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REVIEW OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE STUDIES OF THE KIELCE POGROM: 1946–1992

Introduction

Polish-Jewish relations have enjoyed unfading interest since the early 2000s. Such large works as *Dalej jest noc* (Night without End)¹ or *Pod klątwą* (Cursed)² make us yet again ask the question of what we actually know about the relations between the Poles and Jews during and after the war. Strong criticism, in turn, levelled at these works by some conservative historians, provokes questions about the objectivity and intentions of researchers.³ The

¹ *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, ed. by B. Engelking and J. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2018).

² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1–2 (Warsaw, 2018).

³ The first work in particular aroused lively discussions. For reviews of *Dalej jest noc* see J. Chrobaczyński, “Osaczeni, samotni, bezbronni Refleksje po lekturze książki ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,’” *Res Gestae* 6 (2018), pp. 266–301; R. Gieroń, “Próby przetrwania zagłady w powiecie bocheńskim. Refleksje po lekturze artykułu Dagmary Swaltek-Niewińskiej,” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 47 (2018), pp. 95–108; D. Golik, “Nowatorska noc. Kilka uwag na marginesie artykułu Karoliny Panz,” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 47 (2018), pp. 109–134; P. Gontarczyk, “Między nauką a mistyfikacją, czyli o naturze piśmiennictwa prof. Jana Grabowskiego na podstawie casusu wsi Wrotnów i Międzyzyles powiatu węgrowskiego,” *Glaukopis* 36 (2018), pp. 313–323; T. Rogulski, “Recenzja: ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,’” *Glaukopis* 36 (2018), pp. 335–356; J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Błąd pomiaru. O artykule Barbary Engelking: *Powiat bielski*,” *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2018), pp. 166–194; M. Zaremba, “Efekt Lucyfera w polskim powiecie (na marginesie ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,’ ed. by Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, Warsaw, 2018, vol. 1–2, 1640 ss.,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 110/1 (2018), pp. 123–130; K. Koprowska, “Nocne i dzienne historie. Doświadczenie Zagłady na

dilemma remains whether the very way of looking at past controversial events should not become a research topic. This is because of the increasingly frequent mutual accusations from “Judeocentric” and conservative scholars of not being sufficiently critical.⁴

The Kielce pogrom of 4 July 1946 is an excellent example of an event that, on the one hand, continues to be an object of research and, on the other, has been

polskiej prowincji (O książce ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,’” *Wielogłos* 36 (2019), pp. 161–174; S. Kassow, “‘Like Trees Marked for Cutting’: The Jewish Struggle for Survival in Nazi-Occupied Provincial Poland,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 48 (2020), pp. 223–244; A. Kopciowski, “Book Reviews. Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski’ [Night Without an End. The Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland] (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018),” *Polish Review* 65/2 (2020), pp. 83–85; S. Lehnstaedt, “Review of: Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski (eds), ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski’ [Night Without an End. Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland], 2 vols., Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów (Warsaw, 2018), 871 + 835 pp.,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 121 (2020), pp. 309–314; in particular T. Domański, “Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,’” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 1 (2020), pp. 209–314; a reply of the authors of the book to the review by Tomasz Domański is accessible on the webpage of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research: <http://www.holocaustresearch.pl/index.php?show=555&lang=pl> (accessed 5 October 2020). Continuation of the polemic, see T. Domański, *Korekty ciąg dalszy. Odpowiedź redaktorom i współautorom książki ‘Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,’* red. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, Warszawa 2018 na ich polemikę z moją recenzją “Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski,*” t. 1–2, red. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa 2018,” *Warszawa 2019* (Warsaw, 2020). The announcement of the English language edition of the book, to be published by Indiana University Press, runs the following information: “When these findings were first published in a Polish edition in 2018, a storm of protest and lawsuits erupted from Holocaust deniers and from people who claimed the research was falsified and smeared the national character of the Polish people.” It is published on the official webpage of Indiana University Press: <https://iupress.org/9780253062864/night-without-end/> (accessed 25 May 2022). An interesting discussion on the book *Pod kłatwą* was held by its author with Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, see R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Między tezą, hipotezą a fikcją literacką – opowieść o pogromie Żydów w Kielcach – recenzja książki Joanny Tokarskiej-Bakir, ‘Pod kłatwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego,’ Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, Warszawa 2018, t. 1, t. 2: ‘Dokumenty,’” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 1 (2020), pp. 315–384; J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Miazga. Odpowiedź Ryszardowi Śmietance-Kruszelnickiemu,” *Studia Litteraria et Historica* 10 (2021), pp. 1–31.

⁴ The term ‘Judeo-centric’ was coined by Natalia Aleksion to refer to historical writing drawing mainly on Jewish accounts (N. Aleksion, “Survivor Testimonies and Historical Objectivity: Polish Historiography since Neighbors,” *Holocaust Studies* 20/1–2 [2014], p. 160). A German historian, Stephan Lehnstaedt, ironically calls historians representing a type of conservative narrative a “heroic camp.” He charges the “Judeo-centric” side, in turn, with “politically intentional” writing in many respects and adopting demythologisation as its goal by stressing the Polish complicity in the Holocaust and leaving the impression of a “Holocaust without Germans” (Lehnstaedt, Review of: Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, pp. 309–314). An excellent work on the difficulties in commemorating the Holocaust in post-communist countries has been recently written by Jelena Subotić, see J. Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star. Holocaust Remembrance after Communism* (London, 2019).

mythologised and seriously distorted. Although seventy-seven years have lapsed since the pogrom, the dispute about its spontaneous or organised character continues and will not cease to arouse controversies soon.⁵

In Poland, any discussion of the massacre was greatly limited in communist times, with the first publications on it coming out only in the early 1980s.⁶ Therefore, it can be said that knowledge of the pogrom accumulated in the West until 1989 without considering the Polish point of view. In 1992, Krystyna Kersten⁷ observed that a view circulated “that after all these publications on the subject that have appeared outside Poland, nothing new can be said; everything is known.”⁸

This article’s very purpose is to review English-language academic texts on the Kielce pogrom published between 1946 and 1992. The end date is set by the publication of Bożena Szaynok’s book and her English-language article on the Kielce pogrom in *Yad Vashem Studies*.⁹ As the reader can see, both works were milestones in studying the pogrom and Polish-Jewish relations in post-war Poland.

The present author attempts to go beyond a standard review of historiography. Besides presenting the publications, an attempt will be made to study how historians understood the pogrom, from where they drew information on it, what made them view these tragic events in the way they did and whether the views created then could influence the current debate about the pogrom. For this reason and because the publications are only a few, they are discussed in separate sections, while a comprehensive discussion of processes and phenomena is attempted in the conclusions.

⁵ On the investigation into the Kielce pogrom, see Report of the Decision to discontinue investigation into the Kielce pogrom, Cracow, 21 October 2004, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, ed. by Ł. Kamiński and J. Żaryn (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 441–483. In the second volume of *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, its authors inclined towards the opinion that the event resulted from a provocation (*Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 2, ed. by Ł. Bukowski, A. Jankowski and J. Żaryn (Warsaw 2008)).

⁶ One of the first articles on the pogrom was the 1981 text by Krystyna Kersten published in the *Tygodnik Solidarność*: K. Kersten, “Kielce – 4 lipca 1946 roku,” *Tygodnik Solidarność* 36, 4 December 1981.

⁷ Bożena Szaynok (b. 1965) – a Polish historian specialising in recent history, the history of Jews in Poland after 1945 and Polish-Israeli relations. The author of the first major and still one of the vital works on the Kielce pogrom: B. Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r.* (Warsaw, 1992).

⁸ Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 7.

⁹ B. Szaynok, “The Pogrom of Jews in Kielce, July 4, 1946,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 22 (1992), pp. 199–235.

Bernard Dov Weinryb, “Poland”

Probably the first academic work that gave details about the Kielce pogrom was the chapter written by Bernard Weinryb¹⁰ in the 1953 book *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*.¹¹ It presents Polish-Jewish relations across history, including the post-war period and the Kielce massacre. Hence, the pogrom, but also anti-Semitism in general, were only elements of Polish-Jewish relations for Weinryb.¹²

Before moving to the pogrom, the author informed the reader that before that “most heinous” murder, Poles had killed 1,150 Jews. Trying to explain the reasons for a surge of anti-Jewish violence in Poland, Weinryb devoted much space to the role of the “nationalist and reactionary” Catholic Church. In this context, he quoted the statement by the Primate of Poland, August Hlond, to American reporters on 11 July 1946 and the views of the then Bishop of Lublin, Stefan Wyszyński, and contrasted them with the attitude of the Bishop of Częstochowa, Teodor Kubina.¹³ The historian included the anti-communist underground in the broader group of Polish nationalists, and the number of Jews killed by the National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, NSZ) was given. Moreover, he claimed that underground members infiltrated the structures of the communist authorities while partisans in areas around Kielce and Białystok reportedly were a “shadow cabinet.” He also said that the communist side’s indecisiveness in the struggle against anti-Semitism

¹⁰ Bernard Dov Weinryb (1900–1982) – a Polish-American historian of Jewish origin. He spent his youth in Breslau, where he also obtained his doctorate. Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, he emigrated to Palestine, while after it ended he moved to the United States. From 1948 to 1964, he taught at the Yeshiva University in New York City but also worked at many other universities, including Columbia University. He authored numerous publications and a few hundred articles and was a member of many American learned societies.

¹¹ B.D. Weinryb, “Poland,” in *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites*, ed. by P. Meyer, B.D. Weinryb, E. Duschinsky, and N. Sylvain (Syracuse, 1953), pp. 207–327. The book was re-published in 2016, owing to the efforts of the Forgotten Books publishers.

¹² Weinryb devoted a separate section to anti-Semitism. It covers only 7 out of 107 pages of the whole chapter (Weinryb, “Poland,” pp. 207–314; section “Antisemitism,” in *ibid.*, pp. 247–254).

