

Wojciech Saletra

Kielce

THE CAUSES AND THE COURSE THE OF ANTI-JEWISH EVENTS IN WARSAW IN DECEMBER 1881

Introductory notes. The researcher's dilemma

A historian studying the pogrom in Warsaw in 1881 is not in the best situation, because there are no documents relating to these three-day long tragic events, which took place between 25 and 27 December of that year. Even the complex search in Polish archives turned out to be a failure, as not even one piece of archival records relating to the events in Warsaw had been found. The study was conducted in a number of institutions, including the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw¹, the State Archives of Warsaw², and the Jewish Historical Institute. The materials were also sought in archival collections in Cracow: the Jagiellonian Library, the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Princes Czartoryski Library.

Actually, a researcher can rely mainly on the press reports issued in Warsaw at that time and their reprints in newspapers in other cities of the three parts of partitioned Poland³. A more detailed description of the events is presented in the memories of Jan Rosen⁴.

For a large group of the historians who follow Alina Cała⁵ in their publications, the information provided by the press formed the basis for the reconstruction of the most important facts concerning these events⁶. Similarly, a German-Polish histo-

¹ In the archive, whose collections were going through hard time (they were subject to divisions and removal already in the nineteenth century, and then during to the two world wars), studies were carried out on the funds of records belonging to repressive authorities, including the Office of the General Governor of Warsaw, General Governor Assistant for Police Affairs, Warsaw Judicial Chamber and the Prosecutor of Warsaw Judicial Chamber.

² The archive funds of the Province Government of Warsaw in Warsaw, (1867-1918); Chancellery of the Governor of Warsaw in Warsaw (1867-1918); Warsaw Province Board of Police (1880-1917); The Board of Police Chief in Warsaw (1837-1917); Warsaw Department of Security and Public Order in Warsaw (1897-1916) were examined.

³ Mainly „Gazeta Warszawska” (used henceforth: GW), Year 1881, no. 45, 112, 114, 136, 140, 170, 171, 179, 180, 184, 185, 191, 193, 194, 196, 200, 222, 232, 289

⁴ J.Rosen, *Wspomnienia (1860-1925)*, Warsaw 1933, pp. 86-87.

⁵ A. Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864-1897)*, Warsaw 1989, pp. 268-278.

⁶ See: also: „Izraelita”, 1881, no. 50; *ibidem*, 1882, no. 2; „Kurier Codzienny”, 1882, no. 2; „Czas”, 1881, no. 297.

rian Frank Golczewski⁷, writing about the events in Warsaw more than 30 years ago, also based his findings on the local press. However, one cannot forget about the censorship of the time, which produced much of the information and manipulated it.

Further reflections on this issue lead to some speculations or even certainty that most of material concerning police investigations and trials was transferred to Russia, and is now located in the local archives. This, first of all, refers to the archival funds in the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow and the Russian State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg, where huge collections concerning the central offices of occupying authorities were gathered. There is no doubt, that the records of the tsarist political police⁸ which are stored there are of a high educational value, however, they should be treated by a historian researching these events, similarly to the contemporary press, with a large dose of circumspection⁹. This is so because, as it is rightly emphasized by the historian Stanisław Wiech. Tsarist political police showed prejudice and hostility towards the Jewish minority in their opinions and judgments. The followers of Judaism were frequently referred to as „leeches, encouraging the people to drink alcohol, and preying on the healthy body of the nation”¹⁰.

The materials from the same Moscow archive may have a similar cognitive value, however they are a part of huge funds of the Ministry of Internal Affairs¹¹. Also in St. Petersburg there are a few interesting archival documents¹².

These sources may have important implications for historians because they can throw some light on the motivations, standard procedures of the perpetrators, or possibly reveal their main inspirers. Unfortunately, the author of this paper only indirectly benefited from these source materials, quoting many passages using the publications of Polish historians, such as Stanisław Wiech¹³.

Even after 130 years which have passed since these events, Jewish pogroms, a very dark and shameful side of the relations between Poles and Jews, are still in need of investigating. Although we have a little bit more knowledge about them now than before, we are still far from knowing the whole truth. This situation has fundamentally influen-

⁷ F. Golczewski, *Polnisch-Jüdische Beziehungen, 1881-1922 eine Studie zur Geschichte de Antisemitismus in Osteuropa*, Wisbaden 1881.

⁸ Goosudarstwiennyj Archiw Rossijskoj Fiedieracyi (further: GARF) – Moscow, e.g. fund 110 – Sztab Otdielnego Korpusu Żandarmów the Headquarters of the Separate Gendarme Corp 1827-1917; fund 217 – Warszawskoje Gubernskoje Żandarmskoje Uprawlenije 1867-1917.

⁹ Which definitely does not disqualify these reports as a source of great value to Polish historians. See: S. Kalabiński, *Źródła do dziejów Polski 1850/1864-1918*, [in:] *Historia Polski*, eds. S. Arnold and T. Manteuffel, Vol. 3, 1850/1864-1918, eds. Ż. Kormanowa, I. Pietrzak-Pawłowska, Warszawa 1963, p. 20.

¹⁰ As cited in: S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego w oczach carskiej policji politycznej (1866-1896)*, Kielce 2002.

¹¹ GARF, fund 102 – Diepartament Policji Ministierstwa Wnutriennnych Dieł 1880-1917.

¹² Rossijskij Gosudarstwiennyj Istoriczeskij Archiw – Sankt Petersburg, fund 1270 – Komitet po dielam Carstwa Polskogo; ibidem, fund 1282 – Kancelarija Ministra Wnutriennich Dieł 1802-1917.

¹³ S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa*, pp. 203-222.

ced the shape of this paper. By recalling the generally known facts, already in circulation, it specifically seeks to highlight the causes of the December events in Warsaw in 1881, and analyze their implications for further Polish-Jewish relations in Poland.

