidence. Especially because of its reference to events occurring after its reputed composition in the mid-1890s, it is clear that neither Rachkovsky nor Golovinskii was its author.⁴³

Amid the welter of tales surrounding the document's origins, there has never been any doubt that its first version was in Kru-

shevan's newspaper. This remained, however, the most obscure of all its Russian-language versions, all but forgotten until it appeared in several editions in book form in 1905–6. Krushevan himself would never mention the document again, despite its many subsequent editions and his continued prominence on Russia's Right. Benjamin Segel, the author of one of the earliest exposés of the text—*Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion*, published in 1924—did not even know of the existence of Krushevan's version. In the tale of the origins of *The Protocols* as told in right-wing circles by a Russian princess of Polish origin, Catherine Radziwill, it was an agent of the foreign branch of the Okhrana, the Russian secret police, Golovinskii, who visited her Paris apartment in 1904 or 1905 (on Rachkovsky's orders) and handed her the first version, in French, of *The Protocols*. "Radziwill," writes Michael Hagemester, "gave an exact description of the manuscript: different handwritings, yellow paper, and a big spot of blue ink on the first page." Radziwill also showed no awareness that *The Protocols* had already been published in Russia a year or two earlier.⁴⁴

Evidence that Krushevan was its author, or at least its coauthor, is convincing. The Italian linguist Cesare G. De Michelis has identified crucial markers in the document itself that he likens to fingerprints in his annotated edition of the first version, *The Non-Existent Manuscript: A Study of the Protocols of the Sages of Zion*. To unearth the document's author, he considers "the sole element that cannot lie: the text itself, its linguistic nature, its construction and the modalities of its tradition . . . an operation as obvious and banal as it has been systematically overlooked."⁴⁵

It was revealed by these textual markers that the text was produced in the eastern Ukraine or Bessarabia. There, for example,

the preposition *u* was standard rather than the Russian *v*, and it is the Ukrainian variant that is utilized throughout the first version. Prolific in all versions was the word for "gentile," which in *Znamia's* account was Ukrainian *goyevskii*, not the Russian *goyskii*. These and other examples of Ukrainian usage were then corrected or excised from subsequent book-length editions of *The Protocols*, together with the many redundancies and misprints scattered throughout the original text.⁴⁶

The first variant, copied almost straight from Joly, also leaves the clear impression of a hurriedly produced text. Curiously Krushevan himself would acknowledge this sloppiness in his foreword, as we will see. Evidence that it was the product of very recent work—done no earlier than 1901 or 1902—abounds: for example, references to the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900 and to the killing of President William McKinley in Buffalo in 1901. No less persuasively, the fact that the ferociously anti-Jewish compendium *Talmud i evrei* (Talmud and Jews), which contains every conceivable antisemitic text appearing in Russia at the time, includes Krushevan's variant—publishing the first of its sections in full—only in its third edition, which was released in 1903, dates its composition explicitly to 1902–3.⁴⁷

Krushevan and his close friend G. Butmi from the same region (Butmi was born in Yampol in central Ukraine), both fluent in French, were likely the first authors of the document. Butmi would publish his own version in 1906, titling it *The Enemies of the Human Race: Protocols Extracted from the Archives of the Central Chancellery of Zion (where the root is of the present disorder in Europe in general and of Russia in particular)*. He was then a widely translated if idiosyncratic economic theorist, but he had fallen into obscurity by the early 1920s when *The Protocols* first captured widespread attention. By then Krushevan had

long been dismissed as little more than a crass rabble-rouser. Both had been leaders of the Union of Russian Peoples, which—except in the rarefied confines of the far Right—had by then been wholly discredited after the White Army's outright bigotry and slaughter in its battle with Bolshevism. Of course no one on the Right had a vested interest in identifying the authors of *The Protocols*. Both Butmi and Krushevan were therefore overlooked or sidelined in the vast body of literature generated by partisans and critics of the infamous work.⁴⁸

The only comments Krushevan would ever make about the *Znamia* text that he published were in its foreword and afterword. These were disjointed, uncharacteristically meandering pieces, replete with excuses and equivocations. In them Krushevan apologizes for the document's imperfections—though what they are he does not say—and how drastically it differs from the original—though he does not indicate where the original copy might be found or what it contains. He also points out that the document is incomplete, and—though he rejects the idea that it is a hoax—he leaves open the possibility that it could be, as he puts it, “apocryphal.”⁴⁹