¹³ Hlond believed that the pogrom was sparked by political and not racial factors, and blamed Jews in the communist authorities for creating tensions. In the opinion of Wyszyński, in turn, the source of unrest was Jews holding positions in the communist authorities. He was also reported as having said that “the Germans wanted to exterminate the Jewish people because Jews spread Communism” and that the question of ritual murders had not been finally settled. Whereas Kubina issued an appeal together with the communist authorities denouncing anti-Semites without approval from higher Church dignitaries.

resulted from its weakness caused by insufficient support from an “anti-Semitic” society.¹⁴

Only after describing the background in considerable detail did Weinryb move to present the pogrom itself. He thus associated it with a surge of anti-Jewish violence, for which he blamed the NSZ. The historian gave the following account of the pogrom: a boy was taught a story about being kidnapped by Jews, the militia that was to verify the story confiscated the Jews’ arms and then a mob together with the militiamen entered the building and massacred the Jews. In total, forty-one Jews were reported to have been killed.¹⁵

The account, albeit short, gave several important details. Weinryb argued that the Kielce pogrom was not an isolated incident but a part of a “broader plan.” He mentioned attacks on trains and attempted pogroms in Częstochowa, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski and Radom, as well as attacks in Silesia and Pomerania. He was convinced that “it would seem that [the pogrom] was well organised,” and about Henryk Błaszczyk, he said that the boy was “trained” to tell his story and suggested that this was the work of the NSZ. What is more, Weinryb knew such details as the disarming of the Jews and the murdering of Regina Fisz and her child. However, the Polish Army and Soviets were completely missing from his account, while arms were requisitioned by the militia.¹⁶

Weinryb claimed that after the pogrom, the communist authorities reportedly attempted to attack the hideouts of the anti-communist underground and took some stricter measures, but anti-Semitism thrived nevertheless. In the historian’s opinion, combatting it more effectively was possible only when the communist rule consolidated after the January 1947 election and stricter coercive measures were introduced.¹⁷

It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the sources that Weinryb used in his discussion of Polish anti-Semitism, including the Kielce pogrom. He drew on the reports from the *New York Herald Tribune* and the bulletin of the Jewish Telegraphic

¹⁴ Weinryb, “Poland,” pp. 247–253.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 252–253.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

Agency and cited Samuel Leib Shneiderman's boo *Between Fear and Hope*¹⁸ and a chapter from the *American Jewish Yearbook* devoted to Poland authored by Leon Shapiro.¹⁹ These sources, above all, but not exclusively, presented a Jewish viewpoint on the events taking place in Poland. This, in turn, could not have left Weinryb's view of the Kielce pogrom unaffected. Surprisingly, he did not cite – in the context of the situation in post-war Poland – the relations of Arthur Bliss-Lane,²⁰ ambassador of the United States to Poland, or Stanisław Mikołajczyk,²¹ although he did refer to their books elsewhere.²²

To the pogrom account itself, Weinryb did not add any source footnotes. The quoting of the number of forty-one murdered Jews and the information about Henryk Błaszczyk being taught a story of kidnapping, however, suggest that he drew extensively from the chapter by Shapiro.²³ However, the other details he gave make us ask if the historian perhaps had access to the witnesses of those events or documents produced by communist law-enforcement agencies after the pogrom.

Importantly, Weinryb blamed NSZ members for the pogrom. He believed that not only had they created the conditions conducive to it but also had organised it and “trained” Henryk to speak about kidnapping. Moreover, it was the NSZ, according to him, that was responsible for anti-Jewish violence, including the attacks on trains, in other parts of Poland at the same time.²⁴ The picture of post-war years that Weinryb sketched divided Poles into two categories: one comprising those who supported the communists and their equality slogans and others who opposed them and were responsible for a wave of anti-Jewish violence.

¹⁸ S.L. Shneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope* (New York, 1947). Weinryb dates this book to 1949, which is either a mistake or a reference to another edition he used.

¹⁹ L. Shapiro, “Poland,” *American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947–1948/5708), ed. by H. Schneiderman and M. Fine (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 380–392.

²⁰ A. Bliss-Lane, *I saw Poland Betrayed* (New York, 1948).

²¹ S. Mikołajczyk, *The Rape of Poland. Pattern of Soviet Aggression* (New York, 1948).

²² Weinryb, “Poland,” pp. 231, 361.

²³ Shapiro, “Poland,” p. 384.

²⁴ Weinryb, “Poland,” pp. 252–253. This, in turn, shows that the opinion about the National Armed Forces' complicity in the pogrom he took from Shneiderman (Shneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope*, pp. 85–94).

Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*

Seventeen years after Weinryb's work, in 1970, Yehuda Bauer²⁵ published *Flight and Rescue*,²⁶ his renowned book used to this day, describing the migration of Jews from East-Central Europe in 1944–1948. The story of the pogrom was told in the chapter “Great Exodus,” which is titled analogously to the Book of Exodus in the Bible.²⁷ The pogrom triggered a mass migration of Jews from Poland, with Palestine being their primary destination. There the State of Israel was founded in 1948.²⁸ If this were true, it would show that the author adopted only one perspective in advance.

Before discussing the pogrom itself, Bauer outlined the background against which the events played out by describing the situation of Jews in post-war Poland. In his opinion, anti-Jewish violence was widespread, often leading to minor pogroms and attacks on Jews on trains. The Kielce massacre was thus “exceptional” since it eclipsed other acts of violence with its scale and occurrence in “broad daylight.”²⁹

Discussing the general causes of the pogrom, the author named, above all, the anti-Semitism of the anti-communist underground and the ambiguous and passive stance taken by the Catholic Church. The historian mentioned the failed requests to condemn anti-Semitism by David Kahane (Head Rabbi of the Polish People's Army) and Józef Tenenbaum (President of the American World Jewish Federation in Poland), who addressed Church dignitaries before the pogrom. He also extensively quoted the statement by August Hlond of 11 July and commented

²⁵ Yehuda Bauer (b. 1926) – an Israeli researcher associated with Hebrew University in Jerusalem, studying the history of Jews and the Holocaust. The author of many publications in these fields and one of the most famous and renowned researchers of the Holocaust. One of the founders of the prestigious academic journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*.

²⁶ Y. Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah. The Organized Escape of the Jewish Survivors of Eastern Europe, 1944–1948* (New York, 1970).

²⁷ The Book of Exodus (Greek Εξοδος), tells of the oppression of Jews under Egyptian rule and their later migration to the Promised Land, i.e. Palestine, which enabled the Jews to found their own state of Israel.

²⁸ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, pp. 206–211. Despite its status as one of the most important books on this subject, Bauer's work has not been widely commented on. The reason may be its complexity. Its reviewer, Marver Hillel Bernstein, observed that “it is a book that is not easy to read nor assimilate,” see M.H. Bernstein, “‘Flight and Rescue: Brichah.’ By Yehuda Bauer. New York: Random House, 1970. x + 369 pp. maps,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 61/3 (1972), pp. 254–255.

²⁹ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 208.

on it by finding that “the Primate gave no indication of his condemnation of the pogrom as directed specifically against Jews. It seemed to be the Primate’s view that Jews were either communists or supporters of Communism and that the fault of the pogrom rested with them.”³⁰ In Bauer’s opinion, even if the Church was not directly involved in pogroms or did not “sponsor” pogroms – to which question he does not give a definite answer – it did nothing to prevent them and stayed on the course of “the traditional pre-war form of anti-Semitism.” Bauer did not accuse outright the opposition of organising the pogrom or a provocation but maintained that it had created, together with the Church, the atmosphere of connivance in acts of anti-Jewish violence.

The account of the pogrom itself began with the appearance of nine-year-old Henryk Błaszczuk at a militia station and his story of having been kidnapped by Jews. Bauer found it incredible that the militia commander could believe in that story. He added sarcastically: “Was it not well known that Jews murdered Christian children for ritual purposes?”³¹ Militiamen and the boy went to 7 Planty Street, where a mob had begun to gather as a result of the story spread by the boy. A priest appeared at the “scene” but “did nothing to calm the public.” The mob and militiamen attacked the building, murdered the Jews and looted their possessions. In the mob, several soldiers disarmed the Jews and promised them – the historian informs – that they would protect them against the mob. When the soldiers had left the building, the Jews were reportedly grabbed by the mob and murdered in the square. In Bauer’s opinion, the same mob, after forcing their way into the building, murdered the chairman of the Jewish Committee in Kielce, Seweryn Kahane. Ultimately, reinforcements arrived at the scene, but the soldiers, instead of stopping the massacre, dragged the Jews onto the square for the mob of many thousands to massacre them. Only the arrival of another military unit brought the situation under control. In total, in the pogrom and attacks in other parts of the city, according to Bauer, forty-one Jews and four Poles perished. He opined that “More blood would certainly have been shed if the Polish government had not reacted so swiftly.”³²

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 209–211.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 207–208.

Yehuda Bauer's account of the Kielce pogrom was based on David Kahane's article in *HaTzofe*, published on 6 July 1956, a relation of an anonymous witness of the massacre,³³ the testimonies of a person Bauer gave the pseudonym "Alexander" and of Yitzhak Zuckerman, as well as stories by William H. Lawrence published in *The New York Times* on 5–16 July 1946.³⁴ Except for the "witness," of whom nothing is known, Bauer's sources were second-hand accounts. David Kahane, Yitzhak Zuckerman, and William Lawrence did not witness the pogrom; the first two maintained close relations with the communist authorities in connection with their positions, while Lawrence relied chiefly on official information from Gen. Wiktor Grosz.³⁵

For Bauer, the pogrom was only a single incident in the story of Polish anti-Semitism. This is seen in his critical comments, giving unimportant details (such as Henryk Błaszczyk's father was a cobbler by profession³⁶) and disinterest in the causes and perpetrators of the pogrom or an alleged provocation. The details of the massacre were probably unimportant for him because he did not devote any space to them in his work.³⁷ In his eyes, the pogrom was the most tragic event in post-war Europe, while its causes had little significance for the Jews at that time or ones of his time.

In Bauer's account of the pogrom, there are three significant distortions: that the mob murdered Seweryn Kahane,³⁸ that at the beginning of the commotion, a priest

³³ Bauer does not reveal the identity of the person or what information he or she provided.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

³⁵ Yitzhak Zuckerman was a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of Polish Jews; he also co-organised the semi-legal migration of Jews from Poland. For more on the subject, see M. Semczyszyn, "Nielegalna emigracja Żydów z Polski 1944–1947 – kontekst międzynarodowy," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 50/1 (2018), pp. 95–121; and memoirs of Zuckerman: I. Cukierman, *Nadmiar pamięci (siedem owoch lat). Wspomnienia 1939–1946* (Warsaw, 2000). Bauer wrote that when the pogrom broke out, Yitzhak Zuckerman was talking with Prime Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski about providing assistance to the Zionists in their struggle against the British over Palestine (Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, pp. 208–209). David Kahane was the Head Rabbi of the Polish People's Army and president of the Jewish Religious Congregation in Poland.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁷ It should be noted that Bauer does not inquire at all where Henryk was between 1 and 3 July. The version that the boy supposedly spontaneously made up the story that later incited a mob to perpetrate a massacre appears to him absolutely credible and thus calls for neither a comment nor verification.