The issues relating to the impact of the pogrom in Warsaw on Polish positivist writers have been extensively explored. These events were of paramount importance for the evolution of positivism and the Jewish question. Indeed, the pogrom was a shock to the liberal opinion and it questioned the idea of assimilation and the creation of a harmonious society. Polish literature of the period described the mechanisms that led to these events and social causes of anti-Semitism. Such reflections are omnipresent in the works of Boleslaw Prus¹⁴, Maria Konopnicka¹⁵ and the journalistic writings of Eliza Orzeszkowa, who – a year after the pogrom in Warsaw – put forward proposals to solve the Jewish question by assimilation of the Jews and making them (valuable) citizens in her study „On the Jews and the Jewish question”.

The present study is not exhaustive and rather constitutes a preliminary material for further research on these critically difficult and at the same time interesting problems. After these introductory remarks of a methodological nature, the author discusses in detail the main issues as already mentioned above.

The causes of anti-Jewish persecutions

The most serious breakdown in the relations between Poles and Jews took place during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The years of good relations between Poles and Jews, which were still of actuality at the time of the Kosciuszko Uprising of 1794¹⁶ had gone. Later, during the period of the Duchy of Warsaw, the Kingdom of Poland¹⁷ and the time of the November Uprising in 1830-1831¹⁸, these relations were getting worse. However, it is impossible to forget about the huge impact, that the wealthy representatives of the Jews had on the economic development of the Polish lands under occupation.

¹⁴ See: B. Prus, *Lalka*, Vol. 1, Wrocław 1998, p. 272; B. Burdziej, „*Lalka*” Prusa o genezie pogromu warszawskiego 1881 r. *Rekonosans problemu*, [in:] *Jubileuszowe „Żniwo u Prusa”*. *Materiały z międzynarodowej sesji prusowskiej w 1977 r.*, ed. Z. Przybyła, Częstochowa 1998, pp. 171-192.

¹⁵ See: M. Konopnicka, *Mendel Gdański*, [in:] M. Konopnicka, *Na drodze*, Warszawa 1893; B. Burdziej, *Marii Konopnickiej „Modlitwy” po pogromie warszawskim 1881 roku*, [in:] *Maria Konopnicka, Nowe studia i szkice*, eds. J.Z. Białek and T. Budrewicz, Kraków 1995, pp. 51-62.

¹⁶ See: J.K. Urbach, *Udział Żydów w walce o niepodległość Polski*, Warszawa 1938; S. Hirszhorn, *Historia Żydów w Polsce 1788-1914*, Warszawa 1921.

¹⁷ See: I. Schiper, *Dzieje narodu żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich*, Warszawa 1937; idem, *Dzieje Żydów na ziemiach Księstwa Warszawskiego i Królestwa Polskiego (od 1795 do 1863 włącznie)*, [in:] *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej. Działalność społeczna, gospodarcza, oświatowa i kulturalna*, ed. I. Schiper, vol. 1, Warszawa 1932, pp. 423-471.

¹⁸ See: W. Saletra, *Żydzi wobec powstania listopadowego 1830–831 roku – na przykładzie województw krakowskiego i sandomierskiego*, [w:] *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich. Polityka – gospodarka – kultura – społeczeństwo*, eds. J. Wijaczka, G. Miernik, Kraków 2005, pp. 87-101, where the publications relating to the largest military uprising of the 19th century were discussed.

Thus, for example, in 1851, a Jewish banker Herman Epstein became a head of a consortium, which eventually built many sugar refineries in the Kingdom of Poland and a few years later, in 1857, the same man became a president of the railway company, which built railways from Warsaw to Bydgoszcz and from Zabkowice to Katowice. In 1866, a Jewish financier Samuel Natanson and his sons opened in Warsaw a department store, and four years later a Jewish financier Leopold Stanisław Kronenberg founded a Commercial Bank (polish: Bank Handlowy). The Jews also made a significant contribution to the development of the modern Polish culture and the dissemination of Polish literature by setting up in the second half of the nineteenth century many publishing offices and printing houses. Thanks to these institutions, Warsaw and Vilnius became major publishing centers. For example, Samuel Orgelbrand's printing house published the works by Henryk Sienkiewicz. There were a number of Jewish families involved in either bookselling or publishing, including the already mentioned Orgelbrands and the Glücksbergs, Arctcs, Natansons, living in Poland at that time.

However, this did not have any positive impact on the public opinion concerning the attitudes of Jews towards the January Uprising of 1863. Poles blamed Orthodox Jews for their failure in supporting national forces. It was only in Warsaw where Jewish people took an active part in demonstrations, funerals of the victims of tsarist repression and participated in various underground activities. In October 1861, when as part of the protest, Christian churches were closed down, Jews joined Poles and closed their synagogues¹⁹. Warsaw was the exception on the map of the Kingdom of Poland, because at that time two major ideological trends among Poles developed. The first was anti-Semitism, which had been systematically growing since the seventies. This was especially painful for the progressive part of the Jewish population wishing to integrate into Polish society. But anti-Semitism was a wider phenomenon spreading through the entire European continent. The second trend was modern nationalism, common in the vast majority of European countries, including the Jewish variant of nationalism – Zionism²⁰.

¹⁹ A. Eisenbach, *Żydzi a powstanie styczniowe*, Warsaw 1963, p. 120; more on the Jewish attitude towards the January Uprising, See: B. Merwin, *Żydzi w powstaniu 1863 roku*, Lvov, 1913; J.K. Urbach, *Udział Żydów w walce*; D. Fajnhauz, *Ludność żydowska na Litwie i Białorusi a powstanie styczniowe*, „Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego”, 1961, no. 1-2; *Żydzi a powstanie styczniowe. Materiały i dokumenty*, eds. A. Eisenbach, D. Fajnhauz, A. Wein, Warszawa 1963; W. Caban, *Żydzi guberni radomskiej a powstanie styczniowe*, [in:] *Żydzi w Małopolsce. Studia z dziejów osadnictwa i życia społecznego*, ed. F. Kiryka, Przemyśl 1991, pp. 181-190; Extremely critical view of the attitude of the Jews towards the Uprising was expressed by Vladimir Hurko, who believed that „although Jews were not involved in the insurgent gangs, they were at the same time willing to do so for financial profit”. W.R [W. Hurko], *Oczerki Priwislanija*, Moscow 1897, p. 116.

