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American diplomacy : George von Lengerke Meyer and Odessa

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AMERICAN DIPLOMACY:
GEORGE VON LENGERKE MEYER AND ODESSA

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts

BY
RONALD DWAIN JONES

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ABSTRACT

AMERICAN DIPLOMACY GEORGE VON LENGERKE MEYER AND ODESSA

by Ronald Dwaine Jones

This thesis addresses the topic of how the relationship between President Theodore Roosevelt and Ambassador George von Lengerke Meyer changed because Meyer was not in Russia during the October 1905 pogrom in Odessa, Russia. It begins with a review of Meyer's life, showing his qualifications and great success as the ambassador to Russia. This is followed by a short history of the Jews of Odessa and a description of the October Pogrom. There is also a short narrative on the 1903-1906 wave of pogroms in Russia.

Research on this subject reveals that if Meyer had been able to predict that a large outbreak of violence would occur during his vacation he would have remained in Russia. Furthermore there was nothing he could do about the expectations of a bellicose president who was not satisfied with just having successfully helped end the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).

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I wish to dedicate this thesis to my Grandmother, Mildred Jones - thank you for believing in me.

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CHAPTER 1

War, revolution, and pogroms occurred in Russia during 1905. In Odessa, as in other parts of Russia, many people were killed and injured in the violence associated with the Revolution of 1905. As the revolution was coming to an end, Tsar Nicholas II granted many of the demands of the revolutionaries such as freedom of the press and increased representation in government. Friction between pro-government and anti-government protesters in Odessa soon led to an outbreak of violence against the Jews in the city, a pogrom. The anti-Jewish violence spread to other parts of Russia, but the worst attacks occurred in Odessa. The pain and suffering caused by the violence in Odessa caused an outcry among sympathetic persons in the United States.

The American government under the direction of President Theodore Roosevelt was in the position of trying to bring an end to the war between Russia and Japan. The Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) endangered the stability of Asia and threatened the very survival of the Russian state. Roosevelt decided not to try and intervene on behalf of the Jews in Russia. The Russian government was very sensitive over the "Jewish question," and good relations were needed between the two countries if the Russo-Japanese War was to be ended. For this reason Roosevelt sent a new ambassador

to Russia, George von Lengerke Meyer, who was stationed in St. Petersburg from 1905 until 1907. He was posted there by Roosevelt to handle the Russians during the negotiations to end the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). Meyer was also responsible for other duties of the embassy, such as conveying messages to the Russian Foreign Office and the tsar.¹ Roosevelt had picked Meyer not only because of Meyer's political connections, but also for his ability to make friends with the leaders of other nations, a skill Meyer had demonstrated during his stint as ambassador to Italy (1901-1905). During his time in Italy Meyer had done much to restore relations between Italy and America, including developing a personal relationship with the Italian king. It was also during this time that Meyer had met and befriended the German kaiser. Given these qualifications Roosevelt hoped to have an active agent in St. Petersburg who could convince the Russian tsar to end the war with Japan. He also wanted Meyer to work as an information gatherer who would send information on the conditions within Russia to Roosevelt in an accurate and punctual manner.

George von Lengerke Meyer was a Bostonian blue blood, who, with the base of a good Harvard education, had been

¹Wayne A. Wiegand, Patrician in the Progressive Era: A Biography of George Von Lengerke Meyer (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 61-65.

active in banking, commerce, and politics. With the help of his patron, Henry Cabot Lodge, Meyer was in a position to use an ambassadorship as a stepping stone to a cabinet position. Meyer took his job as ambassador to Russia very seriously, and he tried to make his reports, describing the events in Odessa, accurate and unbiased. These reports stated that no extra measures would be required to protect Americans living in Odessa. President Roosevelt was happy with Meyer's performance in regards to the Russo-Japanese War and with the role Meyer had played as his personal information gatherer up to this point, but Roosevelt thought that it was a matter of duty and national pride to be at one's post during important events. Yet Meyer was in the United States on a well deserved vacation and not in Russia at the time of the Odessa Pogrom. The fact that Meyer could not or would not return quickly to Russia deeply disappointed Roosevelt, who was frustrated that there was nothing he could do about it. It seemed to affect their relationship for a time.

George von Lengerke Meyer was born on June 24, 1858, and died on March 12, 1918. He was born into the wealthy

Bostonian family of George Augustus and Grace Parker Meyer.² Meyer was the grandson of a German emigrant, who lived in New York City. Meyer's father was born in New York City, moved to Boston, and entered the business community as a merchant in East Indian trade. He could trace his family back to a long line of Hanover merchants, which included his great-grandfather who had been chief magistrate of Western Hanover, and a great-uncle, Lieutenant Colonel F. L. Meyer, who had died fighting at Waterloo.³ Meyer entered Harvard University in 1875, where he was not a good student, and he graduated 171 out of a class of 174. But by the time he graduated in 1879, he had joined the two most prestigious clubs at Harvard, the A.D. and the Porcellian Club. He was also a member of the Hasty Pudding Club and the Art Club.⁴ These clubs were important in providing social connections to the other wealthy families of Boston whose sons attended Harvard. After graduating, Meyer joined many of the social organizations in Boston including the oldest and most prestigious, such as the Union and the Somerset Club, where he

²Who Was Who: A Companion to "Who's Who" Containing the Biographies of those Who Died During the Period 1916-1928 (London: A & C Black Limited, 1929), 726-27.

³M[ark] A[ntony] DeWolfe Howe, George von Lengerke Meyer: His Life and Public Services (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1919), 3-4.

⁴Wiegand, Patrician in the Progressive Era, 3-5.

mixed with the merchant elite of Boston. His first job was as an apprentice at the trading company of Alpheous Hardy & Company where he worked as a clerk. Meyer worked there for two years gaining experience in the world of merchants. In 1882, Meyer joined his father's import-export firm, Lindner & Meyer, where he was treated as a partner in the company. Then, several years later, as if to complete his social position, Meyer married Marion Alice Appleton on June 25, 1885. She was the daughter of Charles and Isabella Appleton, a family engaged in trade and more influential than the Meyer family. At about the same time as the wedding, Meyer's father retired and left his son, George, the import-export firm of Lindner & Meyer.⁵ After taking over the family firm, Meyer joined the board of directors of other companies such as the Ames Power Company and the Old Colony Trust Company.⁶

When Meyer worked against the building of a trolley line on Beacon Street where he lived, he entered the world of politics. The attention paid to this fight against the rail line put Meyer's name in the papers and made him a potential political candidate. On December 12, 1888, Meyer

⁵Ibid., 3-5.

⁶Ibid., 5-7.

was elected to Boston's Common Council Seat for Ward Nine.⁷ After two quiet terms at the ward level, Meyer won election to the Fourth Alderman Seat of the Boston City Council on December 9, 1890. Using his position on the Boston City Council he worked to improve the safety of the West End Railway Company, the largest street railway in Boston, if not in the world. He argued that the railroad should implement such safety features as wheel fenders and guarded track crossings. While these improvements were not undertaken during his terms of office, he had supported a popular cause that was eventually successful. These political successes increased Meyer's interest in higher levels of government service.⁸

Meyer's next political move was one of his most important. As a Republican he ran for and won the Ward Nine Seat in the Massachusetts House of Representatives on November 3, 1891.⁹ Meyer was appointed to the Joint House-Senate Committee on Taxation, where he pushed for the exemption of cities from what he considered unfair taxation by the state, by making municipal bonds free from taxation.¹⁰ After being

⁷Ibid., 8-9.

⁸Ibid., 14-16.

⁹Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁰Howe, George von Lengerke Meyer, 25.

re-elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Meyer was elected Speaker of the House on January 3, 1894. His political orientation can be learned from his acceptance speech after he was elected Speaker of the House. In his speech he called for financial caution and honesty and asked that the representatives act in a more businesslike fashion so that they could finish their work as soon as possible and go home.¹¹ After his third term, he retired from state government but was still looking at ways to make his way into national politics. Meyer was active at the 1896 Republican Convention, where he worked at making friends with members of the future McKinley administration.¹²

During the 1900 Republican Convention, Meyer advised Theodore Roosevelt, then governor of New York, to seek the Vice-Presidential nomination.¹³ Using his political connections both from the Massachusetts State House and his hard work for the Republican Party, Meyer raised money for the Republican Party in Massachusetts and traveled giving speeches favorable to the McKinley presidency. He supported both the Spanish-American War and the peace negotiations with Spain to end the war. He also supported the annexation

¹¹Wiegand, 26-29.

¹²Ibid., 35-37.