³⁸ Seweryn Kahane – the chairman of the Voivodeship Jewish Committee in Kielce. He was shot dead when calling for help during the pogrom in Kielce on 4 July 1946 (*ibid.*, p. 208). The murder was committed by Polish Army officers. This information must have been taken from Shneiderman's work; however, he did not give it in the footnote to the pogrom description (Shneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope*, p. 91).

appeared at the scene but did nothing to stop the later pogrom,³⁹ and that the army took part only in the later part of the massacre and only by pushing the Jews into the mob. Although Bauer did inform about the participation of the army in the massacre, his message on this issue was distorted. He did not go into the causes of the soldiers' conduct as he probably believed that Polish anti-Semitism was a sufficient explanation of what happened.⁴⁰ If his information came from Zuckerman or Kahane, one could expect that the Jews who had survived the pogrom would share their knowledge with them on the actual role of soldiers in the massacre.⁴¹

The question, therefore, is who provided Bauer, and why, with detailed but distorted information on the engagement of the army in the pogrom or why he presented the role of soldiers in this way and the reaction of the communist authorities. The further question that should be asked is where he sourced the information about the four murdered Poles and what their identities were.⁴²

Lucjan Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life in Post-War Poland"

Another publication mentioning the pogrom was a 1973 article by Lucjan Dobroszycki⁴³ about restoring Jewish life in post-war Poland.⁴⁴ Similarly to the previous authors, Dobroszycki believed that the massacre in Kielce was merely one of many. What is more, it was to be a typical pogrom: it started with a rumour

³⁹ Bauer informs the reader that Seweryn Kahane called Bishop of Kielce Czesław Kaczmarek only to learn that the bishop was away. The historian comments that people had doubts about this absence (Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 207).

⁴⁰ The conduct of soldiers towards the Jews, according to Bauer, in all likelihood resulted from their anti-Semitism as Poles. This can be seen in his comment that only a swift reaction of the communist authorities limited the scale of the massacre. The reaction was the sending of soldiers to its scene (*ibid.*, p. 208).

⁴¹ See, for instance, the relation of Jechiel Alpert in P. Cytron, *Sefer Kielce. Toldot Kehilat Kielce. Miyom Hivsuduh V'ad Churbanah* (Tel Aviv, 1957), pp. 253–255.

⁴² William Lawrence reported that he had seen the bodies of thirty-six Jews and four Poles killed in the pogrom ("Poles Declare Two Hoaxes Caused High Toll in Pogrom," *New York Times*, 6 July 1946). So, Bauer did not give the number of killed Jews reported by Lawrence or even the total number of victims if Poles were to be included. The information that Kahane was killed by the mob was given by Shneiderman, but Bauer did not quote him. Neither is the number of Jewish victims of the pogrom suggested by both researchers correct. In all likelihood, Bauer had greater source knowledge than he chose to reveal and, faced with contradictory pieces of information, made a compilation.

⁴³ Lucjan Dobroszycki (1925–1995) – a Polish-American scholar of recent history and Polish-Jewish relations. Survivor of the Łódź Ghetto and Auschwitz concentration camp, who migrated to the United States in 1970.

⁴⁴ L. Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life in Post-War Poland," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 2 (3) (1973), pp. 58–72.

about Jews kidnapping a child for ritual purposes, it took place in the middle of a city, a mob was involved, and Jewish property was destroyed in its course.⁴⁵

The account of the pogrom covered three paragraphs of the five pages devoted to the study of anti-Jewish violence.⁴⁶ It ran as follows: on 1 July, eight-year-old Henryk Błaszczuk went missing but returned two days later. The boy said that he had been kidnapped by Jews who intended to kill him. In reality, however – Dobroszycki claimed – Henryk stayed with some friends of his father in a village [Pielaki] 25 kilometres away from Kielce where he was supposedly “taught” what to say. The historian added that already before the boy’s return, rumours were circulating about Jews kidnapping Christian children and calling people to gather in front of the building at 7 Planty Street. The pogrom itself was to be perpetrated by a mob by shooting Jews at 7 Planty St. or killing them with axes and dull implements. Jews reportedly were also killed in their Kielce homes and dragged out to the streets. Altogether, forty-one people perished.⁴⁷

In an attempt to name the perpetrators of the pogrom, Dobroszycki informed the reader about mutual accusations made by communists, the anti-communist underground and the Catholic Church. He claimed that underground forces openly murdered Jews, and there were even cases of cooperation between the representatives of the new authorities and “terrorists.” An example of such collaboration, in Dobroszycki’s opinion, was the Kielce pogrom in which militiamen participated, as the scholar informed the reader.⁴⁸ He emphasised, however, that due to a lack of evidence, it was difficult to tell to what extent they acted on their own and to what they followed orders. For the same reason, the attitude of the then-ruling politicians and Soviet officers to violence against Jews in the country could not be established, as Dobroszycki maintained and observed that the Jewish sources he used provided contradicting information on this issue.⁴⁹

Dobroszycki did not place the blame for the pogrom on any one specific group and did not say if it had been organised but claimed that, undeniably, it was the local

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–70. The reason certainly was the author’s attitude to the subject – for Dobroszycki, the Kielce pogrom was an event typical of the period and field he studied.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68. Dobroszycki’s account suggests that militiamen formed part of the mob, which goes to explain gunshot wounds.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

authorities that bore a great responsibility for anti-Jewish sentiment and violence.⁵⁰ His account of the pogrom suggested that he also blamed pro-independence forces because, by perpetrating anti-Semitic acts, they created an atmosphere conducive to crimes against Jews. Anti-Semites could be found, he maintained, in both anti-communist underground forces and structures of power, while the massacre was perpetrated by a mob. Consequently, the blame for the pogrom was borne by the Poles as such because of their anti-Semitism. That the author shared this view is also shown by his account of Henryk's story⁵¹ and the description of murders outside Planty that he gave.⁵²

Although the publications Dobroszycki used are not known, his article was a significant contribution to the study of the pogrom and Polish-Jewish relations – it is still quoted today. His was the first attempt to show that the situation in post-war Poland was complex, while the Jewish question was but an element of this puzzle. The approach he adopted was somewhat surprising: although he viewed the pogrom from the perspective of Polish history, he believed it to be, by nature, an event typical of its kind and of its place and time. Moreover, he distinguished between the potential perpetrators of the pogrom and the people responsible for building an atmosphere conducive to massacres and the murderers themselves.

Michał Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom. Some Unanswered Questions"

A similar perspective, albeit not identical to Dobroszycki's, was adopted by Michał Chęciński⁵³ in a 1975 article devoted entirely to the Kielce pogrom.⁵⁴ It was

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67–70.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁵³ Michał Mosze Chęciński (1924–2011) – an officer in the Polish People's Army of Jewish origin, serving in the counterintelligence service. Having been discharged from the army, he emigrated to Israel in 1969 and to the United States in 1976 where he published academic works on the communist system of government in Poland. His background and military career let him view the Poles-Jews-communists relationships quite differently and put him in an excellent position to study the operations of the uniformed services during the pogrom and afterwards. However, his experience could have narrowed down his discussion to the question of a provocation by secret services and a search for evidence to prove it. This is seen in the structure of the article where the account of the pogrom covers just over one of its fifteen pages (*ibid.*, pp 58–59).

⁵⁴ M. Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom. Some Unanswered Questions," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 5/1 (1975), pp. 57–72.

not an exceptional event, its author believed like other scholars, but was instead the quintessence of post-war anti-Jewish violence. It erupted in all places where Jewish communities had lived in the past, and local populations were afraid of losing Jewish property taken over during the war. What made Poland exceptional, in Chęciński's opinion, was the high number of murdered Jews and recurrent accusations of using blood for ritual purposes to justify violence.⁵⁵

Chęciński mentioned circumstances he deemed important preceding the pogrom: throwing a grenade into the building of the Kielce Jewish Committee in October 1945 and the conversation of Seweryn Kahane and Jechiel Alpert⁵⁶ with the Kielce Bishop, Czesław Kaczmarek, in the autumn of 1945.⁵⁷ Chęciński presented the very events of 4 July 1946 in this way: Henryk Błaszczyk went missing but returned several days later. On his way to a militia station, he was telling passers-by about having been kidnapped and other children held by Jews. In front of the building housing the Jewish Committee, a crowd of onlookers gathered while the militiamen showed that there were no children or a cellar in the building because it stood too close to the river.⁵⁸ At a particular moment, the mob started breaking windows while the militia began to escort the Jews out of the building.⁵⁹ Two military officers with some men arrived at the scene, who then disarmed the Jews. One of them killed Seweryn Kahane, while others started throwing Committee residents through the windows and shooting Jews together with the militiamen. In the evening, more soldiers arrived who, admittedly, stopped the massacre but took part in looting the Committee. The historian estimated the number of casualties at 36 to 42 Jews, and finally, counting the victims of murders in other parts of the city – at 60–70.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ The vice-president of the Voivodeship Jewish Committee in Kielce. Having survived the pogrom with his wife Hanka (Chana) Alpert, he spoke on the pogrom on many occasions and was one of the main sources of information on the massacre for Szmuel Lejb Shneiderman.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58. The latter, allegedly, not only did not come to the defence of Jews in the conversation, but even considered the tensions to be caused by their sharing in Polish political life, i.e. engagement in the work of communists. The historian claims that this view was reiterated after the pogrom by August Hlond.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵⁹ Chęciński does not suggest why the militia, who had inspected the premises and exposed Henryk Błaszczyk's lie, suddenly started to show aggressive behaviour like the mob.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

To present the Kielce pogrom and discuss it further, the historian used sources extensively: Dobroszycki's article, memoirs of Shneiderman and Stanisław Mikołajczyk, reports in the Polish press on the pogrom or the relation by Jechiel Alpert and the Kielce *Księga pamięci* [Memory Book of Kielce].⁶¹ Much of his discussion drew on interviews with the witnesses of the events and persons holding government positions in 1945–1946,⁶² particularly Eta Lewkowicz-Ajzenman.⁶³ For an unknown reason, however, the historian did not use the publications of Weinryb, the *American Jewish Yearbook*, reports of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency or memoirs of Arthur Bliss-Lane and Joseph Tenenbaum, all available in America.⁶⁴

Characteristically, Chęciński, in his article, devoted more space to selected details than to the account of the pogrom itself. He was predominantly interested in Henryk Błaszczyk's kidnapping, the nature of uniformed services' participation in the pogrom and the apparent powerlessness of the communist authorities in the face of the massacre.⁶⁵

Discussing the first mystery, Chęciński pinpointed inaccuracies in Henryk Błaszczyk's disappearance story and his trip to Pielaki.⁶⁶ He asked what role Tadeusz Bartoszyński⁶⁷ played: did he threaten and instruct the boy, and did he meet a group of unknown persons at night, as Shneiderman claimed?⁶⁸ Did he only host the boy, or – as Shneiderman maintains – was he also responsible for his trans-

⁶¹ Bibliography to the article, see *ibid.*, p. 72. Chęciński quotes the following publications: Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life," Cytron, *Sefer Kielce*; Mikołajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*; Shneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope*

⁶² Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," pp. 61, 72.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63, 65–68.