²⁰ A. Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy: akulturacja Żydów Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku*, Wrocław 2008, p. 59; See: *Żydzi w Polsce. Dzieje i kultura. Leksykon*, eds. J. Tomaszewski and A. Żbikowski, Warsaw 2001; *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje. Kultura. Religia*.

The causes of Polish-Jewish conflicts can be traced also in several other ways. First, in the field of religion. For centuries Jewish people had had their own religion, and thus a different culture, attire, rituals and way of life. As long as the Jews constituted a group, a legally separate entity, located at the margins of society, they were not in the spotlight. The situation changed when Jewish people received their privileges and became equal in civil rights with the rest of the society²¹. This started at the beginning of the 1860s. In the years 1860–1861 in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland, the Jews had already received the right to vote. It was also at that time, that the equality of Jewish people was first spoken of. Their legal equality became a reality in 1862, in the Kingdom of Poland, and in the two other partitions in the late sixties. Numerous legal restrictions relating to the Jews as well as to Jewish taxes were abolished (by the decree of Alexander Wielopolski). Starting from 1866, educated Jews had been allowed to hold public offices in the Kingdom, and, two years later, a ban on Jewish settlement outside the Russian Empire was lifted. This resulted in opening the way for Litvaks, who now started their mass immigration from the overpopulated Pale of Settlement to the Kingdom of Poland²².

Jews were involved in lucrative professions, trading, borrowing and lending money and gathering capital. Legal regulations and social circumstances did not allow them to invest in real estate or to purchase properties. In the course of time, however, the Jews began to buy estates from the gentry. This led to their even greater enrichment, which increasingly aroused jealousy in the society. People were not able to accept the fact that the group of no authority or any political involvement had so much capital²³. A careful observer of the contemporary social and economic life on the Polish lands could easily notice that already the 1870s witnessed the first clear symptoms of reversal in the Polish-Jewish relations. Publications criticizing the Jews for their unfair practices in the economy began to appear more and more frequently and they gained increasing popularity among Polish people. And although the Russian events did not exert any special impact on Polish-Jewish relations, the cases of friction between the two communities were recorded. While the December pogrom in Warsaw is more known thanks to its many descriptions in the literature, similar incidents in the remaining part of the Kingdom of Poland have not been described too often. As can be expected, the scale of the Warsaw pogrom surpassed a series of minor anti-Jewish incidents²⁴.

Ludzie, vol. 1-2, eds. Z. Borzymińska and R. Żebrowski, Warsaw 2003; A. Cała, H. Węgrzynek, G. Zalewska, *Historia i kultura Żydów polskich. Słownik*, Warsaw 2000; *The standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. C. Rotha, New York 1966.

²¹ A. Żbikowski, *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce. Ideologia antysemita 1884-1914. Wybór tekstów źródłowych*, Warsaw 1994, pp. 19-20.

²² M. Meducka, *Przejawy obecności Żydów w kulturze przed rokiem 1939 (na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego)*, [in:] *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich*, pp. 103-104.

²³ Żbikowski A., *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, pp. 45-46.

²⁴ H. Bałabuch, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w 1881 i 1882 r. na Lubelszczyźnie w ujęciu władz gubernialnych*, „Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego”, 1993, no. 3/4, p. 24.

The incidents of 1878 and 1879, which took place in the Kingdom of Poland, can be considered a prelude to the events of 1881, when a pogrom in Kalisz took place. Further pogroms in Radom and Blonie were announced. These were the first anti-Jewish acts after the January Uprising. In the capital of the province of Kalisz, riots took place on the day of the Corpus Christi procession (June 23, 1878). They were not described in detail, but a military police report said that they had broken out spontaneously and had been violent. In addition, taking into account the significance of the pogrom, the perpetrators' names had not been revealed. Only the objective causes, according to the opinion of the gendarmerie, of anti-Semitic events were pointed out. The chief of the Kalisz gendarmerie wrote in a political report for 1880: „The whole nation is seething with growing discontent caused by the exploitation carried out by the Jews. The disorder and riots in Kalisz which broke out in 1878 and the following year were a way to express general discontent”²⁵. According to the opinion of the gendarmerie, the riots in 1879 were the result of the escalating anti-Semitism in Germany, which, due to the proximity of the border, became more and more widespread in the province of Kalisz²⁶.

In addition to the anti-Jewish persecutions in Kalisz, similar events were also recorded in Radom and Blonie²⁷. In Radom, on the night of July 8 (20/21) 1878, unknown perpetrators put up posters with some inscriptions in Polish on one of the houses. The posters, which started with the title: „Advertisements for the Jews”, bearing illegible signatures, heralding bloody attacks on the Jews, proclaimed: „The war between Russia and Turkey is over. Now the Poles will start a war against the Jews. The war will begin in Radom, in Wal (Jewish street). Only half of the Jewish population will survive”²⁸. A month later (5/17 August), in the town of Blonie belonging to the Warsaw Province, local police seized posters containing threats against the Jewish population. The authors of the posters, referring to themselves as the National Government, wrote: „We, the Catholics, are in the faithful service of the Emperor and we look forward to the time when our merciful father Emperor the Tsar will reduce taxes and licence fees, imposed on us, the poor. We are being urged by those from abroad to mutiny, but we just beg the merciful father, hoping that he will hear us and fulfill our requests. We, belonging to the National Government, gathered in July 20,000 volunteers who are already armed and each has 20 cartridges to destroy the Jews. Unless the Jews voluntarily leave the country, slaughter will begin in Blonie, the district of Warsaw Province. Let the Catholics, who serve the Jews know, that they can be killed with a dagger”²⁹.