¹³Howe, 27.

of the Philippines, thinking of expanding markets for the United States and helping the downtrodden Philippine people.¹⁴ Meyer was rewarded with the important ambassadorship to the Italian Court with the possibility of future advancement, and a cabinet position under McKinley was rumored. Though there had been much political wrangling over who would be the new ambassador, when asked about taking the ambassadorship to Italy he accepted immediately.¹⁵ Meyer's name was in a prominent position for the post because of who he knew, people such as Henry Cabot Lodge, a friend of Meyer's from Massachusetts, and others, including J.P. Morgan who supported Meyer in his bid to work for the President.¹⁶

When Meyer arrived in Italy on January 19, 1901, he moved quickly to improve the relations between Italy and the United States which had been strained for many years. Relations deteriorated following the 1891 lynching of several Italian nationals and Italian-Americans in New Orleans, Louisiana, after they had been acquitted by a local court of killing a police chief. While several men had been arrested

¹⁴Wiegand, 39.

¹⁵Howe, 28-29.

¹⁶Wiegand, 3, 38-42.

for the lynchings, no one was ever punished for the crime.¹⁷ As if relations could not become worse, on July 30, 1900, the Italian King Humbert I was assassinated by Gaetano Bresci. Bresci had just arrived from the United States, had used an American-made gun, and was a member of an American anarchist group that had plotted to kill the king.¹⁸

Meyer worked to improve American relations with Italy, by making friends with the new Italian King Victor Emmanuel and important persons of the Italian court. Meyer used his vast social experience and personal wealth to present a positive image of America to the Italians. One way he used to win the friendship of prominent Italians was by joining large formal hunting parties and by going on small private hunts, including hunts with the king.¹⁹ A sign that the king of Italy trusted Meyer was when the king agreed to be driven in Meyer's car, by Meyer, to the king's hunting lodge. This trip would normally have taken all day, starting early in the morning, when traveling by train. But when

¹⁷This crisis led to the recalling of both countries Ambassadors and talk of war on both sides. Eventually the United States paid an indemnity of \$25,000 to Italy out of the State Department emergency fund. Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People, 10th ed., (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 414-415.

¹⁸Wiegand, 43-44.

¹⁹Howe, 37-39.

using Meyer's car, they started at a leisurely time and returned to the palace shortly after three in the afternoon. The car traveled so fast that the king's body guards, who were riding bicycles, could not keep up. Both Meyer and the king traveled armed, fearing a possible assassination attempt. The king, possibly enjoying the convenience of the car, soon bought one of his own.²⁰

During 1902, Meyer traveled to the United States on vacation from his post in Italy. Meyer stopped at the yacht races at Kiel, Germany, where he met the German kaiser, Wilhelm II, and they became friends. The kaiser was interested in Meyer's noble sounding German name. Meyer told the kaiser that his ancestors were German and one of them had fought at the Battle of Waterloo. They met four times before Meyer had to leave for America. The friendship between the ambassador and the German kaiser would prove important later when Meyer had to deal with the Russian tsar while keeping the negotiations going between Russia and Japan.²¹

On January 20, 1905, Meyer received word from Roosevelt that he would be the new American ambassador to Russia. Since Roosevelt was working to end the Russo-Japanese War

²⁰Ibid., 38-39.

²¹Wiegand, 52-53.

(1904-5), he wanted Meyer in St. Petersburg, not only as ambassador, but also as a personal messenger and information gatherer whom he could trust. In that letter, Roosevelt told Meyer that St. Petersburg would be for at least a year "the most important post in the diplomatic service, from the standpoint of work to be done."²² Roosevelt wanted someone on the spot who would follow his hunches as to what was important and who could tell the President about conditions within Russia. He thought that Meyer's social skills, which he had demonstrated in Rome, would be important when dealing with Russian nobles. Roosevelt wanted to learn all that he could about what the Russian nobles thought was important. This information on the political and social conditions within Russia, Roosevelt hoped, could be used to improve American relations with Russia and at the same time be used to bring Russia and Japan to the negotiating table.²³

When Meyer left Italy he had greatly improved relations between the United States and that country, if not between the people, at least between the two governments. At Meyer's farewell meeting with the king, Meyer was surprised when the king said he would miss him and hoped that he would

²²Elting E. Morison, ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt vol. 4, The Square Deal: 1903-1905 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1951), 1078-1080.

²³Morison, Letters, vol 4, 1078-1080.

return. The king and queen gave Meyer a going away dinner party that was attended by many important people.²⁴ The next day Meyer and his family had their first meeting with Pope Pius X. During the meeting the Pope spoke in Italian and Meyer spoke in French. They discussed the Russo-Japanese War, and how the Pope prayed for peace. The Pope had also written the tsar about the war. The next morning Meyer, leaving his family in Rome, left for Russia, traveling by way of Paris. His stated intentions were to pick up his diplomatic credentials before reaching Russia, as he did not want to appear unprepared or rushed to his new post. But his real intentions may have been to check the reaction of various European powers to the American involvement in the Russo-Japanese peace negotiations.²⁵

Meyer arrived in St. Petersburg on April 7, 1905. He was amazed by the change of climate. He had traveled from almost spring-like conditions in Italy to the harsh winter snows of Russia. Meyer said that the conditions reminded him very much of Canada, with the fields and little wooden houses. But that image was shattered when he first spotted the little droshky sleighs after entering St. Petersburg.

²⁴Howe, 134.

²⁵George von Lengerke Meyer, Paris, to Henry Cabot Lodge, Nahant, Massachusetts, 3 April 1905, George von Lengerke Meyer Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. Hereafter cited as Meyer Mss, MHS.

The sleigh was his first reminder that he was now in Russia, a country very different from the other European countries he had visited. He went to the Hotel d'Europe, which was to be his home until he could find appropriate lodgings for himself and his family.²⁶ The next day Meyer made an appointment through Count Vladimir Nikolaevich Lamsdorff, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to present his credentials to the tsar. Meyer commented that Count Lamsdorff was short compared to the average Russian and did not present the image of a European diplomat except that he expressed no independent opinions.²⁷

Meyer's first meeting with the tsar was on April 12, 1905. He was escorted, along with the embassy staff, to the palace at Tsarskoe Selo. The first part of the trip was in a private royal rail car. Then he was met at the station by the Masters of Ceremony. They traveled in the royal coach, drawn by six white horses, and were escorted by three other gilded carriages to the palace itself. The party traveled slowly because of the age of the carriage and the snow.²⁸ Meyer was first escorted to visit with the dowager empress, the sister of the queen of England, where he presented

²⁶George von Lengerke Meyer, St. Petersburg, to Thomas Meyer, New York, 16 April 1905. Meyer Mss, MHS.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

himself. They made some small talk about Italy and the current travels of the queen of England. Then as Meyer prepared to leave he introduced his staff to the dowager empress. He was then escorted into the presence of the tsar and tsarina of Russia, who were standing in the center of the reception hall. Meyer bowed the customary three times as he approached them. He thought that the tsarina had a restrained air about her and that the tsar looked much like his photographs, which showed him to be in good health. He discounted the rumors of the tsar's attempted suicide. Meyer thought the tsar seemed a little embarrassed during their conversation.²⁹

It was during this meeting that Meyer made his first attempt to discuss peace. He repeated his instructions to offer a neutral location for Russia and Japan to negotiate an honorable peace. The tsar replied, "I am very glad to hear it," then changed the subject. The offer of a place to talk peace with the Japanese was not mentioned again during that meeting.³⁰ Meyer blamed the tsar's cool reception to the offer of help in ending the war on the presence of the tsarina at the meeting. The tsarina was against ending the war with Japan. Meyer had heard that the only reason she

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰George von Lengerke Meyer, St. Petersburg, to Theodore Roosevelt, Washington, D. C., 30 April 1905. Meyer Mss, MHS.

was at the meeting was to prevent the tsar and himself from holding a serious conversation regarding the possibility of beginning peace negotiations.³¹

While waiting for further instructions relating to the peace negotiations, Meyer set up his household at the Kleinmichael Palace, a palace which he believed was splendid enough for the American ambassador.³² Once he was settled Meyer began making the social rounds of St. Petersburg meeting important people from royal and ambassadorial circles. He went hunting with Count Ivan Csekronics and Prince Belosselsky. Meyer told his wife in a letter that he was the first ambassador to hunt with the Russians for a while.³³ He dined or simply met with the ambassadors from different countries, such as having a dinner with the British ambassador to St. Petersburg, Cecil Spring-Rice, or talking current events with the German ambassador, Count von Alversleben.³⁴ While associating with the upper classes was a common ambassadorial practice in 1905, it caused Meyer to be isolated from the common people of Russia. His opinions

³¹Ibid.

³²Wiegand, 70.