⁶⁴ Tenenbaum's work, for unknown reasons, was not used in earlier publications either, in spite of the fact that it gave a panorama of the situation in post-war Poland and included information on the anti-communist underground, Catholic Church and pogrom. See J. Tenenbaum, *In Search of Lost People* (New York, 1948), pp. 204–243.

⁶⁵ Although almost fifty years have elapsed since Chęciński's article's publication, researchers have not answered these questions.

⁶⁶ Pielaki is a small village in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Mniów Municipality, about 25 kilometres from Kielce, where Henryk Błaszczyk lived. According to one account of the boy's disappearance, it was in Pielaki that he reportedly stayed between 1 and 3 July 1946. Chęciński quotes extensively Shneiderman's account.

⁶⁷ It should read: Bartosiński. Chęciński uses the name Bielaki. The former mistake is repeated after Shneiderman (Shneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope*, pp. 94, 96). The latter is a translation of a quotation from a newspaper.

⁶⁸ Chęciński compares a passage from the *Gazeta Ludowa* of 10 July 1946 and the relation of Shneiderman from page 94.

port to the country? Further, how and when did Henryk return to Kielce?⁶⁹ He thus showed that the fundamental question concerning the pogrom, specifically where Henryk Błaszczyk was, had not been fully and unambiguously resolved or revealed to the public.

As far as the participation of uniformed services in the pogrom is concerned, Chęciński informed the reader that the communist authorities tried to hush up the fact of disarming the Jews and the participation of the militia and military in the pogrom. They were especially keen to keep under cover that some of the Jews died of gun wounds. Chęciński also pointed out that there was no information on who killed the Poles in the pogrom, how they died, and why this aspect was not publicised.⁷⁰

Chęciński was equally sceptical about the claim that the communist authorities were powerless in the face of the pogrom and mob. To prove this claim wrong, he confronted the accounts he found with extensive reports in the Polish press of the efforts of the army and militia to stop the massacre. Furthermore, he mentioned the arrest of persons responsible for the uniformed services and their subsequent release.⁷¹ He showed thus that the claim about the powerlessness of the uniformed services and their desperate efforts to stop the anti-Semitic mob was false. What is more, the officers of the services subordinate to the authorities actively participated in murdering the Jews and subsequently covering up their role in the massacre. Chęciński added that although one hundred persons were arrested, twelve were tried, and nine were convicted and sentenced to the death penalty; the court announced that the actual organisers of the pogrom would be found, which has ultimately never happened.⁷²

Furthermore, Chęciński took a closer look at selected “actors” of the pogrom. He informed the reader about the past and views of the chief of the Voivodeship

⁶⁹ Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 61–62.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 64–66.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–68.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 59. On 18 April 1947, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* reported that a day earlier, the Warsaw Radio announced that Jan Ruczaj had been found. He was the leader of a band which reportedly organised the pogrom in Kielce on 4 July 1946. It was he, according to the report, who kidnapped Henryk Błaszczyk and made him spread the rumour about a ritual murder. Despite having organised the pogrom he was not punished because of the amnesty granted to “anti-Semitic underground groups” (*Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 18 April 1947).

Office of Public Security (*Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, WUBP), Władysław Sobczyński, and his later promotion.⁷³ It was he that Chęciński saw as the probable author of the pogrom. Besides him, the historian characterised two other persons whom he believed to have been involved in the organisation of the massacre: a Soviet officer named “Dyomin”⁷⁴ and Walenty Błaszczuk, the father of Henryk who went temporarily missing. Walenty, Chęciński believed, worked for the Security Office (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB) under codename Przelot, his task being the infiltration of the Kielce NSZ. It was he, according to Chęciński, who organised the kidnapping of his son to disgrace the NSZ and, as a result, bring about the pogrom.⁷⁵ Notably, the characteristics of both men were taken from a single source.⁷⁶

Although the best-known claims made by Chęciński – about the involvement of “Dyomin” and “Przelot” in the pogrom – were not borne out by archival resources,⁷⁷ one aspect of his study has kept its relevance undiminished to this day. He made the reader distinguish between different forms of responsibility for the pogrom: for creating an atmosphere conducive to violence against Jews,⁷⁸

⁷³ Chęciński, “The Kielce pogrom,” pp. 68–69.

⁷⁴ Correctly: Dyomin, Mikhail Alexandrovich (*ibid.*, pp. 62–63).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64. See the Transcript of interview of Henryk Błaszczuk, Kielce, 25 August 1995, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, pp. 286–291.

⁷⁶ “Dyomin” was supposedly mentioned by Eta Lewkowicz-Ajzenman, Head of the Secretariat at the Kielce WUBP, in conversation with Chęciński. The source of information on “Przelot” was Adam Kornecki (1917–1986; true name: Dawid Kornhendler). He held the position of the Kielce WUBP chief but was dismissed in October 1945. Subsequently, his position was taken by Władysław Sobczyński. In 1969 Kornecki left for the Federal Republic of Germany, where he died in 1986.

⁷⁷ The theme of “Dyomin” was examined during the second investigation into the Kielce pogrom. No evidence corroborating the statements by Eta Lewkowicz-Ajzenman was found then (Report of the Decision to discontinue investigation into the Kielce pogrom, Cracow, 21 October 2004, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, p. 471). After the death of Chęciński, a present-day researcher of the Kielce pogrom, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, had an opportunity to study his collection of sources, which she cited in part in her book (Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*, pp. 685–717). Having studied the materials Chęciński had collected, she found the claim about “Dyomin’s” involvement in the pogrom not credible. Moreover, she wrote that “a search in the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance and Central Military Archives does not confirm that such a person ever existed” (*ibid.*, pp. 419–420, 750–751). Her claim, however, is not entirely accurate (see Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Między tezą,” p. 328). After it was possible to access the collections of communist archives after 1989, no information has been found that would prove Walenty Błaszczuk’s work for the UB under the codename “Przelot.”

⁷⁸ In his opinion, the responsibility for this lay with the anti-Semitic part of the underground independence forces and the Catholic Church (Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 57–58).

for what happened during the tragic events of 4 July 1946⁷⁹ and for the potential organisation of the pogrom.⁸⁰ The pogrom account given in the article and the many-sided viewing of responsibility for it suggest that Chęciński believed the Kielce pogrom to have been a provocation, with its most likely organisers being UB officials, in particular Władysław Sobczyński. He either worked together with the Soviet authorities or acted at their behest.⁸¹ Researchers do not currently share the opinion that the UB was responsible for the pogrom, but it prevails among the general public nonetheless.⁸²

Furthermore, Chęciński advised caution in drawing conclusions invoking the *cui prodest* reasoning. Pondering who benefited from the Kielce pogrom, he replied that almost everybody. The Soviets and Polish communists received a pretext to

⁷⁹ That is the passivity or complicity of the uniformed services in the massacre (*ibid.*, pp. 64–66).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–69.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 68–69. It cannot be ruled out that it was for this reason that Chęciński formulated this and other opinions of his as suggestions and not outright. Another reason could be also his fear of criticism, as Soviet studies were only in a nascent stage and could not help people understand how the communist system worked then and after the war. Consequently, Chęciński could have been seen as a sympathiser of “fascists,” who tried to shift the guilt for the pogrom to the Jews (and the UB) and Soviets, thus aligning himself with the slogans proclaimed by the “anti-Semitic” pro-independence underground forces.

⁸² The author of the latest work on the Kielce pogrom, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, makes a bold claim that “evidence for a UB/NKVD conspiracy is non-existent, quite on the contrary, there is considerable proof that UB agents, such as Andrzej Markiewicz, Sylwester Klimczak or Zygmunt Majewski saved Jews, no UB agent beat or killed them, and the WUBP chief, Władysław Sobczyński, was first to recognise the accusation of Jews of kidnapping Henio Błaszczyk for what it was – a political provocation.” (J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Odpowiedź na recenzje Bożeny Szaynok i Marcina Zaremby,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 14 (2018), p. 668; also Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*, p. 15). Cf. also: “Summing up, when evidence is evaluated from the point of view of the legitimacy of the investigation hypothesis, it must be found that the body of evidence collected in the course of investigation does not support the claim that the events in Kielce on 4 July 1946 were an effect of a provocation by national or voivodeship echelons of security services” (Report of the Decision to discontinue investigation into the Kielce pogrom, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, pp. 473–478). So unequivocal a stance is unjustified in the opinion of Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki who points to many shortcomings in Joanna Tokarska-Bakir’s book (Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Między tezą,” pp. 327–328, 332–335, 382). Nevertheless, the view that the pogrom was a UB provocation widely prevails among the general public and is sometimes proclaimed in the form of the slogan: “UB pogrom, not Kielce pogrom.” On 5 July 2015, under this slogan, conservatives marched in the streets of Kielce (“Pogrom ubecki, a nie kielecki. Manifestacja w Kielcach,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 5 July 2015, <https://www.rp.pl/historia/art11626471-pogrom-ubecki-a-nie-kielecki-manifestacja-w-kielcach> (accessed 10 February 2022)); see also: “69. rocznica pogromu kie-leckiego. Manifestacja pod hasłem ‘Pogrom ubecki, a nie kielecki’ i natychmiastowa odpowiedź,” *Echo Dnia*, 5 July 2015, <https://echodnia.eu/swietokrzyskie/69-rocznica-pogromu-kieleckiego-manifestacja-pod-haslem-pogrom-ubecki-a-nie-kielecki-i-natychmiastowa-odpowiedz-wideo-zdjecia/ar/8143962> (accessed 10 February 2022).

take stricter measures against the independence underground as part of combating anti-Semitism. As an effect of the pogrom, the mass emigration of Jews from Poland exerted pressure on the British authorities in the context of founding a Jewish state in Palestine.⁸³ A benefit was also reaped by the Poles having anti-Semitic views and the Catholic Church because in the wake of the Kielce pogrom, Poland's Jewish population declined.⁸⁴

Chęciński's comments on the reception of the Kielce pogrom in the West are worth noting. He believed that the version presented by the communist authorities, blaming the opposition and émigré circles for the pogrom, became prevalent there. Likewise, with respect to the Catholic Church in Poland, Chęciński observed that, due to its support for anti-communist factions, it was criticised in the West for, and even suspected of, provoking the pogrom.⁸⁵ In turn, while discussing the weakness of the uniformed services, Chęciński gave the example of Shneiderman's version as one that – although published in the West – actually spread communist propaganda.⁸⁶ By doing that, Chęciński probably wanted to show that the opinions about the innocence and weakness of the uniformed services, proclaimed by the new regime, although false, caught on in the West.