In the notice, also the heads of the districts and the governors were warned, that if the demands (tax reduction) were not met, reprisal actions would begin. Besides, the Catholics, under the threat of setting fire to their houses, were expected to expel

²⁵ As cited in: S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa*, p. 211.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 211.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 211.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 211.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

their Jewish tenants; the authorities were required, starting from 1879, to deny the Jewish people licences to run business. Moreover, the Jews, under the threat of death, were supposed to leave the territory of Poland by 1 April 1879. Furthermore, the notice appealed to the authorities for imposing the previous legal constraints on the Jews.

In the opinion of gendarmerie, the authors of the notices were the representatives of the lower social class and the reason for the phobia was the exploitation of the Christians by the Jews. Despite the serious threats expressed in the notices, there were no serious riots either in Radom or in Blonie. In general, the military police reports prior to 1881 remained silent about numerous verbal assaults, quarrels, squabbles and threats. Before the wave of pogroms, this type of incidents had been treated as standard in Polish-Jewish relations³⁰.

The military police of the Kingdom of Poland made predictions and warned against the threat of bloody riots as well as Polish-Jewish fights. As it turned out later, these predictions were not correct. The anti-Jewish events did not lead to such tragic consequences as the riots in Russia. In the provinces of Kielce, Lublin, Lomza, Radom, Kalisz, Plock and Piotrkow they occurred occasionally and had mostly incidental character. Usually, only few people participated in those events, and hostility was manifested mainly verbally and through rows. The provinces of Suwalki and Warsaw were nonetheless different in terms of showing hostility towards the Jews and demonstrating anti-Semitic attitudes. In these two provinces, cases of the most tragic consequences of xenophobia were reported. The violent events took place in Balwierzyszki, Warsaw, Gabin, Makow and other towns. In the opinion of the gendarmerie, those pogroms were a direct contradiction to the thesis upheld by the Poles claiming the Russian origin and character of the armed actions against the Jews. „Jews, as the chief of the military police in Kielce wrote in his report, exploit the nation, take over the trade and industry. Profiteering is spreading, which gives rise to increasing discontent [...] if so far there have been no instances of pogroms, it can be explained only by the peasants' good nature and the activities of the Catholic clergy, who should be fairly recognized for their considerable efforts to suppress pogroms and induce peace”³¹. In the Kingdom of Poland, the first actions against the Jewish population in 1881 were the events, which took place in Warsaw during Easter holidays. Inscriptions of anti-Jewish character appeared on walls, hostile leaflets and caricatures were distributed. Although they had been destroyed, the following day, a group of about three hundred

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 212; the same author claims that in the reports of the military police in Kielce for the years 1876-1879 there is no information referring to the conflicts between Poles and Jews, although as is clear from the relation of „Gazeta Kielecka” that such conflicts took place: „for some time then, a group of urchins on the streets of the city of Kielce had started a kind of fun, aimed at poking, pinching and thumping the Jews”. The result of this „fun”, which took place late in the evening on the market and nearby streets were severely injured Jewish people. Also, „Gazeta Kielecka”, 1878, no. 58 reported similar incidents occurring in Jędrzejow and Skalbmierz.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 212.

people showing violent and hostile attitude towards the Jews appeared on the Krasinski Square³². Through their initially passive behaviour, the Tsarist police clearly gave their silent consent to the riots, but later dispersed the crowds, so that eventually the incident did not assume such enormous proportions as the events in Kiev, Odessa or Elizavetgrad. The following day, both Jews and Poles issued the notes, which expressed condemnation for the outrage; some help for the victims was organized. The Bishop of the Archdiocese of Warsaw, Antoni Sotkiewicz, wanted to prevent further unrest. For this purpose, he produced a pastoral letter calling for peace, whose copies were exposed in all churches in Warsaw³³. The letter highlighted the universal obligation of love, and the necessity to provide special care for young people, who could become the object of influence by those wishing to take advantage of their temperament for the purpose of anti-Jewish activities³⁴.

Kielce Governorate did not follow the example of the Russian pogroms, which had a character of mass struggle against the Jewish people. There were, however, a few minor incidents, which were limited to verbal arguments or conflicts. The most serious offences were anti-Jewish proclamations and notices, bearing signs of political crimes. In most cases, the police failed to find those responsible for anti-Jewish agitation, claiming that „the incidents were the initiative of the poor strata of the society”³⁵. Report of the Kielce Gendarmerie from 1881 mentioned the notices aimed at encouraging anti-Jewish attacks. Such notices appeared in May and June in such towns as Kurozweki, Wodzislaw, Wislica, Miechow, Jedrzejow and in the village of Topola. Only in Jedrzejow the police managed to identify the people, who committed the crime. According to the decision of the Prosecutor of the Warsaw Judicial Chamber, two citizens, Julian Andrzejewski and Teofil Hoch were taken under the police supervision. On May 20 (June 1) they were putting on anti-Semitic posters in the streets³⁶.

In the town square in Wislica, proclamations in Polish entitled „Revenge! Revenge!” were distributed. Their alleged purpose was to defend the interests of „brothers the Catholics” as well as to call for expelling and robbing the Jews. The terrified Jews went to the governor of Wislica, to seek the guarantee of safety and to make him examine the matter. The two-day investigation concluded that „no serious signs of disturbance or agitation in Wiślica can be observed, [and]... proclamations resemble more a joke or vain terror”³⁷. „Gazeta Kielecka”, describing the events in Wiślica, argued that anti-Semitic activities were provoked by sent agitators or were the result of animosity artificially aroused by the Russian pogroms: „This ridiculous note, written using poor Polish language, bearing some awkward stamp next to the signature of the execu-

³² „Gazeta Kielecka” (further: GK), 1881, no. 39.