³³George von Lengerke Meyer, St. Petersburg, to Alice Meyer, 4 May 1905. Meyer Mss, MHS.

³⁴Meyer Diary, June 12 and 13, 1905, George von Lengerke Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as Meyer Mss, LC.

on the conditions within Russia appeared to be influenced by his peers, causing him to miss many of the problems, such as the discontent of the Russian people with their government.

Meyer arrived in St. Petersburg at a critical time in Russian history. From the reports of the American consulates, he learned of the deteriorating conditions in most of the country, and of the resulting popular discontent. Meyer concluded that both the deterioration and the discontent were partly a result of the Russo-Japanese War. The war was fought over territory in Korea and Manchuria, and Russia was losing the war. The discontent was a result of the removal of many of the young men from the fields and factories that brought down the overall production of goods in Russia. At times, because of the war, there had been trouble bringing in the harvest which created the fear of food shortages.³⁵

Discontent was concentrated in the factories and the universities, as liberals agitated for political liberty and an end to the war with Japan.³⁶ Events such as Bloody Sunday, January 5, 1905, aggravated widespread discontent among the common people of Russia. On that day, in St. Petersburg, a group consisting mostly of workers that included men, women, and children tried to deliver a

³⁵Abraham Ascher, The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 164.

³⁶Ascher, The Revolution of 1905, 48-49, 94-95.

petition to the tsar. The procession was led by Father Gapon, an influential priest and political organizer. The petition was partly a plea asking that they not be treated as slaves but as people. They also wanted protection from the bureaucracy, which they thought was responsible for the conditions within Russia.³⁷ After failing to heed the pleas of government officials, the march went on as planned. Many of the marchers were wearing their best Sunday clothing, and they were singing religious hymns and carrying pictures of the tsar. As they moved through the city many people joined the procession. A crowd estimated to be as large as 100,000 people marched on the Winter Palace, where they believed the tsar to be in residence. When orders to disperse were ignored by the crowd, shots rang out, and many of the marchers were killed. The dead included marchers trying to escape the carnage and bystanders who had just come out to see the procession. Hundreds of marchers were killed by government troops, although the official tally was only 130 dead and 299 wounded.³⁸ The massacre caused strikes and protests throughout Russia and is often referred to as the beginning of the Revolution of 1905. These events, which occurred prior to Meyer's arrival in St. Petersburg,

³⁷Ibid., 89-91.

³⁸Ibid., 90-91.

influenced his views of Russia and led him to think that Russia was drifting toward anarchy. The Russian government would issue reforms one day and rescind them the next based on the latest success or failure in the war with Japan. If the government did not reform itself, Meyer believed, the reforms would eventually come from a revolution.³⁹

It was not until after the Battle of Tsushima (May 27-28, 1905), where the Russian Baltic fleet was all but destroyed by the Japanese Navy, that a gradual change of opinion about the war occurred. The Baltic fleet had sailed from the Baltic Ocean around the Horn of Africa with the hope of relieving the Russian troops at Port Arthur. Many Russians were killed at Port Arthur, the site of a long siege during the Russo-Japanese War.⁴⁰ Meyer noted in his diary that unofficial word of the Russian naval defeat at Tsushima had reached St. Petersburg by May 30, 1905. In an obvious comparison of the Japanese and Russian forms of government, Meyer commented on how they fared during a time of war. "Education, good government, and freedom are Always [sic] victorious over ignorance, misrule and despotism."⁴¹ Meyer mentioned in a later entry that the blame for the

³⁹Wiegand, 68-70.

⁴⁰Ibid., 71.

⁴¹Meyer Diary, May 30, 1905. Meyer Mss, LC.

defeat was not directed against the tsar but against the bureaucracy which was corrupt and deserved much of the blame for Russia's many defeats.⁴²

On June 6, 1905, Meyer was instructed by the American State Department to seek an audience with the tsar. Meyer's orders came straight from President Roosevelt. He was instructed to tell the tsar that the war was not winnable and that the tsar should seek peace before all of Eastern Russia was lost to the Japanese. Meyer quickly made arrangements with the Russian Foreign Office and he was given an audience with the tsar at Tsarskoe Selo on June 7, 1905, the tsarina's birthday.⁴³ The meeting with the tsar started right on time and Meyer delivered Roosevelt's message to the tsar. The tsar was reluctant to agree to ending the war even after a good deal of persuasion. But Meyer finally gained the tsar's agreement to begin the peace process by pointing out that the Russian people badly wanted peace, but would support continuation of the war if the Japanese proposed unreasonable terms. Having received the answer he was seeking Meyer asked permission to return to the embassy so he could inform President Roosevelt that the tsar had agreed to accept American assistance in arranging peace

⁴²Diary, May 31, 1905. Meyer Mss, LC.

⁴³Wiegand, 72.

negotiations. He was allowed to leave and send the cable after assuring the tsar that no mention would be made of the fact that it was Russia who had asked for peace. Neither of them knew that it was Japan who had first approached Roosevelt for help in ending the war with Russia.⁴⁴

The negotiations between the Russian and Japanese delegates occurred in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. They continued until reaching a stumbling block over what Japan wanted Russia to pay for the return of captured territory, most notably Sakhalin Island. Meyer was again sent with a message from President Roosevelt to the tsar saying that the tsar should agree to peace and then negotiate the amount of the indemnity at a later time. If he would not, Roosevelt feared that Russia would lose much more than an island to the Japanese. Meyer was unable to convince the tsar to agree to paying any amount of money for the return of Russian territory. After passing along another message from Roosevelt advising Russia to agree to peace and worry about the money later, the reply from the tsar was the same, no peace if it meant paying an indemnity to Japan.⁴⁵ Meyer noted in his diary that almost all of the Russian people were against paying an indemnity of any kind and that this

⁴⁴Ibid., 73-74.

⁴⁵Ibid., 86-89.

was giving the war party more influence.⁴⁶ The next day, August 29, 1905, Meyer learned that the Japanese had dropped all monetary claims against the Russians. Meyer's frustration was evident when he complained that he could have convinced the tsar that peace was the best course if he had known that the Japanese had dropped their demands.⁴⁷

The end of the Russo-Japanese War with the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth brought an end to Meyer's urgent responsibilities. Meyer asked for and received permission from the State Department to take a vacation in the United States. He left Russia on September 12, 1905, and on his way back to the United States stopped and visited with the German kaiser, Wilhelm II; they discussed the negotiations that brought about peace between Russia and Japan. Meyer reached the New York aboard the Kaiser Wilhelm II on October 3, 1905.⁴⁸ He met with Roosevelt the very next day at the White House. During this meeting Roosevelt congratulated Meyer on his work in Russia and inquired whether Meyer would be interested in a cabinet post, either as the Secretary of the Navy or Treasury. Roosevelt said that Meyer would enter the cabinet as soon as a position become available. A

⁴⁶Diary, August 28, 1905. Meyer Mss, LC.

⁴⁷Diary, August 29, 1905. Meyer Mss, LC.

⁴⁸Wiegand, 93-96.

retirement was expected soon that would allow Roosevelt to shuffle the cabinet giving Meyer the promised position. This way Meyer could spend at least two years in the cabinet, as a reward that Roosevelt said Meyer had earned.⁴⁹

But Meyer's vacation was marred as reports began to arrive that all was not well in Russia. It appeared that Russia was again on the path to revolution and chaos. Nevertheless, Meyer was delayed returning to Russia for several reasons, the most important of which was that his daughter Julia had become very sick and had her appendix removed. During her recovery, Meyer was visited by a delegation of American Jews who wanted him to support sending a fleet to Russia as a way to protect the Russian Jews from pogroms. He told them that this probably was not a viable option.⁵⁰ Once he did start his return journey to Russia, he stopped and held discussions with the English, French, and German heads of state in order to learn more about the current conditions within Russia. He made these stops despite Roosevelt's instruction that he make haste back to Russia. Although Roosevelt was not totally against these visits he just wanted them done quickly.⁵¹

⁴⁹Howe, 219-220.

⁵⁰Wiegand, 97-99.

⁵¹Ibid., 97-103.

It seemed that Roosevelt was upset that Meyer was not already in St. Petersburg to report on conditions during the unrest within Russia. Wayne A. Wiegand, in his biography of Meyer, stated that Roosevelt believed it was a matter of pride to have an ambassador in Russia during this time of trouble, just as there had been an American ambassador, the only foreign ambassador, in Paris while the Commune was in power during the 1871 uprising. To Roosevelt it was not only a matter of duty but national pride that Meyer return to St. Petersburg. Roosevelt reminded Meyer that he had left his sick wife when he had gone to fight in the Spanish-American War (1898). He said that at times duty to one's country was more important than family.⁵² There were other signs that Roosevelt was not happy with Meyer and that there was a change in their relationship. Roosevelt no longer sent official instruction to Meyer himself, he had official instructions sent through his Secretary of State. Roosevelt stopped using Meyer's first name when beginning a letter, instead he began to address Meyer as the ambassador to Russia.⁵³

On returning to St. Petersburg on December 8, 1905, Meyer was shocked to see the changes that the chaos of the

⁵²Ibid., 99.