In the foreword Krushevan describes how he received the minutes of the “World Union of Freemasons and Elders of Zion” after they were stolen in France and brought to St. Petersburg. Why the document was written in French, who the courier was, and how it was acquired are all left unasked. Yet time and again he dwells on its “authenticity,” sometimes insisting that proof of its Jewish authorship is in its “cynical logic” and coldness of heart, so intrinsic to Jews. But he backtracks, too, allowing for the possibility that it is not what it purports to be—which, he insists, does not minimize its

significance, since it is clear that, no matter who wrote it, the author is a “profound observer” of the Jewish people.⁵⁰

Its author understood well, according to Krushevan, the intention of Jews to “take over the world and create a ‘super-state.’” Consequently, whether the actual words of the text are apocryphal or not, its importance is undeniable, especially since Jews have now put their plans into motion through the channels of the Zionist movement, which “calls for all Jews in the world to unify into a union more cohesive and dangerous than the Jesuit order.”⁵¹

In the afterword Krushevan continues recycling much the same medley of unprompted apologies. He says that he feels awful about making so many cuts to the document, but he insists again that, despite the text's imperfections, it offers “a fairly accurate idea of the program of world conquest by Jews.” This is the terrible, fervent dream shared by all Jews. How is it possible for anyone but a Jew to describe the workings of such a mind, its contempt for all the Christian countries of the world? This is sufficient proof that the document is neither apocryphal nor, as Krushevan puts it, the workings of a diseased mind. Only a “cruel Jewish mind” would be able to sum up the catastrophic contours of a world in which Jews enslave everyone else. There is little time to stop the clock. Resistance to the disastrous scenario now nearing its culmination can succeed only if action is taken immediately.⁵² What he says here is startling: First he insists on the document's authenticity though no one had questioned it, and his answers are curiously thin. He appears to acknowledge this inadequacy: The most conclusive proof he is able to muster in this regard is that the incomparable coldness of the Jewish mind is something no non-Jew could ever replicate. Moreover, he admits that the document was rushed into press—why, he does

not explain—with all sorts of errors strewn throughout. He is willing to acknowledge such errors—indeed, even the text's possible fraudulence—while trumpeting how revealingly it airs the terrible intentions of the Jewish people.

Chapter 10 of the document opens, for example, with a proclamation of the Jewish obligation to wipe all other faiths off the face of the earth. This devastation admittedly might result in the rise of several generations of atheists, but it is certain that they will eventually be won over to the religion of Moses. The key to Jewry's strength, according to the text, is in its unalloyed confidence, its certainty of its own indomitable power that will ultimately result in the subjugation of all under the weight of its kingdom: "We will not tolerate any kind of religion espousing one God except our own . . . since we are the chosen people, and we have been fated to rule."⁵³

The document sees the slow, steady march to Jewish power that began in antiquity and is now nearly successful. And, though Jewry's stated goal is the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, it is obvious that a more pressing issue is the capitulation of Christianity—which is, arguably, a euphemism for the annihilation of Judaism's foes.

■

Why were these heinous "admissions" made in the form of a word-for-word transcript? Who transcribed it, and why? None of this would be explained. However, the reason why the present moment was so dire is made clear: The sudden rise of Zionism was proof that Jewry's goals were nearing success. Zionism had openly acknowledged that it was ready to take control of Christianity's most sacred sites in the Holy Land and that this was merely the opening sortie in Jewry's march toward universal mastery.

Krushevan—and others close to him on Russia's far Right—had long seen Zionism as among the most destructive of all Jewish efforts at world dominion. The right-wing journalist Menshikov summed up these fears in the wake of the Fifth Zionist Congress in December 1901. The movement, he argued, constituted the starkest shift in Jewish history since the destruction of the Second Temple. Since then Jews had been absent from history—"historically defunct" is how he put it—plotting their return, no doubt, but constrained by the heavy yoke of "the Talmud and the Kahal."⁵⁴ This meant that Jews had been no more than a "desolate and gray" presence on the world stage, a condition that was now over because of Zionism's alarming capacity to revitalize Jewish political life. Clearly this perilous situation had to be carefully monitored, though mere monitoring could not go nearly far enough.⁵⁴