³³ S.H. Peltyn, *Z dziejów ostatnich dni*, „Izraelita” 1881, no. 19, p. 155.

³⁴ K. Lewalski, *Kościoty chrześcijańskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec Żydów w latach 1855-1915*, Wrocław 2002, pp. 128-129.

³⁵ As cited in S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa*, p. 212.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 213.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 213.

tive committee provides more than enough evidence of its foreign origins and probably together with the Austrian vodka had been smuggled to Wiślica³⁸.

„Gazeta Kielecka” also described anti-Jewish activities in another region of the province. In the district of Pinczow, incidents of peasants’ assaults against the Jews, though incidental, also happened. „They were limited to chasing away Jews from their rented orchards (Chrabkow, Michalowice, Gory), or tipping over a cart on which a dozen Jews sat (Kije), etc. The peasants’ incentives for those acts were the news of the persecution of the Jews in the south western provinces³⁹. An example of a minor incident was an attack, which took place in a forest village inhabited by Jews, near Chmielnik. The muggers attacked and severely beat two Jews and looted many valuables, which were lost during their escape. Their whole loot was 20 pounds of matzah⁴⁰.

A correspondent to the „Gazeta Kielecka” described the situation in the village of Dzialoszyce in this way: „The persecution of Jews in the south of the empire caused much concern among the local Jewish population, particularly the wealthy part of it, which feared a repetition of bloody accidents. These fears proved to be ungrounded and they were gradually disappearing (thanks to the effective activities in this matter of the Catholic clergy as well as our people, accustomed to peace and order)⁴¹.

As the „Gazeta Kielecka” reported, in Pacanow inhibited by a large group of Jewish people, the news of the disappearance of a Jew named Kauffman was spread. As it turned out, he was killed in a village of Biskupice by a peasant Osolinski. The motives for the murder were of economic nature; Kauffman bought from Osolinski the ground, from which he wanted to harvest the whole-year crops, although he did not pay the total amount due. The peasant and the Jew started a squabble, which soon turned into a fight. Osolinski and his son hit Kaufman with stones and a stick, which led to his death. The body was transported to the field, buried in the ground and covered with turf. The main perpetrator as well as his son and wife were arrested in the local jail⁴².

In addition, the „Gazeta Kielecka” recorded several incidents that took place in the region of Kielce as early as the spring. In some villages, including Kromolow, Ogrodzieniec and Radkow, thieves robbed Jewish shops during the night⁴³.

The persecution of the Jews also took place in the province of Piotrkow, namely in Czestochowa. On the first day of Pentecost, after midnight, a resident from Prussia caused riots in the city. Some rumbles could be heard first near the church and then near the railway. On the second day, a man attempted to throw an object into the church. It was a wooden pipe filled with a grey mass. He noticed, however, that he had been followed, so he threw the object onto the roof of a nearby building. The pipe

³⁸ GK, 1881, no. 41.

³⁹ GK, 1882, no. 3.

⁴⁰ GK, 1881, no. 36.

⁴¹ GK, 1881, no. 55.

⁴² GK, 1881, no. 184.

⁴³ GK, 1881, no. 39.

fell to the ground. A woman passing by picked up the object and took it home. When she put it on the stove, there was a great explosion, causing the stove and the windows in the apartment to break into pieces⁴⁴. The incident started some rumors among the people, who claimed that the Jews wanted to blow up the church. Although the main perpetrator (a German worker) was caught and arrested, the Jews living in Czestochowa felt such fear, that they were afraid to go out in the street⁴⁵.

Anti-Jewish excesses also affected the province of Lublin and the city of Lublin itself. Until World War II, Lublin had been a city in which Jews constituted half of its residents. It was an area of two distinct worlds: the upper town of the Christian and lower of the Jewish (the boundaries had been marked with the Grodzka Gate, also known as the Jewish Gate). Even the Jews call Lublin the Jerusalem of the Kingdom of Poland, and in their memory it is considered to be the legendary capital of the Jewish culture and science in Central Europe. Numerous small towns situated in the Lublin region have a similar demographic nature, including Lubartow, Kock, Izbica, Kazimierz Dolny and Piaski. Today, these regions are the place of eternal rest for many thousands Jews.⁴⁶

In 1881, the Office of the Governor of Lublin recorded 15 cases of acts against the Jewish population. The characteristic feature of the riots was that, like those which occurred in the other areas of the Kingdom of Poland, they took place in the spring after Easter (April 17). They accompanied the successive religious feasts: Days of the Cross, the Lord's Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity Day, and ended with the celebration of Corpus Christi. They occurred in the months of May and June, and only two incidents took place outside of this time-frame (one in February and one in December). Less grave forms of hate crimes were prevailing in most of the cases, and included: verbal assaults, quarrels, squabbles and threats. Violent crime with the use of physical force took place only in a few cases, and fortunately no one was killed⁴⁷. Riots occurred in five districts of Lublin, Zamosc, Janow, Tomaszow and Bilgoraj. Hooligans attacked the Jews in different places in the province. As a rule, these were small towns or villages, not being the seat of provincial or county authorities, for example Stojeszyn (the district of Janow), Labunie (the district of Zamosc) and Tyszowce (the district of district Tomaszow), where military or police forces did not have their units, so there was no one to protect the Jews against the aggressors. Taverns, markets and bazaars, where Polish and Jewish people have regular contacts, were typical places for attacks⁴⁸.

On July 23 in the town of Leczna, in the province of Lublin, a lot of houses, factories and farm buildings fell victim to flames. The fire was started in the district inhabi-

⁴⁴ „Nowy Czas”, 1881, no. 25.

⁴⁵ GK, 1881, no. 47.

⁴⁶ S.J. Żurek, *Ścieżki pamięci, czyli o pojednaniu chrześcijańsko-żydowskim w archidiecezji lubelskiej*, [in:] *Dialog chrześcijańsko-żydowski w Polsce*, ed. G. Ignatowski, Katowice 2008, p. 84.