⁵³Ibid., 98.

revolution had inflicted on the country. He reported in one of his dispatches that it appeared as if the entire country had gone mad. Meyer never seemed to realize that the Revolution of 1905 was more a series of mostly unconnected outbursts of public discontent with the government than the result of some grand plan. According to Wiegand, it seemed as if Meyer could never quite adapt to the changes that had occurred.⁵⁴ Meyer did not return to America again until January 29, 1907, when he was recalled to the United States by the State Department.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Ibid., 104-105.

⁵⁵Ibid., 118.

CHAPTER 2

Odessa, much like St. Petersburg, had a history of unrest. To comprehend what occurred in Odessa, something of its past must be understood. During the Second Turkish War (1787-92), the Russians had captured a fortress on the Black Sea that protected the Turkish city of Khazhibei which formally became a Russian possession in 1789. Six years later the Russians renamed the city Odessa. The capture of the city was part of the culmination of Russian aspiration for a Black Sea port.⁵⁶ The newly conquered area was lightly populated, and Catherine II, Tsarina of Russia, attempted to attract people to the area by granting large tracts of land to her nobles. She also allowed escaped serfs to remain free if they settled in the Odessa area. Catherine II allowed those Turkish prisoners of war who were Jewish to settle in Odessa after the war as another way to increase the population of the area.⁵⁷ With no peasant labor force in the area, the nobles were forced to hire paid laborers to harvest their crops. Grain became the most important crop as England and other countries started to

⁵⁶Steven J. Zipperstein, The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794-1881 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 21-22.

⁵⁷Zipperstein, The Jews of Odessa, 34.

import grain.⁵⁸ Foreigners, especially Germans, were recruited to settle the area to boost business and agriculture. When officials in St. Petersburg picked Odessa as the location of a new commercial port, immigration to Odessa increased. At first there was uneven growth in the city; most of the residents of Odessa were migrant laborers.⁵⁹

A prominent Frenchman working for the Russians, Armand Emanuel, Duc de Richelieu, became governor-general of Odessa in 1803. He was responsible for modernizing the port. Under his direction the construction of the port was completed, and the duties and tariffs on goods that moved through Odessa were lowered. Richelieu also worked to improve the cultural level of Odessa by having an opera house and other beautiful buildings built at the city center. By 1814, when Richelieu returned to France to become foreign minister and later chairman of the Council of Ministers under Louis XVIII, Odessa had become a thriving city of trade and commerce. There were several banks and foreign councils in the city. Odessa also became a popular vacation destination for Polish nobles. The city was said to be a "bourgeois republic, unbearably resolute, earnest, and self-absorbed," by the Russian noble, F.F. Vigel.

⁵⁸Ibid., 22-23.

⁵⁹Ibid., 25.

Others compared Odessa to St. Petersburg and Florence, Italy, saying that Odessa had the feeling of a European city and not a backwater Russian city.⁶⁰

The city of Odessa continued to expand in size as the port began to increase in importance to world trade. During the Napoleonic War and the Continental Blockade (1807-12), trade, especially the trading of grain, grew dramatically in Odessa. Trade was increased even more when Odessa was made a free-port in 1817 by Tsar Alexander I, making the city an important trading port for luxury items for Europe, in addition to normal trade items. The free-port status was so beneficial to Russia that it was not revoked until 1859. Odessa quickly became an important administrative center for the local Russian rulers.⁶¹ The administrative offices for the postal and telegraph companies were located in Odessa. The governor-general of Kherson province lived in Odessa even though Kherson was the capital city. As a result of being the local administrative center for the area, there was an improvement in the existing communications and transportation links with the rest of Russia. The best schools in the province were located in Odessa as well as a

⁶⁰Ibid., 25-27.

⁶¹Robert Weinberg, The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 3-4.

special school for the children of the nobility. There was also a Russian Orthodox seminary school, a conservatory, and a school of fine arts.⁶² By 1892 the official population of Odessa had reached over 404,000 people, making it one of the largest cities of the Russian Empire and Europe. As the population increased so did the proportion of Jews and other minority groups living within Odessa. There were 124,511 Jews living in Odessa with over 250,000 other "foreigners" including Poles and Ukrainians. The term "foreigner" included people who had not originally lived within the territory occupied by Russia, such as Poland. The Russian population of Odessa was officially put at 198,233 persons.⁶³

Most Jews in Russia were restricted to living in the Pale of Settlement. The Pale primarily consisted of land in the western and southern portions of Russia. Most of this land was taken in the partitions of Poland and the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴ The official policy of the government sanctioned discrimination. Jewish people were treated differently than the rest of the Russian and non-Russian population. Outside

⁶²Zipperstein, 28-29.

⁶³Ibid., 32.

⁶⁴John D. Klier, "Russian Jewry on the Eve of the Pogroms," in Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History, ed. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4-5.

of the Pale of Settlement, Jews were not allowed to own land or property. They were excluded from conducting business in the interior of Russia. The Pale was the only place where Jews could do business.⁶⁵ According to Steven Zipperstein, in The Jews of Odessa, the Jewish settlement began in Odessa in 1769 because Jews had been excluded from the interior of Russia because Russian landowners and merchants feared Jewish business competition. By 1799, there were 310 Jews living in the city of Odessa with succeeding waves of Jewish immigration occurring from 1803 to 1819.⁶⁶ This happened during the time when Odessa was changing from a simple port to an international city of trade. These Jewish migrants consisted mainly of families. As the population increased, there appeared to be a weakening of traditional Jewish values, or so it seemed to a contemporary observer, J. L. Finkel, who wrote for Odesskii vestnik. He said that some of Odessa's Jews had "abandoned certain ritual practices and tried to make themselves appear less distinct and foreign to non-Jews."⁶⁷

In many Russian cities Jews were considered a drain on city resources. But the Jews of Odessa were considered

⁶⁵Zipperstein, 34.

⁶⁶Ibid., 34-35.

⁶⁷Ibid., 36-37.

important to the city by the local Russian rulers. The Jews were allowed to run for local elective office. The first Jew elected was Meir Elmanovish who in 1796 was elected an arbitrator for the small claims court. The good relations between Jews and Russians in Odessa lasted into the 1860s, when they deteriorated as a result of interference from St. Petersburg and a decrease in local trade. This was partly due to the decrease in the grain trade and attempts to protect Russian interests by the local and national government.⁶⁸ The deterioration culminated in a pogrom against the Jews of Odessa on May 27, 1871, which lasted several days. A rumor that the Jews had desecrated the Greek Orthodox Church and cemetery sparked the riots.⁶⁹ After the riots the Jewish intellectuals of Odessa began to reconsider their position. They had lost confidence in liberal institutions and thought. A marked conservative turn occurred in the Jewish community which resulted in the Jewish community isolating itself from the rest of the people of Odessa.⁷⁰

This had not been the only pogrom against the Jews of Odessa. There had been others before 1871, but they had all

⁶⁸Ibid., 37-39.

⁶⁹Robert Weinberg, "The Pogrom of 1905 in Odessa: A Case Study," in Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History, ed. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 251.

⁷⁰Zipperstein, 127-28.

been put down forcefully by the local rulers. Most pogroms were considered no more than simple brawls between Greek sailors and Jews. The pogroms had happened most often during the Greek Orthodox Holy Week and were considered by Jewish leaders and community to be almost yearly events. One exception to this pattern was the Pogrom of 1821 which had been attributed to the bad feeling of the Greek revolutionaries in Odessa. At the time the Greeks were trying to win independence from the Ottoman Empire and did not like the support that some Jews had given the Turks.⁷¹

By 1905, the Jews in Odessa were no longer considered an asset by the Russian government. Official discrimination against the Jews had been spreading from St. Petersburg for many years. A deep anti-Jewish attitude had developed in many levels of the Russian population of Odessa. This attitude was inspired partly from the belief that the Jews were rich and owned much of Odessa, ignoring the fact that many in the Jewish population were just getting by with very low incomes. Many of the Jews were day laborers, sales clerks, or domestic servants. Many of them were forced to ask for assistance from Jewish help groups.⁷² There was

⁷¹Ibid., 119.