Krushevan, according to his nephew, had never hated Jews, only Zionists. Krushevan's own words contradict the claim, of course, but the nephew could have remembered accurately that Theodor Herzl's movement filled him with special terror.⁵⁵

Why this preoccupation with Zionists? Jewish radicals were justly obsessed, now more than ever, but why was fear focused on Zionists, who had their sights set on a faraway land and had a comparatively mild, even conservative constituency drawn largely from the ranks of shopkeepers and synagogue attendees? Their leader, Herzl, sported formal wear at its congresses and reassured every world leader willing to meet with him—including Plehve, in meetings held in St. Petersburg soon after the Kishinev pogrom—of his disdain for revolutionaries. The most compelling of all Russian Zionism's ideological mentors, Ahad Ha'am, was

* "Kahal" means both the Jewish community as a whole and the administrative body of a Jewish community.

an intense, reclusive former businessman who was now an editor and essayist. Far from being a firebrand, his two-hour oration delivered in a monotone at the movement's first officially authorized conference in Russia in September 1902 had thoroughly bored most in the Minsk hall. Judged by any realistic standard, this was not a movement intent on taking Russia by storm.⁵⁶

Nonetheless the Zionist movement was by the turn of the twentieth century, more so than ever before, the object of the greatest scrutiny in Russia's right-wing circles. This interest was prompted by Zionism's stated intention to purchase the Holy Land. "Most legends spring from facts," as the historian A. J. P. Taylor once observed, and there was sufficient evidence available to make the case for a Jewish plot—as outlined in the Zionist movement's own protocols—whose goal was world domination. Of course, Krushevan's belief in the mysterious power exerted by the movement was grossly exaggerated, but there was testimony, indeed right there in Kishinev, on which he could draw to substantiate his fears.⁵⁷

Fears of Zionism's dangerously ambitious aspirations found their echo in official circles too. On the one hand, officials sought to use the Zionist movement as a wedge against radicalism, as a way to deflect the Jewish hope for reform in the empire to distant Palestine; hence the permission given to Russia's Zionists to convene the 1902 conference. On the other hand, Herzl's grandiosity, his frequent (if also unfounded) intimations of his movement's wealth, and particularly the launching of a Jewish colonial bank in 1901—accompanied by efforts to establish a branch in Russia—quickly soured officials on the prospect of cooperation. Indeed, such suspicions would only deepen in the wake of the Minsk conference (a condition of its legality was that police attend and take notes), where talk of cultural revival and

nationalist education dominated the agenda rather than calls for emigration. The items highlighted at the conference struck officials as uneasily familiar, tinged as they were with subversion and the prospect of political activism.⁵⁸

Thus not only did Russia's Zionists sound eerily similar to radicals, but Herzl himself, with his claims of great wealth and the prospect of support from English, Ottoman, or German authorities, seemed on the verge of an epochal diplomatic victory. It seemed certain—as attested by numerous articles appearing in Russia's right-wing periodicals—that Zionism was on the cusp of acquiring for itself vast chunks of the Holy Land. All such claims were either untrue or greatly overstated, but they were taken deadly seriously by the Russian Right, whose apprehensions grew to fever pitch once Zionism petitioned for authorization to establish a branch of the colonial bank in Russia so as to garner investors. This transformed Zionism from a project with the benign goal of emigration to an effort intent on acquiring Christianity's most sacred places and then, no doubt, far more.⁵⁹

The looming prospect of an English-sponsored Jewish settlement in East Africa and Herzl's Russia trip soon after the Kishinev pogrom, when he had audiences with both Plehve and Sergei Witte, heightened fear of the Zionists. This would only be accentuated after news spread of the wildly enthusiastic reception he received when, on visiting Vilna, the "Jerusalem of Lithuania," thousands greeted his train in the middle of the night. Circles close to Krushevan as well as the Russian government registered all this with mounting concern. The government made this clear in a book-length report on the Zionists that was produced soon after the Minsk conference by the police director Aleksei Lopukhin, a particularly well-informed bureaucrat. As portrayed by Lopukhin, this was an organization no less pre-

occupied with Russian domestic reform than were the regime's liberal and radical opponents; Zionism's calls for emigration were sidelined by a mounting interest in the thoroughgoing reform of Jewish life in Russia. Its message was, arguably, even more threatening than that of the radicals, if only because its potential impact was greater, with the resources at its disposal making it better equipped to conceal its subversive goals.⁶⁰