⁴⁷ H. Bałabuch, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w 1881*, p. 25.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 27-28.

ted mostly by the Jewish population. The motive for arson, according to the mayor of Łęczna, was the fact that local merchants came into possession of significant amount of cloth, linen, shoes and harness. These materials and products were kept on the premises rented from a Jew – a man named Icek Weifeld. It was where the first flames appeared. The fire destroyed 149 houses (mostly owned by Jews), two storages of artillery ammunition, a magistrate office together with its numerous records, police custody place and a synagogue. Three people, including two children, died in the fire⁴⁹.

The „Gazeta Warszawska” informed about attacks on the Jews in the Lodz suburbs. At night, a group of robbers attacked three Jewish people travelling on the route between Leczyca and Gostkowo. All of them suffered from serious injuries, one did not manage to survive. Similar things happened on the route between Lask and Lodz. One night, muggers assaulted a Jewish woman, who was taking geese to the market. All the geese were taken and the woman was beaten up. After three days, she died. On the same route, in a small forest, some people opened fire at a local Jewish innkeeper, but he managed to get out unscathed. In connection with the incidents, the Laski county police authorities decided to put guards in the forest. Several police officers patrolled the area every night⁵⁰.

The region of Suwalki turned out a place of the most frequent and serious assaults on Jews. In April, rumours about the expected Jewish messiah and his imminent arrival, swept over the province. The arrival was to be preceded by the murder of Christians by Jews. In order to prevent it, the Christians promised to kill the Jews first, and a great slaughter was to take place on the first day of Easter. Although this news seemed quite absurd and fabricated, the Bishop of the Diocese of Sejny Piotr Wierzbowski issued a circular to the clergy subordinate to him, in which he appealed to people to keep order⁵¹.

Officially, however, just like in the whole Kingdom of Poland, also in the province of Suwalki the first acts of anti-Semitic assaults were reported in May. Military police recorded in the political report for the year 1881 the information about an attack of peasants from the village of Degucie on two houses belonging to Jews. In July and August, the peasants in the villages of Bierzynie and Widgiry in the Wołkowysk district carried out attacks on the inns leased by Jews. Similar incidents were recorded in other towns of the province, when peasants „without any good reason threw the Jews out of the carts and threw the goods transported by them on the ground”⁵².

In the province of Suwalki, the border town of Balwierzyszki (the district of Mariampol) witnessed the most dramatic events. On September 20 (October 2) 1881, anti-Jewish riots whose scale was much greater than that of the incidents mentioned before, took place. Mostly peasants from the surrounding villages participated in them. Anti-Jewish persecutions coincided with a period of religious holidays (the Catholic All

⁴⁹ „Gazeta Warszawska” (further: GW), 1881, no. 171.

⁵⁰ GW, 1881, no. 244.

⁵¹ K. Lewalski, *Kościół chrześcijański w Królestwie*, p. 133.

⁵² As cited in S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa*, p. 214.

Souls' Day and the eve of the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur). The pretext for starting the riots was an argument of a local peasant with a Jew. Considering the size of the loss, the excesses in Balwierzyszki can be qualified as pogroms. During the events, thirty Jewish houses were robbed and a few people suffered from serious injuries as a result of beating. The possible successive events were prevented thanks to the contribution of the army, which was brought to the village after the riots in Balwierzyszki⁵³.

Only the province of Lomza did not experience serious anti-Jewish incidents. Yet, the events in the capital of the province, Lomza, were an example of deliberate provocation of violence between the Christian and Jewish population. The „Gazeta Warszawska” reported that in June troops appeared on the market in Lomza. Their purpose was to take measures against provocation. At the same time the clergy, from the pulpit, warned the people of succumbing to the provocations and strongly urged them to keep peace. The sermons proved to be useful and the appearance of the troops in the city did not provoke hostile spirits between the two religious groups. In addition, the rabbi of Lomza, advised the Jewish community against giving the Christians reasons for jealousy or confusion. Moreover, in Tykocin (the Lomza province), entering the synagogue was forbidden for those who were engaged in forging accounts and making the peasants pay off „enormous debts”⁵⁴.

The events in Warsaw

The anti-Jewish incidents, which took place in Warsaw during Christmas are generally regarded as the most tragic in consequences. The immediate cause of the pogrom was the break out of panic in the church of St. Cross on December 25, 1881. During the mass, someone shouted: „fire”. As a result, the crowd rushed to the exit, which resulted in trampling and the death of twenty people. A rumour that it was a Jewish thief who caused the panic spread quickly around the streets. As a result, the population of Warsaw began to assault Jewish passers-by. Besides, the crowd formed several groups, which scattered around the city to plunder and rob Jewish shops. The events spread around almost the whole of Warsaw, having the longest and the most serious course in Praga (a district in Warsaw). The Jews organised self-defence on the Witkowski Square, yet without success. In Nalewki and Grzybow, they managed to effectively withstand the attack. In these two districts they received the authorisation from the local police commissioner to organize self-defence. However, it was a single case, as in most of the areas the defenders were arrested. In Rybaki, the district inhabited by both the Christians and the Jews, the two communities together rebelled against the attackers. A temporary hospital in a banquet hall in Panska street was organized; 2 people died, 24 were wounded, and seven people of whom one person died soon after, were seriously injured⁵⁵.

⁵³ „Izraelita”, 1881, no. 40.

⁵⁴ GW, 1881, no. 136.

⁵⁵ S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa*, p. 214.

The „Gazeta Warszawska” of 27 December described the events in Warsaw in this way: “Soon after the disaster, the news that in Tamka a Jew was beaten and injured spread quickly. The reason for this was a rumour that the perpetrators of the disaster in the church of St. Cross were Jewish. The rumour went round the crowds of people, who firmly believed it, despite strong efforts of a number of people who tried to convince to stop it. Unfortunately, those positive voices were ignored, and soon, at about 3 in the afternoon, the troublemakers, among whom many were intoxicated, started riots, which in various places lasted almost until midnight.