⁷²Robert Weinberg, "Workers, Pogroms, and the 1905 Revolution in Odessa," Russian Review 46 (January 1987): 56-57.

additional resentment because the Russian population believed the Jews were not doing enough in the war against Japan.⁷³ This was a commonly held belief despite the fact that 30,000 Jews were fighting and dying for Russia at the front.⁷⁴ The governor of Odessa, Dmitri B. Neidhart, did not help matters when he claimed that all of Odessa's problems were caused by the Jewish population of the city. The New York Times quoted the governor as saying that the police always found revolutionary material and weapons in Jewish homes and that without the Jews there would never be any problems in Odessa.⁷⁵

The trouble in Odessa began during the Russian Revolution of 1905. The revolution as played out in Odessa revolved around the mutiny on the battleship Potemkin. The mutiny occurred partly because many of the men the navy drafted into service were from the cities of Russia. These were educated men and some of them belonged to revolutionary groups. These people organized revolutionary cells within the Russian Black Sea Fleet; the cell at Sevastopol had even been planning a mutiny within the fleet. The revolution-

⁷³Ibid., 57-58.

⁷⁴Shlomo Lambroza, "The Pogroms of 1903-1906," in Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History, ed. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 215.

⁷⁵New York Times, 27 July 1905, 2.

aries hoped that a mutiny within the fleet would spread the revolution to the rest of Russia, but there was no real support for this plan among other revolutionary groups. Those opposed to the revolutionary plan thought the military should not be the leaders of a revolt.⁷⁶

The mutiny on the Potemkin began on June 27, 1905, while the Potemkin was out testing its guns in the Black Sea. The sailors were upset over being served rotten meat that the ship's doctor had said was good. When a delegation went to complain to the captain their leader was killed by the executive officer. This action angered the other delegates so much that they threw the captain and executive officer off the ship and shot them while they were in the water. The mutiny quickly spread to the entire ship. Several of the other officers were killed and the remaining officers were locked in a cabin. The mutineers tricked the commander of an accompanying torpedo boat into coming aboard the Potemkin, took him prisoner, and commandeered his ship. The sailors elected a revolutionary committee, whose leader decided that since they were close to Odessa they should sail there with the hope of gaining support and spreading

⁷⁶Abraham Ascher, The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 170.

their revolt to the rest of Russia.⁷⁷ The Potemkin arrived at the Port of Odessa on June 28, 1905.⁷⁸

There had been unrest in Odessa at the time the battleship arrived, but the arrival of the Potemkin moved the focus of the disquiet away from the commercial and industrial areas to the port area of the city. After listening to revolutionary speeches and drinking, workers began to loot and set fire to warehouses and fight with the police. The army, after some delay, intervened by shooting and killing many people, whether they were rioting or not. The action of the military ended the unrest in the city quickly, and the Potemkin left the harbor and did not return.⁷⁹

There was a period of public calm until the general strike in Russia began in early September, 1905. The strike began slowly, starting with printers in Moscow. It soon spread to the rest of the city and then to workers in St. Petersburg. Railroad workers, who were concerned about pensions and wages, joined in, paralyzing the railroads and precipitating a general strike by the end of the month.

⁷⁷Ascher, The Revolution, 170-171.

⁷⁸Spencer Eddy to Secretary of State, 5 November 1905, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers; 1905 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 769.

⁷⁹Weinberg, The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa, 132-38.

The strike reached Odessa by October 11, 1905. Strikers and students opposed to the government were emboldened and began fighting with the police in Odessa by October 16, 1905.⁸⁰ After it became apparent that control would not be restored quickly throughout Russia or in Odessa, the tsar gave in to the peoples' demand for a constitution as a way to end the uprising. The new constitution, or manifesto, was published on October 30, 1905. It granted many liberties to the Russian people, including freedom of speech and assembly, and the election of a state Duma or national assembly. Not everyone, however, was satisfied.⁸¹

There was much celebration in Odessa over the promulgation of the new constitution. People thronged the streets of the city celebrating the liberties the new constitution promised. The Jews of Odessa were hopeful that the manifesto was the beginning of the end to the official discrimination under which they had suffered.⁸² The celebrants, revolutionaries and others, began flying red flags from windows and balconies. They would force people they passed on the streets to tip their hats and bow before the

⁸⁰Ibid., 154-58.

⁸¹New York Times, 31 October 1905, 1.

⁸²Weinberg, The Revolution of 1905, 161.

red flags. Shouts of "Long Live Freedom," and "Down with the Autocracy," were often heard in the streets. There were also reports of demonstrators tying pictures of the tsar to dogs and then setting them loose in the city.⁸³ Revolutionary speeches were given all day at the city council building, most if not all calling for the total end of the monarchy. Later in the day celebrants tore down the picture of the tsar and placed a red flag where the royal flag had flown in the chamber. Things were slowly getting out of hand when demonstrators began to collect money for weapons.⁸⁴ Once the clashes began, the police worked to disarm the demonstrators. It was claimed after the fact, by the government, that these demonstrators were primarily Jews.⁸⁵

So in Odessa the new constitution did not end the fighting. Soon Jewish shops were being looted again and people were preparing self-defense groups.⁸⁶ These groups were of two types, one consisting primarily of students and radical workers who wished to aid the Jews. The other type was organized by the Jews themselves for self-defense. Both

⁸³Ibid., 161-62.

⁸⁴Ibid., 162.

⁸⁵Ibid., 162-63.

⁸⁶New York Times, 1 November 1905, 1.

groups had a common goal, the protection of Jewish lives and property.⁸⁷ But the full fledged pogrom did not begin immediately. The first rounds of fighting occurred in the Jewish district of Moldavanka. While Jews and their property were being attacked, soldiers who had been sent to stop the disturbance, despite being shot at, worked to disarm both sides in the fighting. The day ended with several Russians killed during the fighting and some arrested, while the number of Jews killed or arrested was not known.⁸⁸ The next day patriotic marchers who supported the monarchy, men, women, and children, marched through the city. As in the past these marchers enjoyed the support of the local government. They were accompanied by speakers who supported the tsar, wanting him restored to full power and the new constitution repealed.⁸⁹ Many of the marchers met near the port at Customs Square, where pro-government agitators handed out portraits of the tsar, flags, and religious icons. It was also reported that undercover police officers handed out money, guns, and vodka.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Weinberg, The Revolution of 1905, 171.

⁸⁸Ibid., 165-66.

⁸⁹Ibid., 166.

⁹⁰Ibid.

The marchers stopped off at the city council chambers and replaced the red flag hanging there with the royal colors. As the marchers made their way through the city many people joined and the crowd grew larger and larger. Once the crowd passed the building of a liberal newspaper, Iuzhnoe obozrenie, a shot rang out that killed a young boy. Accounts differ as to who fired the shot and from where. One version states that the shot came from the newspaper building, while others claimed the shot came from the procession, where marchers were firing pistols into the air in celebration. Yet others asserted that the shots came from Jewish and student self defense groups. Whatever the cause the first shot was soon followed by many other shots, some coming from nearby buildings and others coming from the procession. Homemade bombs were soon added to the building battle. It seemed that the self defense groups were prepared for trouble.⁹¹ As the patriotic marchers fought against the Jews, students, and other revolutionary groups they began shouting "Down with the Jews" and "The Jews need a beating." The patriotic marchers, convinced that the trouble was started by the Jews, began looting Jewish homes and businesses and beating and killing Jews.⁹² The trouble

⁹¹Ibid., 166-67.

⁹²Ibid., 167.

quickly spread to other parts of the city, where patriotic marchers clashed with revolutionaries. In these areas it is hard to tell who started it all. But in at least one district, Peresyp, where no marches had occurred, trouble did not start until thugs from other parts of the city entered the area and incited the locals.⁹³

The violence against the Jews of Odessa was horrible and lasted several days. Large crowds of Russians roamed through the city killing and mutilating every Jew they met, whether man, woman or child. It seemed that some took comfort that the large crowds provided an excuse to carry out all sorts of horrors on people who were no longer considered human.⁹⁴ One woman was hung upside down over the bodies of her dead children. While many people tried to escape the mobs by climbing onto the roof of their houses, soldiers shot most of them, but at least one young girl escaped from a mob this way.⁹⁵

It seemed that the police and military assisted in the Jewish massacres and that General Dmitri Fedorovich Trepov directed the pogrom.⁹⁶ General Trepov had been appointed

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid., 171.