Mentioned frequently in the Lopukhin report is the prominence of Kishinev's Bernstein-Kogan, with nearly as many references to him as to Herzl. Bernstein-Kogan was described as occupying a role unmatched in the Zionist hierarchy, the virtual "president" of the movement in Russia.⁶¹

This was a curious depiction, since Bernstein-Kogan was never more than a midlevel activist, a financially strapped cholera specialist whose communal activities outpaced his devotion to his practice. (Unable to make a living in Palestine, where he moved before World War I, he would return to Romania later, spending the last years of his life ministering to the medical needs of the Jewish agricultural colonies in Soviet Crimea.) The government as well as the Russian Right took special interest in him because of the populism of his youth and the eventual jailing of his Socialist Revolutionary brother. In reality there was little to worry about. His relations with Herzl were not close, indeed often contentious. He wielded little influence in the movement and had left his radicalism behind long ago.⁶²

Still, though he was far from the darkly influential figure imagined by St. Petersburg officials or Kishinev's far Right, Bernstein-Kogan's role in catapulting the city's pogrom into a world-famous event was pivotal. His ability to spread word of the pogrom—and with breathtaking speed—to newspapers, organizations, and influential figures throughout Europe, the United

States, and elsewhere would consolidate the belief that he was at the epicenter of Jewry's worldwide machinations. Here was that rare moment when fantasy, or at least the previously unprovable, seemed to mesh seamlessly with reality, when long-held suspicions of Jewish sedition would now be pegged onto humdrum Kishinev as the headquarters of a meticulously coordinated effort to do harm to the Russian empire.

Bernstein-Kogan would be identified as the endeavor's mastermind. And at his disposal was the Zionist movement's Kishinev-based correspondence bureau, one of four offices performing different institutional tasks set up a few years earlier. The others were by now largely nonfunctional; Bernstein-Kogan, no longer at the helm of Kishinev's office, had set in motion a well-run (albeit one-man) operation, ensuring not only contact with the movement's branches but also ready dissemination of information about Jewish concerns inside and beyond the empire.⁶³

Bernstein-Kogan's superb work as head of Kishinev's correspondence bureau, as well as the city's proximity to the notoriously porous Romanian border at Jassy, one hundred miles to the west, was the backdrop to his stumble into history. The reasons for this were, of course, far more mundane than imagined by the right-wing circle close to Krushevan. Nonetheless there was good reason for them to connect the dots as they did with Bernstein-Kogan's activities: Since he had already been identified as suspicious by the government, this was concrete proof of what they already believed was the terrible truth.

In the anxious weeks before the pogrom's eruption, Bernstein-Kogan's apartment was designated as a depot for guns that could be used for self-defense. It is unclear whether these weapons were really intended to be used. On the second night of the pogrom, when most of the city's streets were finally quiet,

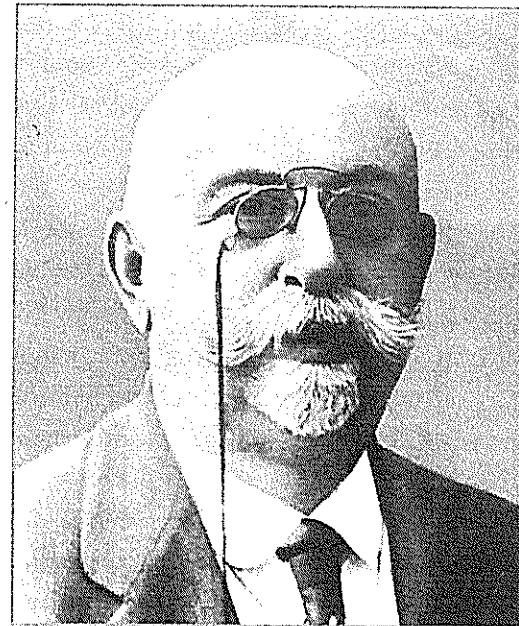
Bernstein-Kogan went door-to-door to the city's wealthy Jewish families, collecting money for relief and for the cost of telegrams he intended to send to newspapers and other outlets, telling them news of the massacre.⁶⁴

By the night's end he had collected 48,000 rubles in cash and 18,000 rubles in checks. (He says in his memoirs that, when he encountered resistance, he simply stood his ground and refused to leave until the donation was given.) His familiarity with smugglers, who had long serviced his correspondence bureau, and his knowledge of the movement's international contacts, whom he had cultivated for years, proved to be invaluable. He spent some 1,500 rubles, a large sum, on telegrams transmitted from Jassy.⁶⁵