First, a crowd of raiders, labourers, mostly adolescent, gathered in Ordynacka street and began to smash the glass in the open windows and the doors of Jewish shops. Soon the police and gendarmes entered the street, and seeing that the crowd split into two parts, one of which went to the Swietokrzyska street, and the other to the Wrobla street. Here the destruction began; breaking down the doors to Jewish shops, especially taverns, breaking into pieces everything encountered [...] The Jewish shops in Ordynacka, Wrobla, Tamka, Aleksandria and Browarna were most affected. The shops were destroyed in the twinkling of an eye, things were grabbed, destroyed and the attackers moved further. In the Old Town, the crowd of several thousand people gathered to shout, whistle and make a terrible racket.

The crowd moved to the New Town, yet it was resisted by the army marching from the citadel. The people stepped back, but on their way they devastated a watchmaker’s shop run by Chana Kolka in Mostowa street and destroyed everything in Bawaria⁵⁶ at the corner of Podwale and Nowomiejska. In Nalewki several shops were broken into, just like in the streets of Walowa and Franciszkanska, but early intervention of authorities prevented further consequences. Riots also started in Grzybow, but ended up only with the destruction of the Chwat’s watch shop and the ironmonger’s. Behind the Iron Gate, some unknown people, according to an official report, attacked an Orthodox Jew, who was passing by, and wounded him so severely in the head that he was taken to the hospital unconscious.

In the Swietojska street, opposite the cathedral, a leather shop was smashed, goods were thrown into the street, and the destruction was wrought with such passion that the windows were torn out together with the frames. In the Bracka street, starting from the corner of the Chmielna street up to Jerosolimaska Avenue, all the taverns maintained by the Jews and one warehouse were smashed.

In the Trembacka street a watchmaker’s shop was broken into and watches, table clocks as well as large wall clocks were thrown out onto the street. In the Furmanska, Browarna and Zajeczka as well as in Solec and Czerniakowska street, goods, furniture, dishes and linen in the shops and homes of the Jews were destroyed. The pillows and duvets, thrown onto the streets, were torn, and soon the streets were covered with feathers like with snow⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ [Bawarsky Hotel, author’s note].

⁵⁷ GW, 1881, no. 289; the descriptions of the course of events were also in other newspapers, among them „Kurier Codzienny”, 1882, no. 2; „Czas”, 1881, no. 297.

The riots lasted until Tuesday, 27 December. A major-general Nikolai Buturlin who was then in charge of the police and the army left Warsaw for Christmas holiday. This unequivocally confirms that the Russian authorities were not really keen on rapid suppression of the riots. It was not until the third day after Buturlin's arrival, that the police intervened to put down the unrest. 2600 people, including 825 workers, 47 craftsmen and 30 caretakers were arrested and tried and committed. Among the penalties imposed, the maximum was one year of the fortress-imprisonment, or exile. 2011 families (about 10 thousand people) suffered in the pogrom. 948 of them lost all their material possessions. It was estimated that property damage amounted to approximately 800,000 rubles. The poorest, especially hucksters, street peddlers, craftsmen and inn-keepers suffered the most serious losses⁵⁸.

Most journalists, including the entire Warsaw press, condemned the riots in Warsaw. „War” between newspapers in the Kingdom of Poland began. „Gangs of bullies and teenagers” were blamed for the pogrom. Some newspapers expressed opinions that the events had a „temporary character” and that they would never happen again. On the other hand, some journalists frequently speculated about the causes of the riots (including those in Russia) and possible provocations. Many of them claimed that the riots were not just incidental, but they were inspired from the outside⁵⁹.

The pogrom had destroyed the efforts of the new positivist, pro-Jewish approach, promoting the ideas of „organic work” and „work at the foundations”. Its followers considered Jews as useful citizens of the country, not meaning national, but positivist social relations⁶⁰.

The weekly paper „Izraelita” described the event, which took place shortly after the attack. It was about a Warsaw census, which was taken at the beginning of 1882. It included a question relating to the nationality of the Jews. The president of the Jewish community, Louis Natanson, stated that currently Jews had no nationality, so the people who were born in Poland and who were permanent residents should be recorded as Polish. John Jelenski, the founder of anti-Jewish magazine „Rola”, did not agree with the thesis. He argued that nationality could not be granted forcibly. The census had produced a surprising result: of the 127 917 inhabitants of Warsaw, only 10 031 identified themselves as Jews. It was definitely surprising, as at that time the Jews constituted the majority of the population of the capital⁶¹.

A few weeks after the pogrom, unknown perpetrators broke the windows in the synagogue at Tlomackie and glued a sheet of paper on the wall: „the synagogue for rent, kill the Jews”⁶². Anti-Semitic inscriptions appeared in the streets. Even in the spring of 1882, the atmosphere of fear and threat was still present. The Jews were afraid to organize wedding parties and to celebrate Passover. A few months after

⁵⁸ S. Wiech, *Spółeczeństwo Królestwa*, pp. 214-215; See: A. Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie*, pp. 271-272.

⁵⁹ A. Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie*, pp. 272-275.

⁶⁰ A. Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy: akulturacja Żydów*, pp. 58-59.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 60-61.

⁶² S. Hirschhorn, *Historia Żydów w Polsce*, p. 233.

the pogrom, about a thousand Warsaw Jews emigrated to the United States: thus they started at that time a new chapter in the history of the Jewish Diaspora: from the Polish lands over the Atlantic.