⁹⁶New York Times, 3 November 1905, 1.

governor-general of St. Petersburg on January 24, 1905, and on June 3, 1905 he was appointed by the tsar to the post of Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs, a position that put him in control of all the vast Russian internal police force.⁹⁷ Yet it was more likely that a lack of leadership in bringing troops into Odessa to put down the pogrom was at fault. This lack of leadership may have led some police and some lower ranking military personnel to believe that the pogrom was officially sanctioned, so some police actively helped and directed the pogromists.⁹⁸

In his book on the revolution in Odessa, Robert Weinberg repeated accounts that some police officers directed the pogromists to Jewish homes and businesses and away from the non-Jewish homes and businesses. There were reports of the police shooting their guns into the air and claiming that the shots had come from Jewish houses or businesses. These places would then be attacked by the angry mob.⁹⁹ Weinberg wrote that one of the reasons the police acted this way was they wanted revenge on revolutionary groups for past attacks on the police. The police obtained their revenge by shooting at self defense units and

⁹⁷Ascher, 104-105.

⁹⁸Weinberg, The Revolution of 1905, 172-73.

⁹⁹Ibid., 172.

first aid stations. Some of these police and soldiers may have thought they would not be supporting the tsar, but supporting the revolution if they tried to stop the pogromists. Some of the police believed rumors that the pogrom had been ordered to punish the Jews for their work with revolutionary groups, a common belief that was held during previous pogroms.¹⁰⁰ It was not until November 1 that soldiers received orders to shoot at pogromists. The soldiers and police had only been shooting at the self defense units until this time. These orders helped to end the pogrom and soon calm returned to the city.¹⁰¹

In the wake of the pogrom each group blamed the other. The official government line was that the Russian pogromists were patriotic and simply reacting to Jewish provocation. This could be seen in the statement made by the governor of Odessa, Dmitri Neidhart, who claimed that the rioters were the patriots. The liberals and revolutionary groups who supported the Jews blamed a concerted effort from St. Petersburg and noted that the violence was widespread and that local authorities had the power to stop the rioting if they had wanted.¹⁰² It would seem that more decisive

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 173.

¹⁰²New York Times, 4 November 1905, 1.

military or police action tended to discourage pogromists' activities because there were no large scale disturbances once the troops were ordered into action. Since the large number of troops, around 20,000 men, stationed in Odessa were so effective in keeping peace, had they been ordered into action earlier much of the violence could have been avoided.¹⁰³

While these events occurred, there were protests in the United States and demands from Jewish groups in Washington, D.C. to do something about the pogrom. President Roosevelt was very sympathetic to the victims of the massacre, but he said that there would be no official protest concerning the pogrom in Odessa. He considered the pogrom an internal Russian affair.¹⁰⁴ Elihu Root, appointed as the new American Secretary of State in 1905, and following the policies of his predecessor, John Hay, said that it was not a good time to try to interfere with internal Russian affairs. Any interference might endanger the shift to a more democratic form of government, and this new government might be more responsive to the condition of the Jewish population.¹⁰⁵ So in the name of better relations, the United States

¹⁰³Weinberg, The Revolution of 1905, 173.

¹⁰⁴New York Times, 7 November 1905, 2.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 6 December 1905, 6.

government did nothing officially about the massacre of the Russian Jews in Odessa. However, President Roosevelt did direct the American ambassador to Russia, George von Lengerke Meyer, to end his vacation early and make haste to Russia in order to ascertain first hand the true conditions there.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶Wayne A. Wiegand, Patrician in the Progressive Era: A Biography of George Von Lengerke Meyer (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 97-98.

CHAPTER 3

Odessa was not the only city in Russia where anti-Jewish violence had occurred. There had been other recent attacks against Russian Jews and as the years passed more attacks occurred. There were only two major pogroms during 1903, one of which occurred in the city of Kishinev, a city in the southwestern Russian province of Bessarabia. The Kishinev Pogrom of May 1-2, 1903, resulted in the death of 47 Jews with 424 wounded. There was much damage done to the buildings of the city with extensive losses among private property owners.¹⁰⁷ The second major pogrom occurred in the city of Gomel on September 24, 1903 and lasted for two days. There were only ten Jews killed during the riots, but of the rioters eight were also killed, and there were many injured on both sides. There were fewer people killed in Gomel because the Russian government acted swiftly to control the violence and the Jews had banded together in self defense units designed to protect Jewish lives and property.¹⁰⁸ In 1904 there were 43 pogroms with the Bender Pogrom occurring shortly after the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-

¹⁰⁷Shlomo Lambroza, "The Pogroms of 1903-1906," in Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History, ed. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 200.

¹⁰⁸Lambroza, "The Pogroms of 1903-1906," 208.

1905). Bender was a small town south of Kishinev. A total of five Jews were killed during the violence. Twenty four of the 43 pogroms have been blamed on disgruntled conscripted troops taking out their frustrations on the Jews, and for this reason they have been called mobilization pogroms.¹⁰⁹

The end of the Russo-Japanese War did not end the violence. The war had put such a strain on the people, especially in regards to food shortages and working conditions within Russia, that a revolution ensued. The Revolution of 1905 did not end until the issuing of the Manifesto on November 12, 1905, by the tsar. The Manifesto granted many civil rights to ordinary Russians, increased freedom of the press, and expanded the number of eligible voters. But within days of the manifesto's proclamation there were major anti-Jewish pogroms in many locations throughout Russia, including Odessa, Minsk and Bialystok. The outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence lasted well into 1906, with an estimated 690 or more acts of violence against Jews.¹¹⁰ The pogrom in Odessa, October 1905, was the most violent with over 400 Jews and 100 non-Jews killed in the fighting. There were official reports of over 300 persons

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 213-215.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 226-231.

injured, most of them Jews. The official numbers reported may be lower than the actual numbers as some people may have been scared to seek help at hospitals and not all of the bodies had been recovered. There were unofficial reports of over 800 persons killed and thousands injured. The hospitals of Odessa reported treating at least 600 people.¹¹¹ The pogrom in Bialystok in June 1906, claimed the lives of over 200 Jews with more than 700 people injured. The report on the pogrom compiled by the Russian Duma, the Russian state assembly, stated that the pogrom had been part of a well organized effort by the central government, the military, and police against the peaceful Jewish population of Bialystok. Despite this report and the reports from witnesses to the pogrom, the central government released a message thanking the troops for their devotion to duty during the pogrom.¹¹² The final reported pogrom of 1906 occurred in September 1906 in the Polish city of Sedlits when local officials organized a pogrom where 100 Jews were killed and 300 injured.¹¹³

¹¹¹Robert Weinberg, "The Pogrom of 1905 in Odessa: A Case Study," in Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History, ed. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 248.

¹¹²Lambroza, 237-238.

¹¹³Ibid., 238.

There were many Americans who demanded that President Roosevelt do something about the violence against the Jews in Russia. One of these people, Jacob Schiff, belonged to a group of influential New York bankers.¹¹⁴ But while Roosevelt was sympathetic to the victims of the violence he did relatively little to assist them. Roosevelt was not inactive due to an anti-semitic attitude, but because he did not expect his protests to the Russian government to help the Jews; therefore he thought nothing should be done. Roosevelt feared that by using his influence in such an ineffective way he would make himself and the United States look bad. Not only that but his inquiries might make conditions worse for Jews in both the United States and Russia.¹¹⁵ Not only was Roosevelt sympathetic to the plight of the Jews in Russia, but he had also expressed a very critical view of the Russian rulers and decision makers.¹¹⁶ Roosevelt's conclusions were influenced by the realities of the age, as well as by his Secretary of State, John Hay,

¹¹⁴Stuart E. Knee, "The Diplomacy of Neutrality: Theodore Roosevelt and the Russian Pogroms of 1903-1906," Presidential Studies Quarterly 19 (Winter 1989): 74.

¹¹⁵Elting E. Morison, ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt vol. 5, The Big Stick: 1905-1907 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1952), 112.

¹¹⁶Elting E. Morison, ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, vol. 4, The Square Deal: 1903-1905 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1951), 1204-1205.

who espoused many of these ideas and presented them to the president.¹¹⁷

Many of President Roosevelt's opinions can be seen in his correspondence with Jacob Schiff, who had written Roosevelt concerning the conditions of Jews in Russia. Replying to questions asked him by Schiff, Roosevelt stated that he did not believe that diplomatic action during the time of turmoil in Russia would have an effect. The central government was having enough trouble protecting itself with the revolution brewing, and he was sure that nothing could be accomplished. President Roosevelt also ruled out the idea of joining a group of European countries to intervene in Russia to protect the Jews. He stated that a common and unifying goal would not be attainable. There could be disagreement about which kind of government would be installed by the intervening powers, a democratic type government or simply a restoration of the autocracy.¹¹⁸ Roosevelt also ruled out unilateral American intervention in Russia. He believed that such an effort would simply lead to a war with unattainable goals that would be doomed to total failure. This would leave nothing but ruin for both countries. Thus

¹¹⁷Knee, "The Diplomacy of Neutrality," 74.