Yehuda Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*

In 1979, the Kielce pogrom was revisited by Yehuda Bauer in *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*.⁸⁷ Although he did not give much space to the massacre and did not describe its course, he expressed very strong opinions about it none-

⁸³ For the same reason, Zionists could have benefited by gaining an argument in their lobbying for a Jewish state in Palestine. This reasoning led to the conception that they had organised the Kielce pogrom. Today, researchers reject this conception because there are no grounds for considering it credible (Report of the Decision to discontinue investigation into the Kielce pogrom, Cracow, 21 October 2004, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, p. 469).

⁸⁴ Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," pp. 59, 70–71.

⁸⁵ Chęciński does not deny that some of the underground forces showed anti-Semitic behaviour, spread slogans of this kind and took part in the massacres of Jews, but maintains that the underground did not organise the pogrom (*ibid.*, pp. 59–61).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 66–70.

⁸⁷ Y. Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness* (Toronto–Buffalo, 1979). This book has been re-published by the University of Toronto Press: Y. Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness* (Toronto, 2016). A part of the book, including fragments on the pogrom, was repeated verbatim in an article published ten years later: Y. Bauer, "Zionism, the Holocaust, and the Road to Israel," in *The End of the Holocaust*, ed. M.R. Marrus (New York, 1989), pp. 539–579.

theless. As the book gained popularity, its author's convictions could have affected how English-speaking researchers viewed the pogrom.

One of such convictions held that the massacre in Kielce was one of many acts of violence that had taken on an "epidemic scale," with the most frequent pretext for anti-Semitic riots being accusations of ritual murders. This myth, as Bauer stressed, "survived Hitler" and was what old and new anti-Semitism had in common.⁸⁸ Only a year after the defeat of the Third Reich, it brought about the tragic pogrom in Kielce, a city, as Bauer emphasised, being the seat of a bishop.⁸⁹

Although the book did not give any account of what happened in Kielce, it cited the number of forty-two Jews killed in the pogrom. Curiously enough, as several years earlier in *Flight and Rescue*, the same author gave the number of forty-one Jewish and four Polish casualties of the massacre in "[...] which the local government militia, members of the clergy, and even a socialist factory director and his workers took part."⁹⁰ Despite the boldness of this claim, he did not say where he took this information from.

Furthermore, Bauer expressed another important opinion, namely that the massacre in Kielce could have been one of the primary reasons why the United States joined in the question of Palestine, which contributed to the foundation of the State of Israel. He explained that the discovery of concentration camps shocked American soldiers and improved their opinion of Jews as well as advanced the Jewish cause, in particular among commissioned officers. Faced with the influx of Jewish migrants to the American occupation zone after the Kielce pogrom, the Americans had a choice between using force to stop them or letting them into the United States. Alternatively, they could search for a third way out to join in the discussion on Palestine.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence*, p. 43.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; cf. Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 208.

⁹¹ Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence*, p. 68. Bauer observed that the opposite effect was also possible and could intensify anti-Semitism among the rank and file. His observation seems right. As many as 22% of American soldiers stationed in Germany, when polled in September 1945, agreed that the Germans had "good reasons" for not liking Jews, while 19% believed that the Germans had a "good" or "some" justification for starting the war. According to other polls from the same time, 8% of American soldiers personally did not like the Jews. In comparison, about 10% were convinced that the Jews benefited from the war, and 7–8% indicated them as the most disliked group in America. Above 15% of respondents were also convinced that the Jews formed too large a part of financiers, that they made money on non-Jews,

Hence, Bauer considered the pogrom an event in world history that impacted the international situation.

Michał Chęciński, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism*

In 1982, seven years after publishing his article, Chęciński published *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism*, a book in which he devoted a short chapter to the Kielce pogrom.⁹² First, although the article and the book chapter have the same events as their subject, their bibliographies differ somewhat. The publications by Weinryb and Arthur Bliss-Lane are added to the one in the book, but the article by Dobroszycki is removed from it.⁹³ It cannot be ruled out that it was the first of the named publications that made Chęciński criticise more sharply the opposition and soften his stance on the engagement of the communist authorities in the pogrom.

The part devoted to the events of 4 July 1946 starts with the observation that the pogrom has never been unravelled, while it is a significant event from the perspective of the history of the Jews and the Soviet domination of post-war Poland.⁹⁴ The further part of the introduction, preceding the account of the pogrom, is taken from the article,⁹⁵ as is the account itself.⁹⁶ There are, however, some differences.

While earlier, the quoted author left a hiatus between the search conducted by the militia at 7 Planty Street and the start of the attack on the building, in the book, he maintained that the mob attacked the building “despite” discovering that the rumour about murdered children was a lie. Furthermore, a piece of information was added in the book about former Jewish soldiers firing into the air to scare off the mob. Only then did the militia shoot the first pogrom victim and disarm the

and dodged the draft; some believed that they had fought in the interest of a particular group – capitalists, Jews or politicians (S.A. Stouffer, A.A. Lumsdaine, M.H. Lumsdaine, R.M. Williams Jr, M.B. Smith, I.L. Janis, S.A. Star, and L.S. Cottrell Jr, *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, vol. 2 (Princeton, 1949), pp. 571, 585, 617, 619, 638–639.

⁹² M. Chęciński, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1982), pp. 17–18, 21–34. It was published after Krystyna Kersten wrote her article on the Kielce pogrom (Kersten, “Kielce – 4 lipca 1946 roku”).

⁹³ Chęciński, *Poland*, pp. 32–34.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22; cf. *id.*, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 57–58.

⁹⁶ *Id.*, *Poland*, pp. 22–23; cf. *id.*, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 58–59.

Jews.⁹⁷ In the article account, the Jews were disarmed because they had firearms, which they used to scare off the mob from entering the building. There is no information, however, that they were fired.⁹⁸ While in the article account, the attack was initiated by the mob and militia, the book account underscored the role of ordinary people and the Jews as well.

These are not the only differences between the book and the article. One concerns the story of the later conduct of the military and militia: in the article, the new reinforcements that arrived at the scene at about 11:30 am joined in the beating and shooting of the Jews. Meanwhile, in the book, Chęciński distinguished between a group of soldiers who undertook bold and resolute actions and the other soldiers and militiamen. The lynching carried out by the former group motivated the others to join in the massacre and even to fire “at” the windows. Since this information is given in the context of what was happening inside the building, he could have believed that the soldiers and militiamen shot at the Jews who had been cast out or escorted from the building or at the mob from inside it.⁹⁹ Importantly, neither pogrom account by Chęciński carries a source footnote. It must be presumed,

⁹⁷ *Id.*, *Poland*, p. 23.

⁹⁸ *Id.*, “The Kielce Pogrom,” p. 58.

⁹⁹ “[...] and even fired at the windows.” The interpretation that they fired “from” and not “at” the windows appears legitimate, taking into account that the author spoke of the officers inside the building (*id.*, *Poland*, p. 23; *id.*, “The Kielce Pogrom,” p. 59). Elsewhere, a mention is made of soldiers firing at the windows under the influence of the mob (Chęciński, *Poland*, p. 29; *id.*, “The Kielce Pogrom,” p. 67). It is possible, however, that the author intended to stress that the military and militiamen as a body joined in the massacre and shooting only as a result of the actions of one determined and specific group. “The investigation could not unequivocally establish who had fired the first shots. According to the report of the instructors of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party (*Komitet Centralny Polskiej Partii Robotniczej*, KC PPR), the first shots were fired in self-defence by the Jews inside the building. The same information was given by Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek, who also said that the shots triggered the mob’s aggression, while the militiamen and soldiers took then the side of the mob instead of trying to disperse it. [...] During the pogrom, two other Poles standing in front of the building died of gunshot wounds. [...] A post-mortem examination of their bodies, specifically the direction of the gunshot wounds, revealed that they had been shot at from above, from some height. This suggests that the bullets were fired from the building, from at least its first floor. It does not seem possible that such shots were fired at the mob by Polish Army soldiers or militiamen from inside the building” (Report of the Decision to discontinue investigation into the Kielce pogrom, Cracow, 21 October 2004, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, pp. 455–456). “A few soldiers, at the same time, on the second floor, took off their uniforms and hats and started firing from the building at the people who were standing in front of the Committee” (Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*, vol. 2: *Dokumenty*, p. 133). Therefore, the question of who shot at the mob and who started shooting first in the first place – the Jews in self-defence, soldiers, or soldiers pretending to be Jews – remains unanswered.

therefore, that the accounts give his version of the events developed based on collected source materials, publications and interviews. In particular, the details given in the account support this presumption.