The messages yielded, as Bernstein-Kogan later recorded in his memoirs, 1.25 million rubles in immediate relief, the bulk of this money coming to Kishinev from as far away as rural Australia. The Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden in Berlin, German Jewry's central community relief organization, alone contributed 192,443 rubles, and nearly all Jewish communities in the world quickly responded with impressive sums. In the midst of this, the already-porous lines between philanthropy and journalism collapsed. The Hearst chain sent to Kishinev 100,000 rubles that Davitt personally handed over to Bernstein-Kogan. With some of the money Bernstein-Kogan oversaw the launching of a trade school to provide marketable skills to girls whose parents had been killed. A few days after transmitting news of the pogrom via Jassy, he was summoned to St. Petersburg, where he met with Russian Jewry's leading figures and saw government officials as well as sympathetic members of Russia's literary community and intelligentsia, including Maxim Gorky. There he was introduced, especially in meetings with officials, as "Herzl's right-hand man." Plehve would astonish Herzl at their meeting in

August (Herzl said, "I was secretly amazed at [his] knowledge of [Zionist] personalities") when he noted the following: "But take Kogan-Bernstein! . . . [We] know that he conducts a press campaign against us abroad."⁶⁶

It was a telegram from Bernstein-Kogan that had alerted the London representative of the Hearst press to the pogrom, and it was his name that topped Davitt's list of Kishinev contacts. Davitt also had letters of recommendation to Bernstein-Kogan from the American Jewish leader Cyrus Adler and London's Sephardic chief rabbi, Moses Gaster. As soon as Bernstein-Kogan arrived in Odessa, he was summoned by the U.S. consul to meet with Davitt, and as described earlier, he then spent seven hours with the latter—and Meir Dizengoff as translator—relating the pogrom's details. Bernstein-Kogan describes in his memoirs how



Jacob Bernstein-Kogan.

he and Davitt nearly managed to purchase the original copy of the Plehve letter with a large sum provided by Hearst, though it then slipped between their fingers. (This could never have happened, of course, because the letter never existed.)⁶⁷

By now rumors were circulating—fanned by Georgi Pronin and others—that Jews had gathered just before the riot's outbreak in a Kishinev synagogue to plot revolution. In the cosmology of the far Right, Kishinev was transmuted from an agricultural depot at the empire's edge into a place of dark designs, what they believed to be the command post of a Jewish conspiracy with Bernstein-Kogan as its general.

Bernstein-Kogan's celebrity among Jews would pass quickly. With deep roots in Kishinev—where his father had been a well-known Jewish community figure—he never quite found another home after he abandoned it following rumors that his life was endangered once his role in publicizing the massacre became known. But the imprint he would leave in the annals of antisemitism would be profound and lasting—far more so than anything else he achieved in his life either as an activist or as a doctor. A warmhearted man armed with little more than the addresses of foreign newspapers and the stamina to stay awake all night collecting money to pay for a pile of telegrams, Bernstein-Kogan provided the authors of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* with as close a glimpse of a real Jewish elder as they would ever get. So it was that an overweight, underpaid, midlevel political activist—someone known to Krushevan since boyhood, when both were clothed in the same gymnasium uniform—became the unlikely inspiration for the most terrifying Jew on the planet.⁶⁸

Kishinev offered Krushevan a front-row seat to Jewry's international machinations. And there was just enough solid evidence to bolster his already ample suspicions: Bernstein-Kogan's role

in transmitting news of the pogrom, its outsize notoriety in the world's press, the Plehve forgery.

In Krushevan's view, nothing rioters could ever do to Jews could match the terrible, secret horrors Jews had in store, with Kishinev the testing ground for such designs. In Bernstein-Kogan's memoirs, written decades after the pogrom, he described Kishinev as a place where chickens wandered onto its larger boulevards from nearby, rural-like lanes. Krushevan's Kishinev was, in contrast, a place packed with fiends poised to bring Christendom to its knees. What connection there was for Krushevan between the demons haunting his adolescence and those he later sought to vanquish as he fought the Jewish people remains unknowable. Haunted, however, he undoubtedly was. *The Protocols* likely provides, as he saw it, a glimpse as to why.