

Pogroms of Jews in the Polish Lands in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Historiography, Politics, Social Reception until 1939

Summary

Authors of articles in the third volume of studies prepared under the project *Pogromy. Przemoc kolektywna wobec Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX–XX wieku i jej wpływ na relacje polsko-żydowskie. Historia. Pamięć. Tożsamość* [Pogroms. Collective Violence against Jews in the Polish Lands in the 19th and 20th Centuries and its Influence on Polish-Jewish Relations. History, Memory, Identity] were supposed to analyse the phenomenon of pogroms and anti-Jewish violence as a problem of social and political nature. In the collection presented to the readers we find studies dealing with both, an analysis of the scientific output to date (historiography), and the so far applied methodological approaches. A particularly important component of analyses contained in the book are opinions and attitudes of the broadly understood public opinion regarding the phenomenon of collective anti-Jewish violence in the 19th and 20th centuries. Review of reactions to pogroms of Jews of such entities as the Catholic Church, state administration centres, Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, political parties, social environments and layers which we find in the book, is very important.

With respect to events taking place in the territory of pre-partition Poland, chronological range encompasses the 19th century and the years of the First World War. The mid-war period obviously relates to the territory of the Second Republic of Poland. An exception is the article by Gur Alroey, who, due to research matters, exceeds the partition borders, and – naturally – articles regarding the position of British, American, Russian and French public opinion and diplomacy concerning pogroms of Jews in Poland.

Due to the range and frequency of anti-Jewish violence in the second half of the 19th century and in the mid-war period, this problem takes most space in this volume. The outbreak of war and the related German and Soviet occupation resulted in a new social and political reality, and pogroms history relating to this period is presented in fourth volume of the series. First volume deals with problems related to representation of pogroms in art and culture.

Similarly as in the case of second volume discussing case studies, authors were granted full freedom as to definitions, methodology and language. Thus, besides the obvious stock of new information and analyses, readers will find in this volume the whole spectrum of theoretical positions and research stances regarding research on collective violence which occur in contemporary humanities and social sciences.

Not all problems related to research on anti-Jewish violence and accompanying phenomena are discussed in this volume. Such issues as Catholic Church's attitude to pogroms of Jews in the mid-war period, and Orthodox Church and Protestant Churches' position in the 19th and 20th centuries, Jewish self-defence or economic and psychological effects of pogroms are not obscure but they need a more thorough research. Nevertheless, the editors hope that the presented analytical material consisting of basic research will provide not only a general outline of the history of collective anti-Jewish violence in Poland until 1939, but will also constitute

a necessary and important basis for preparation of further, detailed studies allowing to understand these tragic events.

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The authors of studies contained in this volume sometimes use the term “collective anti-Jewish violence” interchangeably with the term “pogrom”, since formulating a precise and clear-cut definition is difficult. So it is not accidental that the first text in the book is Daniel Grinberg’s study; he deals with the history of pogrom definition and solutions currently operating in historiography and social sciences. Mikołaj Winiewski’s text, in which he analyses the cases of collective violence in Poland starting from the beginning of the 19th century till 1946 – the year of Kielce pogrom, from psychological perspective, corresponds with the introductory study of Grinberg.

Further three texts – by François Guesnet, Marcos Silber and Natalia Aleksium – are historiographic studies. Their authors discuss the state of research on anti-Jewish violence in Eastern Europe, respectively, in the 19th century, during the Great War and after its end, and the way of writing about pogroms in mid-war Poland. The authors of these studies point out weaknesses of the current state of research on pogroms and they present a number of research demands, accomplishment of which will allow for filling the existing research gaps.

The next part of the book contains studies on reaction to pogroms and images thereof in particular environments, state agendas, organizations and institutions, parties and political movements. The editors tried to stick to chronological order in about the dozen of texts contained in this part of the book.

Collective anti-Jewish violence in Prussian sector from Poland’s partitions to the outbreak of the First World War is subject to Michael K. Schulz’s research. The aforementioned Gur Alroey’s text on rapes and violence against women, which always accompany pogroms, slightly differs from the group of articles on opinions and reactions to anti-Jewish violence. His approach to the problem is a new and significant voice not only because of perspective close to gender studies, but also to trends related to psychology of violence, more and more frequently noticeable in this historian’s methodology.

Jekaterina Norkina deals with the image of pogroms in the Polish Kingdom in the 19th and 20th centuries presented in Russian press. Stanisław Wiech discussed the tsar police’s attitude to the described phenomenon based on police archival materials. Ilona Zaleska is the author of a study on reaction to pogroms of one of the most important, if not the most important and impactful social institution in Poland, that is, the Catholic Church. Polish, especially Warsaw intelligentsia’s attitude toward the Warsaw pogrom in 1881 is subject of Agnieszka Friedrich’s research.

In 1918 and the following years the situation in Poland became subject to the more or less insightful analyses on the state and diplomatic level, and, first of all, of hundreds of articles and press coverages perceived by certain environments – especially in Poland – almost as a propaganda war and anti-Polish hate campaign allegedly incited and supported by the Germans, Jews and Bolsheviks. This is why the editors decided to contain in the book several texts illustrating these discussions and disputes.

Reports on pogroms in the period 1918–1919 in the British press and diplomatic actions are extensively discussed by Dariusz Jeziorny, who concluded that British reactions were usually well-balanced. Mikhail Mitsel discusses materials of American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee on acts of anti-Jewish violence committed by Polish Army in the years 1918–1919. Przemysław Różański describes perception of pogroms and anti-Jewish violence by public opinion and government of USA, referring to the wave of pogroms of 1881. Audrey Kichelewski turned her attention to French public opinion’s position toward pogroms of Jews in Poland

in the mid-war period (1918–1939). Marzena Szugiero deals in her work with Jewish public opinion in Poland and its attitudes toward the 19th and 20th centuries pogroms (until the end of the mid-war period).

Reactions and attitudes toward pogroms and anti-Jewish violence of two main political camps on the opposite ends of Polish spectrum, National Democracy and the broadly understood Left, are subject of the studies by Grzegorz Krzywiec, Waldemar Potkański and Michał Trębacz. The first Krzywiec's text deals with anti-Jewish violence until 1918, whereas the second, about such violence in mid-war period; Potkański's article describes positions of the Left toward these events in the Polish Kingdom and in the so called Taken Away Lands at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Trębacz analyses attitudes of leftist environments toward pogroms in mid-war period, presenting, without limitation, a nuanced picture of problematic attitude of Polish Left to Jewish Left and to the whole Jewish community in Poland.

It is not surprising that there are so many different attitudes of politically defined environments and groups of intellectual formation nature, as well as of the state and religious institutions expressing their opinions on tragic acts of anti-Jewish collective violence, which are usually called pogroms. But these articles show enormous terminological inconsistency of sources analysed by the authors. It clearly shows that neither the scenario of events nor mechanism thereof may be a starting point for constructing a new definition of pogroms. Differences in this respect which we observe both, based on the studies contained in the first volume with case studies, and on this collection of studies turn our attention to the spectrum of political meanings, thus, generally, to social imagination system. Maybe the category of "pogrom" is not so useful in the complex description of different cases of collective anti-Jewish violence. But it becomes more useful when we apply it to analysis of one aspect of this violence, that is, attitudes and social imagination of its perpetrators. Category of "pogrom" is not really useful to understand tragic attacks on Jews occurring in different historical contexts, but it is a useful tool when speaking about the changes in the social world of people who take part in these attacks, are witnesses thereof or are aware of them.

Translated by Elżbieta Petrajtis-O'Neill