Another difference concerns the assigning of blame for the pogrom. In the article, Chęciński related mutual accusations of the underground and communists of organising the massacre and criticism levelled at the Catholic Church, which was even suspected of its organisation. The version spread by the propaganda of the new regime was to dominate in the Soviet Union and the West also at the time when Chęciński was writing his article.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, in the book, he maintained that the communist authorities accused the underground of organising the pogrom and made the Catholic Church morally responsible for it. This point of view was commonly accepted then, while in Chęciński's times, it was only often repeated. The opposition, in turn, only denied such accusations and demanded a thorough investigation.¹⁰¹

In the context of Henryk Błaszczyk going missing, Chęciński limited the number of questions and the length of the narrative in favour of presentation simplicity.¹⁰² The question of "Dyomin" underwent significant changes. In the article, "he was probably an intelligence and not counter-intelligence officer,"¹⁰³ whereas, in the book, he was characterised as follows: "[...] Dyomin was assigned to Kielce, an unlikely place for a highly-educated Soviet intelligence officer, a few months before the pogrom, and he left two weeks after the pogrom. As a rule, Soviet intelligence officers were sent abroad if delicate political provocations were needed."¹⁰⁴ In the first case, Chęciński's source of information was Eta Lewkowicz-Ajzenman; in the second case, he did not name his source, but in all likelihood, it was her as well. Hence, we can presume that what he earlier considered only potentially true became true for him, and he decided to present his conjectures as facts.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," p. 59.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*, *Poland*, p. 24.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

¹⁰³ *Id.*, "The Kielce Pogrom," p. 62.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*, *Poland*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, his article did not enjoy much interest among Western scholars in contrast to his book, which was easier to read and not burdened as much with a critical apparatus.

What else changed was the description of the alleged collaboration of Walenty Błaszczuk with the UB under the codename “Przelot.” In the article, Chęciński quoted his conversation with Adam Kornecki on this subject but did not comment on it.¹⁰⁶ In the book, only a short fragment of the conversation is quoted, with the rest presented as orderly facts, suggesting that Chęciński’s article may have met with incomprehension from readers unfamiliar with the Polish post-war reality. Therefore, he adjusted his narrative style to his readers. Both texts show that Walenty reportedly approached the authorities with the information that the NSZ intended to organise a provocation with his son’s participation. In contrast, the authorities decided to provoke a pogrom to implicate the underground. He was supposedly motivated by fear that he would lose his flat that had previously belonged to Jews.¹⁰⁷

Chęciński also changed his approach to the question of *cui prodest* reasoning. In the article, he pointed the finger of blame above all at the communist authorities, who could shift the blame for the pogrom onto the opposition, but he also saw that the opposition benefited from it by getting rid of an unwanted minority.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, in the book, it was the anti-Semitism of a “considerable” portion of the opposition that made it an easy scapegoat, owing to which the communists scored a propaganda win. Moreover, the book elaborated on the aspect of exerting pressure on Western countries through the mass migration of Jews. In this context, Chęciński presented the communists’ point of view, who claimed that the pogrom showed it was necessary to use stricter measures in Poland and that under those circumstances, the communists had become the defenders of Jews. The historian did not say if this claim was true or merely a propaganda bluff, although, in the article, he clearly criticised the claim about the weakness of the communist authorities.¹⁰⁹ The book also mentioned the statement by August Hlond, charging him with using anti-Semitism for political ends.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*, “The Kielce Pogrom,” p. 63.

¹⁰⁷ The information survived among pogrom witnesses that Walenty Błaszczuk intended to get rid of Jews. The witnesses reportedly heard from the militia his alleged comment in which he admitted to having planned the events (M. Hillel, *Le massacre des Survivants en Pologne 1945–1947* [Paris, 1985], p. 341).

¹⁰⁸ Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 69–70.

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*, *Poland*, pp. 31; *id.*, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 66–70.

¹¹⁰ *Id.*, *Poland*, p. 22.

The magnitude of differences between the article and the book shows that their introduction was purposeful. The article attempted to objectively present the multifaceted reality of post-war Poland and place the pogrom, a complex occurrence in itself, against this backdrop. Although its author let his views be known, he was inclined to resort to quotations rather than provide ready answers. By contrast, the book fragment on the pogrom carried a ready-made message. Its language was improved, and the narrative was now orderly and straightforward, but some important details were missing. As a result, the previous depth of reasoning was gone, as was the multi-layered presentation of the question of responsibility for the pogrom. Instead, the reader was given a declaration: regardless of whether the massacre was planned and who planned it, it was used for propaganda purposes by the communists. Their task was made easier because they could use the anti-Semitism of the underground as their weapon. If public officials took part in the massacre, it was because of the great dislike for the Jews by the Poles. If it was planned – here, Chęciński implicates the UB – it was because the authorities knew that a provocation would draw a response from the Poles, and they could be thus entangled in a crime, which could subsequently be taken advantage of.

The discussion of the Kielce pogrom represented only a tiny part of Chęciński's book about the situation in communist Poland. Therefore, the reader, thus far in reading the book, did not know the facts to be presented. At that point in his narrative, Chęciński used the pogrom to illustrate the complexity of relations between the communist authorities, ordinary Poles, the opposition and the Jews. Against this backdrop, he continued his story of post-war Poland.

In this context, a potential provocation was of secondary importance to Chęciński. He could expect the reader to have sufficient knowledge of the way Eastern Bloc countries functioned and present the pogrom as an example of manipulation or a political game. This interpretation, however, would make it necessary to look for an external spark that would set off a pogrom, that is, to search for evidence of communist involvement in the massacre organisation.¹¹¹ This explains

¹¹¹ A similar opinion was expressed by Klaus-Peter Fredrich (K.P. Fredrich, "Das Pogrom von Kielce am 4. Juli 1946. Anmerkungen zu einigen polnischen Neuerscheinungen," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 45/3 [1996], pp. 420–421).

why the claims made in the article differ from the findings arrived at in the book. Although they are not contradictory, they place the accent elsewhere regarding responsibility for the pogrom.

Reception of Poland: *Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism*

Chęciński's book has met with the lively interest of scholars from around the world and is one of the most frequently quoted publications abroad on the pogrom, history of Jews and Poland's communist system of government.¹¹² However, many authors have drawn attention to its imperfections. Its author was criticised for too great a reliance on the interviews he conducted and presenting "[...] the point of view of an understandably disillusioned Polish Jew who now makes his home in Israel." Chęciński was also criticised for downplaying the dislike for Jews prevailing among ordinary Poles and treating anti-Semitism as a Russian "import."¹¹³ Other shortcomings that were pointed out included failure to provide a broader background against which the events unfolded, a tendency to explain everything with the operation of Soviet secret services¹¹⁴ and an inability to quote sources on many occasions.¹¹⁵ Waław Soroka,¹¹⁶ above all, appreciated the exposure of the communist authorities' involvement in engendering anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence but believed that Chęciński "diluted" their responsibility by overstating the role of the mob and excessively accusing the Catholic Church. He also drew attention to the fact that the view about anti-communist forces be-

¹¹² Reviews in English, see J.C. Campbell, "Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism" by Michael Checinski. New York: Larz-Cohl, 1982, 270 pp.," *Foreign Affairs* 61/2 (1982), pp. 475–476; A.J. Prażmowska, "Michael Chęciński, 'Poland, Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism,' Kanz-Cohl Publishing Inc., New York, 1982, viii + 289 pp.," *Soviet Studies* 35/3 (1983), pp. 425–426; S. Kirschbaum, "Michael Checinski, 'Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism,'" *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 25/4 (1983), pp. 606–607; W.W. Soroka, "A Book That Shocks and Frightens (On the Pattern of Poland's Subjugation)," *Polish Review* 28/4 (1983), pp. 105–112; E. Mendelsohn, "Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism" by Michael Checinski. New York, Karz-Cohl Publishing, 1982. 289 pp.," *Political Science Quarterly* 99/1 (1984), pp. 158–159.

¹¹³ Mendelsohn, "Poland," pp. 158–159.

¹¹⁴ Prażmowska, "Michael Chęciński, 'Poland,'" pp. 425–426.

¹¹⁵ Kirschbaum, "Michael Checinski. 'Poland,'" pp. 606–607.

¹¹⁶ Waław W. Soroka (1917–1999) – a Polish-American historian and a Second World War veteran, associated with the popular movement. In 1947, he left Poland and, since 1963, pursued a career at the University of Wisconsin. For more on Waław Soroka, see A. Indraszczyk, "Waław Soroka – ludowiec na emigracji: szkic biograficzny," *Niepodległość i Pamięć* 25/4 (2018), pp. 167–203.

ing dominated by anti-Semites was a false stereotype perpetuated at American universities.¹¹⁷

Until the 1990s, Chęciński's publications had been the chief source of information on the Kielce pogrom and thus impacted the incipient discussion on Polish-Jewish relations. An interesting example of their role is offered by a short mention and a comment about the pogrom made by Gershon David Hundert¹¹⁸ in his review of the book *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland*.¹¹⁹ Discussing anti-Semitism in Poland and mentioning the pogroms in Rzeszów, Cracow and Kielce, Hundert wrote that "Almost everyone who has studied these events agrees that the Soviet-instructed Secret police had a hand in their provocation, perhaps with a view to turning Western opinion against Poland."¹²⁰ As a scholar respected in the world, Hundert must have been at least convinced that he was right and must have had good reasons to claim that researchers familiar with the subject of pogroms had no reservations about Soviet involvement. Formulating this thought *expressis verbis* suggests, however, that different ideas prevailed among the researchers who were not so well-versed in the subject.¹²¹

Although Chęciński offered many profound insights into the pogrom, he is chiefly remembered as the author of the theory that the pogrom had been organised by the UB, personally by Władysław Sobczyński, as well as the source of information on "Przelot" and "Dyomin." Once old communist archives could be accessed, these claims were proven false, and the theory about the special significance of these elusive figures, as well as about the alleged provocation by the UB at the behest of Soviet secret services, was discredited.

¹¹⁷ Soroka, "A Book That Shocks," pp. 106, 109–111.

¹¹⁸ Gershon David Hundert (b. 1946) – a Canadian scholar of Jewish origin whose ancestors came from Poland. He studied the history of Polish Jews in late-modern times. For instance, the author and editor of many works on Jewish history is the editor-in-chief of the two-volume *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven–London, 2008). Between 2014 and 2018, he served as the president of the American Academy for Jewish Studies.

¹¹⁹ G.D. Hundert, "Review: M. Niezabitowska, T. Tomaszewski, 'Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland,' New York: Friendly Press, [1985], 272 pp.," *Polish Review* 32/4 (1987), pp. 459–462.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 459.