According to the military police, the consequences of the pogrom in Warsaw were enormous. It fuelled fears among the Jews, and the threat of further incidents resulted in a wave of emigration to America. Subsequent events were expected, and the police in Kalisz anticipated that they would take place in various settlements and towns. They were not wrong as already in the spring of 1882 new pogroms were organized. The chief of the police in Kalisz described the consequences of the pogrom in Warsaw in the following way: „At the moment, the attitude of Christians towards Jews is peaceful, but their dislike of the Jews is huge, not for religious but for economic reasons [...]. In these circumstances, any pretext, any reason could be a spark to ignite anti-Jewish persecutions”⁶³.

After the pogrom in Warsaw, the inhabitants of the province of Plock and Warsaw undertook a number of initiatives aimed at fuelling anti-Jewish persecutions. In Plonsk on the first days of 1882, posters with the inscription „Down with the Jews!” appeared in the streets. Two days later, leaflets prompting people to carry out attacks on the city treasury, the post office and to „Kill the Jews” were spread around the city. The gendarmerie considered it as a provocation by the Jews themselves, who in that way wanted to cause the deployment of regimentation of the Russian military garrison in Plonsk. In turn, in April 1882, the police in Plock reported the preparation of farm workers from the estate in Sielec. On the night of 12 (26) April, the workers, armed with clubs, were ready to carry out an attack on the Jews in the town of Czerwinsk. The intervention of the army thwarted the plans of the initiators of persecutions, whose leader and organizer proved to be a dismissed soldier. Persecutions were not avoided, however, in many other towns in the province of Plock, including in Wyszogrod (April 28/29, 1882), Plonsk (May 10, 1882), Nowe Miasto (May 27, 1882) and again in Plonsk (June 5, 1882).

In the spring, several serious incidents in the province of Warsaw were recorded. The most serious were anti-Jewish persecutions in Makow and Gabin. Especially the pogrom in Gabin (April 30, 1882) resulted in biggest losses, including the destruction of 55 Jewish houses and 3 warehouses. Nine people – four Christians and five Jews – were injured. That pogrom was the last of the big events in the series of anti-Semitic persecutions in the Kingdom of Poland recorded by the military police. The second half of 1882 proved to be far more peaceful, with no anti-Jewish persecutions. Here and there some minor disputes and conflicts erupted, yet they had no influence on the already shaped nature of the Polish-Jewish relations.

According to the historian Stanislaw Wiech, who thoroughly studied Russian military police’ reports in the archives in Russia, these sources do not allow „[...] to further define the role in and the attitude of the Russian authorities towards the pogroms. On the one hand, it is difficult to expect, that the materials produced by the political

⁶³ As cited in: S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa*, p. 216.

police would provide the confirmation of the culpability of the Russian authorities, on the other hand, a lot of indirect information indicates a relationship of some initiators of the persecutions with the officials, the passive attitude of the security organs as well as the authorities' reluctance to impose penalties. Moreover, the political reports reveal anticipatory attitudes towards the wave of pogroms, which was about to reach the Kingdom of Poland. The opinion that the massacres were imminent had been repeatedly expressed for many months before the first tragic events. When the first incidents occurred, the police did not hide their satisfaction from the fact that in a society of the Kingdom of Poland the pogroms gained their supporters⁶⁴.

The pogrom of Warsaw became an important turning point in the relations between Poles and Jews in the nineteenth century. It not only caused deep concern and fear among the Jewish people, which in many cases led to their emigration, but it also intensified the attacks on them. In 1883 the first anti-Semitic Polish magazine „Rola” was founded, and anti-Semitic trends began to be the norm in the contemporary publications of the Polish press. With the afflux of the Jews, the so called Litvaks, from other provinces of the Russian Empire, numerous accusations of their supportive attitude towards Russification started to appear. A few years later, following the series of high-profile trials for „ritual murder” in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany and Russia, the old prejudices revived also in Poland. Such an atmosphere also resulted from numerous publications as well as the ambiguous attitude of the clergy that did not deny those rumours, and sometimes even fuelled them.

Streszczenie

PRZYCZYNY I PRZEBIEG EKSCESÓW ANTYŻYDOWSKICH W WARSZAWIE W GRUDNIU 1881 ROKU

Artykuł ma charakter przyczynkarski i nie do końca wyczerpuje problem badawczy. W części wstępnej ocenia stan oraz wysuwa wątpliwości dotyczące relacji między Polakami i Żydami w XIX w. Opisuje również przyczyny konfliktów oraz przedstawia kalendarium wydarzeń z lat 1878-1879, które w konsekwencji doprowadziły do wydarzeń grudniowych 1881 r. w Warszawie. Ponadto prezentuje szereg ustaleń funkcjonujących już w obiegu historycznym oraz postuluje przeprowadzenie nowych badań archiwalnych dla wyjaśnienia do końca źródeł inspiracji tego ciągu zdarzeń. Autor zamyka swe rozważania konsekwencjami pogromu warszawskiego (25-27 grudnia) 1881 r. dla dalszych stosunków polsko-żydowskich pod koniec XIX i na początku XX w.

⁶⁴ S. Wiech, *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa*, p. 217.

Résumé

**LES MOTIFS ET LE DEROULEMENT DES EXCES ANTIJUDAÏQUES
A VARSOVIE EN DECEMBRE 1881**

L'article a un caractère causal et il n'épuise pas au bout le problème analysé. Il relève dans la partie d'entrée l'état des recherches, et caractérise des relations entre les Polonais et les Juifs au XIX^e siècle d'une façon synthétique. Il décrit aussi des raisons des conflits, ainsi que le scénario des événements des années 1878–1879, qui en conséquence ont amené aux événements de décembre en 1881 à Varsovie. En plus l'article présente une série des faits qui fonctionnent déjà dans la circulation historique, il postule aussi la réalisation de nouvelles recherches archivales pour expliquer jusqu'au bout des motifs d'inspiration de cette chaîne des incidents. L'auteur ferme ses études par la présentation des conséquences de la défaite varsovienne (du 25 au 27 décembre) 1881 pour des relations polonaises – judaïques à la fin du XIX^e et au début du XX^e siècle.

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