¹¹⁸Morison, Letters, vol 5, 112-113.

Roosevelt said that not helping the Jews of Russia was simply the only option open to the United States.¹¹⁹

Secretary of State John Hay finally did recommend that something be done about the Jewish question after the Kishinev Pogrom because he feared that continued violence against the Russian Jews would encourage a mass exodus of Jews from Russia to America. He feared that the United States would not be able to absorb a large influx of new people in a short time. With the upcoming presidential elections in 1904 some kind of action on the president's part was necessary and appropriate. This was accomplished by forwarding one of the many petitions the president had received to the Russian government.¹²⁰ The petition began by pointing out that the Kishinev Pogrom was a horrible crime, that the rioters had broken Russian laws and that official reports confirmed what had happened at Kishinev. It also expressed the continuing fears of the Russian Jews and American sympathizers that there would be more violence against the Russian Jews if nothing were done. The petitioners asked that the Tsar help to bring religious understanding and tolerance to his people, an action that

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Knee, "The Diplomacy of Neutrality," 74-75.

would bring great pride to the Russian people.¹²¹ But just as both Hay and Roosevelt thought and had been told by the Russian ambassador to the United States, Count Cassini, the Russian government refused to accept the petition. He stated that if the petition was delivered it would be returned immediately unopened and unread even if it came with an official diplomatic note.¹²² The petition was eventually placed in the State Department archives, where it would be preserved so that future generations would be able to see the large number of people, many of them leaders of their time, who were concerned for the persecuted Jews in Russia.¹²³

While the Secretary of State liked how the petition played domestically, especially among the Jewish and humanitarian voters, he did not enjoy the added strain it put on relations between the United States and Russia, because keeping good relations between the two countries was more

¹²¹John Hay, Washington, D.C., to John W. Riddle, St. Petersburg 15 July 1903, in Records of the Department of State, Diplomatic Instructions, R.G. 59, Microcopy 77, Roll 140, National Archives, Microfilm at San Jose State University, Russia, 18: 462-464.

¹²²Kenton J. Clymer, "Anti-Semitism in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Case of John Hay," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 60 (Winter 1971): 352.

¹²³Clymer, "Anti-Semitism," 352.

important in Hay's opinion.¹²⁴ Another avenue that Hay and Roosevelt explored to raise the Jewish question with the Russians was bringing up the point that not all American citizens were being treated equally by the Russian government. American Jews were denied entry or restricted in where they could travel within Russia. Since this discriminated against Americans based on their race or religion, it was in violation of the commercial treaty of 1832 with Russia.¹²⁵

The House of Representatives, on April 21, 1904, had passed a resolution asking President Roosevelt not to negotiate with countries discriminating against any group of Americans during their travels. A note passing on this information was given to the Russian Foreign Minister Count Lamsdorff, who replied seven weeks later that the issue had been sent to a special committee that was concerned with revising Russian passport regulations.¹²⁶ Shortly after Lamsdorff's action on June 22, 1906, both Houses of Congress passed a resolution condemning the horrors committed against the Russian Jews. In 1913, the commercial treaty with Russia was canceled by Congress in frustration over the lack

¹²⁴Ibid., 353.

¹²⁵Knee, "The Diplomacy of Neutrality," 74.

¹²⁶Ibid.

of action by the Russian government with regard to Russian Jews or American Jews traveling in Russia.¹²⁷

George von Lengerke Meyer was the American ambassador to Russia during many anti-Jewish disturbances in 1905-1906. Despite the remarkable amount of anti-Jewish violence, Meyer had little to say about the pogroms or Jews. Only in a few instances did Meyer even record in his letters or diary his feelings about Jews or the pogroms in Russia. He seemed to hold two opinions about Russian Jews. One opinion was that the Russian Jews, along with students, were the leading force behind the revolutionary movements of Russia.¹²⁸ The other was that Russian Jews had a right to complain about being treated worse than the average Russian. The Russian Jew was often a legal and social outcast. Meyer believed that the Russian government itself was anti-semitic and had gone out of its way to persecute innocent persons simply because they were Jewish.¹²⁹

Having these two opinions about the Russian Jews may have helped the ambassador in making his reports, since he

¹²⁷Ibid., 76.

¹²⁸M[ark] A[ntony] DeWolfe Howe, George Von Lengerke Meyer: His Life and Public Services (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919), 239.

¹²⁹Wayne A. Wiegand, Patrician in the Progressive Era: A Biography of George Von Lengerke Meyer (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 116.

knew that political pressure was being placed on the president by prominent people in the United States to do something about the treatment of Jews in Russia.¹³⁰ It seemed that Meyer kept his reporting as accurate as possible on the conditions of Jews in Russia. He had no trouble criticizing the Russian government or even the Jews. Meyer had said that the government would leave out points that would make it look bad. The Jews would repeat rumors of supposed happenings against other Jews that had never occurred. Meyer thought that the facts were bad enough without either side embellishing them.¹³¹

He reported that the number of killed and wounded was still not clear as of December 20, 1905, almost two months after the pogrom in Odessa. He said that reports about the number of victims varied. One report from the Austrian Council at Odessa claimed that 680 people were killed and 2000 wounded, with 80% of them being Jews. Another report claimed that only 299 Jews had been killed because that was the number of new graves in the Jewish cemetery.¹³² This

¹³⁰Wiegand, Patrician in the Progressive Era, 116-117.

¹³¹Howe, George Von Lengerke Meyer, 318-319.

¹³²George von Lengerke Meyer, St. Petersburg, to Elihu Root, Washington, D.C., 20 December 1905, Records of the Department of State, Despatches from United States Ministers to Russia 1808-1906, R.G. 59, Microcopy 35, vol 65, National Archives Microfilm at San Jose State University. Hereafter cited as Archives at SJSU.

report to the Secretary of State was delayed despite reports from the American Consulate at Odessa run by Thomas E. Heenan. These messages were sent both to the State Department and the St. Petersburg embassy, on November 8 and 18, 1905, just days after the pogrom. These messages contained first hand information from the American Consul who was in Odessa to view and report on the violence. In his report dated November 8, 1905, Heenan stated that the fighting was subsiding after several days. He reported that the number of killed and wounded could be in the thousands, but that he had been told that there had been 685 Jews killed and 1500 wounded in various hospitals. He went on to state that there were several different stories being circulated about the number of killed and wounded. One of the least believable was that more Russians had been killed and wounded than Jews during the fighting. Heenan said that these numbers were the best he could estimate as there had been no published numbers in any newspaper since the pogrom. He also stated that no American had been attacked during the riots, not even the few American Jews who lived in Odessa. It seemed to Heenan that the pogrom was something purely between the Russians and the Russian Jews.¹³³ His message

¹³³Thomas E. Heenan, Odessa, to Robert Bacon, Washington, D.C., 8 November 1905, in Records of the Department of State, Despatches from United States Consuls in Odessa, 1834-1906, R.G. 59, Microcopy 459, Roll 7, National Archives, Microfilm.

on November 18, 1905, stated that there was continued calm in Odessa since the end of the fighting and that there was still no official number given for the killed and wounded, although he believed the number of Jews killed was over 500. Heenan also stated that reports had arrived from other cities that the violence had spread there from Odessa and caused much destruction and suffering in Kiev, Rostov on Don, Kishenev, and several other cities.¹³⁴ Why Meyer delayed in commenting on this information to the State Department is hard to tell. He might have simply been waiting for more definite information from Odessa or he simply did not realize how important Roosevelt considered this information.

Later, in response to the Bialystok Pogrom in June 1906 Meyer reported that according to the most recent and accurate reports from the scene of the massacre only 100 people were killed, 100 wounded, and several persons were mutilated. There was significant damage to Jewish property during the pogrom. Meyer's sources indicated that local military and police were responsible for the violence, and there had been no influence from the St. Petersburg govern-

¹³⁴Thomas E. Heenan, Odessa, to Robert Bacon, Washington, D.C., 18 November 1905, in Records of the Department of State, Despatches from United States Consuls in Odessa, 1834-1906, R.G. 59, Microcopy 459, Roll 7, National Archives, Microfilm.

ment.¹³⁵ After consulting with the Russian Foreign Minister, Alexander Izvolsky, as instructed by the American State Department, Meyer reported that the Foreign Minister was very defensive and demanded to know what Meyer wanted. When Meyer told Izvolsky that he was to ask informally about the violence at Bialystok, Izvolsky refused to discuss the pogrom stating that it was an internal affair. He instead referred Meyer to an official communication issued by the Minister of the Interior to the governors and prefects of Russia which had been published in the Russian newspapers. The communication stated that disorders of any kind including anti-Jewish riots must be prevented and if any disturbances occurred they must be stopped quickly and decisively.¹³⁶ Meyer also said he thought that the Foreign Minister knew what Meyer was instructed to say in the cable from the State Department. Meyer suspected that Izvolsky had been given a copy of the telegram and that he had a copy of the State Department code so that he could decipher the telegram. Meyer suspected this was why Izvolsky was nervous when he arrived and insisted on knowing Meyer's reason for coming to the office.¹³⁷ From the way Meyer reported on the

¹³⁵Meyer, St. Petersburg, to Root, Washington, D.C., 27 June 1906. Archives at SJSU.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

anti-Jewish violence in Russia it would seem that he was following the same track as Roosevelt, who wanted reports made in an accurate and unbiased manner. Meyer tried his best to communicate unofficially to the Russian government the concerns of the citizens and elected officials of the United States, primarily President Roosevelt's, about the violence against the Jews in Russia especially that which occurred during the Bialystok Pogrom.