¹²¹ One cannot ignore the Cold War climate that was favourable to accusing East-Central European countries of anti-Semitism. In this case, however, the role of ordinary Poles would have been underscored, whereas Hundert accused outright Soviet secret services.

Aleksander Smolar, “Jews as a Polish Problem”

Another English-language publication on the Kielce pogrom, Aleksander Smolar's¹²² 1987 article in the prestigious *Daedalus*, is devoted to the history of Polish-Jewish relations.¹²³ The post-war period is described on ten pages, none of which is devoted to the account of the event itself.¹²⁴ What exactly happened in the Kielce pogrom interested its author far less than that it had happened at all. This is seen in his approach to the provocation theory, about which he remained quite sceptical. He believed that no evidence would be found that one of the sides of the political dispute – or both – was responsible for the pogrom and that inquiring who organised the massacre was pointless. A much more important question was how a pogrom might have occurred in a country where six million Jews had either perished or been murdered.¹²⁵

Trying to understand the causes of the pogrom, Smolar concentrated on the role of the Catholic Church in the entire event. Thus, he presented briefly the position of bishops: they were indifferent, did not condemn anti-Jewish acts and shifted the blame for violence onto Jewish communists. He further stressed that such views were held by such important personages as August Hlond, Czesław Kaczmarek and Stefan Wyszyński and contrasted them with the attitude of the Częstochowa Bishop, Teodor Kubina.¹²⁶ Smolar, therefore, advised the reader against generalising comments by bishops as the position of the entire clergy despite the negative and critical view of the Church.

In his discussion, Smolar took advantage mainly of comments by Polish intellectuals and the press. He also quoted publications strictly on the pogrom, such as studies by Chęciński and Shneiderman, the article by Krystyna Kersten and Marc Hillel's *Le massacre des Survivants: En Pologne 1945–1947*, published in 1985.¹²⁷

¹²² Aleksander Smolar (b. 1940) – a Polish feature writer and political activist of Jewish origin. Having been engaged in the March 1968 protests, he was arrested and expelled from Warsaw University. In 1971, he emigrated and served abroad as a spokesman for the Workers' Defence Committee. After the change of the political system, he returned home. From 1991 to 2020, he served as Chairman of the Board of the Stefan Batory Foundation. His father, Grzegorz Smolar, was a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of Polish Jews from 1946 to 1950.

¹²³ A. Smolar, “Jews as a Polish Problem,” *Daedalus* 116/2 (1987), pp. 31–73.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 45–55.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 45–49.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72. Smolar was sceptical about Hillel's book (Hillel, *Le massacre des Survivants*). In his opinion, it distorted many details, but he believed its general claims to be true.

Smolar's analysis of the pogrom was far from objective – a predetermined thesis being visible. Its central theme was the claim that the pogrom was perpetrated by “very ordinary men and women” and not “communists, secret police operatives or hated dignitaries.”¹²⁸ He failed to stress the role of militiamen and soldiers who took part in the lynching and shooting of the Jews. Having used the studies by Chęciński and Shneiderman,¹²⁹ he could not have been unaware that uniformed servicemen took part in the massacre. This distortion is even more significant as the article was published in the prestigious *Daedalus*. This certainly must have contributed to the popularity and weight of Smolar's claims.

Arieh Josef Kochavi, “The Catholic Church and Antisemitism in Poland Following World War II as Reflected in British Diplomatic Documents”

In 1989, Arieh Kochavi¹³⁰ published an article on the anti-Semitism of the Catholic Church in Poland as reflected in British diplomatic documents. It, too, carried a short but significant account of the pogrom,¹³¹ mentioning forty-seven Jews killed because of the accusation of kidnapping of a “Christian” boy. Kochavi did not go into the details of the pogrom but mentioned mutual accusations of organising the pogrom by the communists and the opposition and the fact that the Catholic Church was blamed for it. He wrote that “Polish hierarchs, unsurprisingly, rejected any guilt.”¹³²

Like many authors before him, Kochavi quoted the statement by August Hlond of 11 July 1946 and criticised it. This statement, as well as others made on other occasions, lacked, in the historian's opinion, any condemnation of the perpetrators and the belief in the myth of ritual murders. Kochavi also reminded readers of the

¹²⁸ Smolar, “Jews as a Polish Problem,” p. 49.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹³⁰ Arieh Josef Kochavi – an Israeli modern history scholar at the University of Haifa. The author of the famous work *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945–1948* (London, 2001), a part of which deals with the situation in post-war Poland, and of *Prelude to Nuremberg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment* (London, 1998).

¹³¹ A.J. Kochavi, “The Catholic Church and Antisemitism in Poland Following World War II as Reflected in British Diplomatic Documents,” *Gal-Ed* 11 (1989), pp. 116–128.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

throwing of a grenade into the Committee building a year earlier and the reaction of the local clergy to this incident.¹³³

Kochavi did not take a stance on the question of who had brought about the pogrom. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that for him, the theory about a provocation on the part of the anti-communist underground was as legitimate as others. Kochavi referred the reader to studies by Yehuda Bauer¹³⁴ Chęciński and Weinryb (all discussed in this article) and Israel Gutman¹³⁵ (written in Hebrew), as well as memoirs by David Kahane.¹³⁶

Abraham Brumberg, “Poland, the Polish Intelligentsia and Antisemitism”

A few comments on the pogrom were made also by Abraham Brumberg in his 1990 article.¹³⁷ He did not go into the details of the pogrom either but used it in his discussion of anti-Semitism among the Polish intelligentsia. Having quoted a comment by Andrzej Szczypiorski,¹³⁸ who considered the pogrom a provocation “no doubt,” Brumberg deemed it absurd. He maintained that no evidence had been found of the communists “instigating the massacre or Stalin planning it to justify a Soviet intervention”. He observed that even if the communist authorities produced the rumour that led to the pogrom, the pogrom was perpetrated by Poles.¹³⁹

Elsewhere in his article, Brumberg criticised the 1981 article on the pogrom by Krystyna Kersten¹⁴⁰ for excessive concentration on alleged pogrom organisers and insufficiently focusing on “why thousands of people could believe a rumour

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.

¹³⁴ Y. Bauer, *HaBerihah* (Tel Aviv, 1970). This is a Hebrew version of his book *Flight and Rescue*.

¹³⁵ I. Gutman, *HaYehudim beFolin aharei Milhemet ha'Olam haSheniyah* [The Jews in Poland after the Second World War] (Jerusalem, 1985).

¹³⁶ D. Kahane, *Aharei HaMabul [After Deluge]* (Jerusalem, 1981).

¹³⁷ Abraham Brumberg (1926–2008) – an American writer of Polish-Jewish descent. During the Second World War, he emigrated to the United States. His interests included the Jews of East-Central Europe and communist countries. Numerous American newspapers published his work, but this article did not gain much recognition (A. Brumberg, “Poland, the Polish Intelligentsia and Antisemitism,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 20/2–3 [1990], vol. 20, pp. 5–25).

¹³⁸ Andrzej Szczypiorski (1928–2000) – a Polish writer and politician associated with the popular movement. A Warsaw Rising veteran, anti-communist dissident, and member of the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society.

¹³⁹ Brumberg, “Poland,” p. 16.

¹⁴⁰ Kersten, “Kielce – 4 lipca 1946.”

about a ritual murder and start a day of indescribable massacre.” Moreover, he pointed out that she had left out the role of the Church and its failure to condemn anti-Semitism.¹⁴¹

Marion Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic and Anti-Jewish Attitudes in Post-Holocaust Poland*

References to the Kielce pogrom can be found in a 1992 book by Marion (Marian) Mushkat¹⁴² discussing philo- and anti-Semitism in post-war Poland.¹⁴³ Mushkat did not go into pogrom details but attempted to outline the complex background of the events. He mentioned, for instance, the collaboration of the Świętokrzyska Brigade with the Nazis or murders perpetrated by the NSZ. On the other hand, Mushkat wrote in detail about the communist actors of the pogrom, connections of Sobczyński to the NKVD and the rampant infiltration of the anti-communist underground by agents provocateurs who were prepared to murder Jews and public officials to gain credence in the eyes of the NSZ and thus penetrate the organisation deeper still.¹⁴⁴ Mushkat thus pointed out that the driving force of history, in this case, was not the opposition between good philo-Semites and bad anti-Semites but rather that its actors represented a broad spectrum of attitudes. Furthermore, given this background, the reader could realise that the Jews were an instrument taken advantage of by both sides of the political conflict in their propaganda war.

Despite leaving out the account of the pogrom itself, Mushkat wrote about the events following the pogrom: arrests of civilians, but also of Sobczyński, Kuźnicki (Kuzminski in the article) and Gwiazdowicz, a later promotion of the first of them,

¹⁴¹ Brumberg, “Poland,” p. 24.

¹⁴² Marion Mushkat (1909–1995) – a Polish lawyer of Jewish origin, specialising in international law and relations. From 1945 on, he was a member of the Polish Workers’ Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR), later the Polish United Workers’ Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR). After the Second World War, he worked at Warsaw University, but in 1957 emigrated to Israel and took up a position at Tel Aviv University. He authored many academic publications in many languages, most related to law.

¹⁴³ M. Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic and Anti-Jewish Attitudes in Post-Holocaust Poland* (Queenston–Lampeter, 1992). Ezra Mendelsohn was critical of the book, especially its language problems, overuse of names and personal data, to which Western readers were not used, and of an inadequate critical apparatus (E. Mendelsohn, “Reviewed Works: ‘Philo-Semitic and Anti-Jewish Attitudes in Post-Holocaust Poland’ by Marian Mushkat; ‘A Surplus of Memory. Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising’ by Yitzhak Zuckerman, transl. Barbara Harshav,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 72/3 [1994], p. 563).