CHAPTER 4

As American ambassador to Russia from 1905 until 1907 George von Lengerke Meyer was in charge of the American embassy located in St. Petersburg. During his tenure, Meyer was responsible for reporting on conditions within Russia to President Theodore Roosevelt. In Odessa, as in other parts of Russia, there was violence, much of which was directed against the Jews of the city. The reporting of events in Odessa by Ambassador Meyer and other embassy officials, to the effect that no extra measures would be required to protect Americans living in Odessa, were as accurate and unbiased as information and time permitted, but did this meet President Roosevelt's expectations of what Meyer was to do in Russia as his personal information gatherer?

Meyer arrived at the height of the Russo-Japanese War, which was being fought over territory in Korea and Manchuria. A period of protests and strikes throughout Russia triggered by the massacre called "Bloody Sunday" is often regarded as the beginning of the Revolution of 1905.¹³⁸ It was during these chaotic times that the pogrom in Odessa occurred. Many Jews were killed in the pogrom, which lasted several days. At times during the pogrom it

¹³⁸Abraham Ascher, The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 83-84.

seemed as if military and police officers were directing the violence. Some police and soldiers did assist the pogromists, but it was more likely that a lack of leadership in bringing troops into Odessa to put down the pogrom was the biggest fault. The pogrom ended quickly once troops were ordered into Odessa.

It was during this key time that Ambassador Meyer was out of the country on vacation. He had left Russia after the signing of the peace treaty ending the Russo-Japanese War on August 29, 1905. He left for the United States on September 9, 1905.¹³⁹ Meyer did not return until December 8, 1905, after stopping in London, Paris, and Berlin to talk with different government leaders.¹⁴⁰ Meyer did not seem to be in a hurry to return to Russia despite being ordered by Roosevelt to quickly return to his post, or after talking with Roosevelt who told Meyer that having an American ambassador in Russia during the uprising was a matter of national pride, and that it was also his duty to be at his post. It seemed as if Meyer did not understand how serious

¹³⁹George von Lengerke Meyer, St. Petersburg, to President Roosevelt, Oyster Bay, 8 September 1905, George von Lengerke Meyer Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts; and Meyer Diary, 9 September 1905, George von Lengerke Meyer Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁰Wayne A. Wiegand, Patrician in the Progressive Era: A Biography of George Von Lengerke Meyer (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 103.

Roosevelt thought the events occurring in Odessa were. By the time he arrived in Russia the violence against the Jews of Odessa had ended.

It is interesting that Meyer had so little to say about the pogrom in Odessa. The fact that he wrote nothing about the events in his diary or in letters to his friends is strange considering how well Meyer had detailed events in Russia before and after the pogrom. Meyer had not been shy about criticizing the tsar and the Russian government in the past. It was as if he had no concept of how important the pogrom was to Roosevelt and to American public opinion. After he returned to Russia from his vacation, it was almost two months before he made his short report on the number of Jews killed in the Odessa Pogrom despite having access to the dispatches from the American consul in Odessa, Thomas E. Heenan, that contained estimates on the number of Jews killed or wounded during the violence.

Meyer's writings did not indicate that he was anti-semitic, and previously he had expressed sympathy and anger over the persecution of the Jews in Russia. His writings seemed to indicate that he thought the discrimination and persecution of the Jews was a symptom of bigger problems with the Russian government. Meyer definitely believed that talented people should not be hindered because of their race. It was almost as if he were oblivious to the events

in Odessa, despite the big headlines the pogrom created in the United States. The New York Times devoted front page articles to the pogrom for several days. Roosevelt had specifically asked Meyer to return to Russia because of the events in Russia. Meyer might have realized the scope of the pogrom after talking with the different heads of state of Europe on his return journey. Despite their concern about the unrest in Russia, their calm demeanor seemed to convince Meyer that speed was not required in his return to Russia.

It was almost as if Meyer did not want to report on what was occurring in Odessa. He made one short report on the pogrom months after it had occurred. Perhaps he feared spoiling his relationship with the tsar and Foreign Office if he reported on the pogroms. Up to this time he had spent most of his time trying to get into their good graces. Meyer suspected that the Russians had broken the American diplomatic code and were reading his official communications with the United States. He also knew that the Russians did not like it when pogroms or losses in a war were made public. Meyer may have written little about the pogrom in Odessa so that he would not damage his relationship with the Russian government.

While Meyer was on vacation outside of Russia, the reports coming out of St. Petersburg to the American State

Department were generated by the American First Secretary, Spencer Eddy. Since 1897, Spencer Eddy had worked in several embassies and had held several State Department jobs. Eddy's first diplomatic position had been as private secretary to the American ambassador to London, John Hay. Prior to arriving in St. Petersburg in 1903, Eddy had worked in the embassies at Paris and Constantinople.¹⁴¹ On November 6, 1905, he wrote a report to the State Department about the unrest throughout Russia that included the Odessa Pogrom of October 31. The report indicated that the violence was continuing and that thousands of Jews could be dead in Odessa, but despite the trouble, American interests in Odessa were not threatened.¹⁴² In another report Eddy stated that the violence seemed to be against the Jews of Odessa. He continued by saying that the initial reports from Odessa probably exaggerated the number of victims of the pogrom, yet the number of killed could be quite large.¹⁴³ These reports seemed to indicate Eddy's interest in reporting as accurately as possible the events in Russia.

¹⁴¹New York Times, 8 October 1939, 49.

¹⁴²Spencer Eddy to The Secretary of State, 5 November 1905, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers: 1905 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 779. Hereafter Cited as FRUS: 1905.

¹⁴³Eddy to Secretary of State, 6 November 1905, FRUS: 1905, 781.

At the time of the pogrom in Odessa, the embassy was reporting that the number of dead would be high, but the true number would not be known right away. Later reports indicated that 560 Jews were killed and 3000 Jews were wounded in Odessa.¹⁴⁴ While at the same time the New York Times reported that the number of dead would probably never be known, but that 5,657 people were in the hospitals and dressing stations as a result of the pogrom. It also reported that 120 pogromists were confirmed dead.¹⁴⁵ The paper did report an estimated 25,000 Jews killed and 100,000 wounded in all of Russia during the pogroms.¹⁴⁶ The San Francisco Chronicle reported that 5000 people were killed or wounded on the first day of the pogrom in Odessa.¹⁴⁷ It later reported that 412 bodies were buried in one day.¹⁴⁸ In light of the newspaper reporting, it seemed that the embassy reports were as accurate as the newspaper accounts. The reports that came from the embassy were not exaggerated and even warned that the number of dead and wounded was probably smaller than reported, and that there was no imme-

¹⁴⁴Eddy to Secretary of State, 25 November 1905, FRUS: 1905, 831.

¹⁴⁵New York Times, 5 November 1905, 2.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 18 November 1905, 2.

¹⁴⁷San Francisco Chronicle, 3 November 1905, 1.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 8 November 1905, 4.

diate danger to American interests. In fact the American consul in Odessa reported that no American citizens had come to the consulate asking for protection during the pogrom.¹⁴⁹ Thus it would seem that the embassy reports of Meyer and Eddy were as accurate and dispassionate as information allowed. But Roosevelt was disappointed with Meyer's slow return to Russia and the almost two month delay in reporting on Odessa. Meyer remained stationed in St. Petersburg, seemingly ignored for a year, until he was recalled to Washington by Roosevelt to join his cabinet, not as Secretary of the Navy or Treasury, but as Postmaster General, on January 29, 1907.

¹⁴⁹Thomas E. Heenan, Odessa, to Robert Bacon, Washington, D.C., 11 December 1905, Records of the Department of State, Despatches from United States Consuls in Odessa, 1834-196, R.G. 59, Microcopy 459, Roll 7, National Archives, Microfilm.

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