¹⁴⁴ Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic*, pp. 140–142.

sentencing to death of “some murderers” and the strike of Łódź workers in reaction to their execution.¹⁴⁵ Mushkat stressed that the pogrom attracted the attention of not only Jews but also the world public opinion, at the same time diverting its attention away from the rigged referendum. Finally, it gave the communists a pretext to step up violence against the opposition.¹⁴⁶

In an attempt to answer the question of who was responsible for the pogrom, Mushkat cited the views of public officials, opposition activists and members of the intelligentsia on the subject to show the reader how ambiguous this event was and how variously it was interpreted.¹⁴⁷ In his opinion, the pogrom did not have an organiser, but “It was the result of the miscalculation of the Polish communists and the work of criminals, policemen, NSZ personnel and veteran anti-Semites.” In this way, he distinguished between provocateurs whose existence he disputed, groups that had created an atmosphere conducive to a pogrom and yet others who actively brought it about. In the second group, he included only the militia and UB, while the Catholic Church was blamed for too passive an attitude towards anti-Semitism.¹⁴⁸ Any provocations by either the NSZ or Soviets were rejected as having little credibility despite his very bad opinion of “NSZ criminals and bandits.”¹⁴⁹

For Mushkat, the Kielce pogrom was not an exceptional event but an instance of post-war anti-Jewish violence “[...] as if in continuation of their plan for a ‘final solution of the Jewish question.’”¹⁵⁰ In his opinion, the source of dislike for the Jews was the nationalism of both anti-communist forces and a part of Polish communists themselves.¹⁵¹ He did not segregate people into good communists and bad Fascists because the very root of evil was ethnocentrism he believed, accepted by some Poles regardless of their political views.

Although Mushkat extensively commented on the pogrom without giving any account of it, he barely cited any publications. Instead, he did quote detailed ones concerning the matters he had selected. The work of Shneiderman must have

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 141–143.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 137–138, 141–142.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 137–138, 142–143.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

been known to him, at least partially, but he did not quote it when commenting on the pogrom. By contrast, he referred the reader to a master's thesis written on the pogrom by Bożena Szaynok and that its central part was to be delivered at the conference *Pogrom in Kielce* in Tel Aviv in December 1991. It reputedly contained the thesis that the local population was to blame for the Kielce pogrom. However, it should be noted that Mushkat did not quote Bożena Szaynok's publications from 1992.¹⁵²

Bożena Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews in Kielce, July 4, 1946"

The last English-language publication before 1992 on the Kielce pogrom was Bożena Szaynok's article, a version of her master's thesis.¹⁵³ Except for Michał Chęciński's article, it was the only publication exclusively on the massacre at that time.

Szaynok gave a detailed account of the pogrom, beginning with Henryk Błaszczyk going missing on 1 July 1946 and his parents reacting to the disappearance. Using witness testimonies, she gave various versions of where the boy stayed between 1 and 3 July, herself opting for Pielaki. In this context, she found the alleged conversation of Shneiderman with Henryk not to be credible because, in her opinion, the boy was taught the story of being kidnapped and Jewish rituals only after his return.¹⁵⁴

Next, the account goes on to mention the formation of a mob, Seweryn Kahane's intervention with the militia, a search for murdered children, the arrival of troops at 7 Planty Street, entry of militiamen and troops into the Committee building, seizure of firearms and the start of the massacre.¹⁵⁵ Further, accounts of the start of the shooting inside the Committee building are extensively discussed, as are ones on the mob joining in the massacre. The use of firearms in self-defence by the Jews, they being cast out by the militiamen and soldiers into the mob,¹⁵⁶ discussions and

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁵³ Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews," pp. 199–235. The article is based on her published master's thesis, see Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów*.

¹⁵⁴ Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews," pp. 199–202. It is worth noting that the latest book on the Kielce pogrom by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir does not discuss the question of Henryk's absence but presents its author's version as absolutely sure (Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*, pp. 80–97).

¹⁵⁵ Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews," pp. 204–211.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 211–216.

communications between various officials and commanding officers about what to do in the face of the pogrom, and confusion caused by their indecisiveness¹⁵⁷ as well as murders elsewhere in Kielce¹⁵⁸ are all discussed in detail. Finally, the article gives the number of dead as forty-two and the list of victims of the pogrom.¹⁵⁹

Bożena Szaynok's article was the first to provide a detailed account of the pogrom and a landmark in the study of the subject. It was also the first to quote communist sources and so extensively discuss the participation of uniformed services in the pogrom. However, these merits that made Szaynok's article so exceptional made it difficult for non-Polish speaking readers. Long quotes and a detailed narrative featuring numerous names and positions produced information noise that readers used to a different tradition of academic writing found hard to struggle through. To make matters worse, a broader backdrop of the pogrom, introduction and summary were missing from the article to the disadvantage of non-Polish readers unfamiliar with the local context, which they would greatly benefit from by being able to follow the narrative with far less effort.¹⁶⁰

The reasons for this form of the article may include the desire to render the story of the pogrom as objectively as possible and present the knowledge transpiring from communist archives made accessible after 1989 as accurately as possible. It has to be remembered that this article was the first such serious and detailed study of the Kielce pogrom both in Poland¹⁶¹ and abroad.¹⁶² A clear favouring of one of the interpretations would have met with criticism, while the form of the

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 216–219, 222–223.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 220–221, 230–234.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 234–235.

¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the account of events preceding the massacre itself takes up almost one-third of the text (*ibid.*, pp. 199–211). The readability of a work is crucial, as illustrated by the comparison of the popularity of Szaynok's article and Jan Tomasz Gross's *Fear*, which, despite its lesser particularity, dominated how the pogrom was represented in the public mind in later years (J.T. Gross, *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz* [New York, 2006], pp. 81–166). It must be stressed, however, that some non-Polish authors with knowledge of the Polish language, instead of this article, quoted Szaynok's book *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*. A similar conflict between objectivity and text readability was probably faced by Michał Chęciński, whose study was mentioned in this article.

¹⁶¹ Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów*. The same year saw the publication of annotated source documents on the pogrom, edited by Stanisław Meducki and Zenon Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946. Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 1 (Kielce 1992).

¹⁶² This is to mean the content of published works and not the knowledge itself of their authors on the pogrom.

article prevented the author from adding a lengthy commentary or a discussion of the credibility of particular source types.¹⁶³ The last-mentioned question was so important that “for the Western world, Communism was an experience that never happened.”¹⁶⁴

Surprising as this may seem, despite the excellent empirical work done in the article, it is not free from inaccuracies. *Exempli gratia*, in the beginning, it gives the number of pogrom casualties as forty-two Jews – without mentioning any Poles¹⁶⁵ – while at the end – as forty-four of which forty-two were killed in the pogrom itself, including two Poles, and two that died in hospital.¹⁶⁶ The first number may, in fact, have been given by the editors of the *Yad Vashem Studies*.

Szaynok relied, above all, on Polish documents produced by communist secret services. The information they provided was compared with and supplemented by the non-polish relations: Shneiderman,¹⁶⁷ Cytron,¹⁶⁸ Shtokfish¹⁶⁹ and Bliss-Lane.¹⁷⁰ She did not refer, however, to the publications mentioned above or the press other than Polish except for one occasion, where a fragment of the pogrom account from Chęciński's book is quoted but without his commentary.¹⁷¹ As a result, the article lacks a clear author's stance on the pogrom theories discussed in non-Polish publications for almost half a century. Neither does it assess the output of Western researchers in the light of discoveries made by its author.

What else made Bożena Szaynok's article exceptional was an entirely different view of the pogrom. She studied it as a unique event and confined her interpretation to related matters. Meanwhile, non-Polish researchers working at that time treated the pogrom as an element of a greater whole while its course was often

¹⁶³ It must be remembered that the article was written in 1992 when the study of records left by various communist authorities was only beginning. Therefore, the absence of a broader criticism of sources should be treated as the characteristic of the times and not a deficiency of the author's research technique.

¹⁶⁴ É. Kovács, “Limits of Universalization: The European Memory Sites of Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 20/4 (2018), p. 498.

¹⁶⁵ Szaynok, “The Pogrom of Jews,” p. 199.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 201, 222.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 211–212, 214, 216–217, 227, 234–235.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 212–213, 215, 235.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216. Curiously enough, Szaynok spotlighted the figure of Władysław Sobczyński in the pogrom as did Chęciński and yet did not comment on his publications and opinions (*ibid.*, pp. 207–209, 217–220, 224–227).

left out. For this reason, presumably, Szaynok focused on the immediate causes of the massacre and not a general setting which could have induced people to perpetrate a crime. Therefore, the article lacks any references to the role played by the Catholic Church and the anti-communist underground in contrast to works by foreign authors where such references are frequent.

Bożena Szaynok's article and her study published in Poland marked the end of the first period of pogrom studies in which the massacre was thought of chiefly as an instance of anti-Jewish violence, and the press stories and testimonies of surviving Jews were the only available sources. Szaynok's article was the first and the only serious publication on the pogrom by an author working in Poland. It resounded in international academic literature and showed that any further study of the massacre – and not only – was impossible without using communist archives. Moreover, Szaynok showed that the study of the Kielce pogrom called for an enormous amount of empirical work and that its interpretation merely as a sign of anti-Semitism was inadequate.

Image of the Pogrom

Although from the pogrom in 1946 to 1992 almost half a century had lapsed, the massacre noticeably did not attract any special interest of English-speaking researchers.¹⁷² Moreover, only two publications dealt specifically with the pogrom,¹⁷³ while others only mentioned it, albeit in some cases quite extensively. The reason in this case probably being the fact that for the people of those turbulent and belligerent times, a pogrom in a provincial Central-European city could not represent a particularly spectacular event.¹⁷⁴ It was commonly believed therefore

¹⁷² Mushkat noticed this by observing that the pogrom “until now has been mentioned only in passing” (Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic*, pp. 137). He may have thus referred to the studies by Bożena Szaynok (*ibid.*, p. 137).

¹⁷³ Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” Szaynok, “The Pogrom of Jews.”

¹⁷⁴ Now, an opposite tendency is noticeable. In the seventy years since the Holocaust, it has become one of many mass murders described – next to the Holodomor in Ukraine, the Armenian Genocide or the Ruanda Genocide – in publications on world history. For that matter, the period in question witnessed other more severe incidents in which the criterion of division into victims and murderers was ethnicity. Among such incidents were the Sétif and Guelma massacre on 8 May 1945, the Deir Yassin massacre on 9 April 1948, the Kafr Qasim massacre on 29 October 1956 and the Paris massacre on 17 October 1961. Therefore, the Kielce pogrom could be viewed by the general public as one of many acts of mass violence after the Second World War. Lately, however, the Kielce pogrom has attracted increasing interest from regionalist historians and is discussed in the context of the Poles' self-perception.

to have been yet another instance and summation of Polish anti-Semitism: “the most gruesome,”¹⁷⁵ but still a “typical” pogrom.¹⁷⁶ What could be seen as special about it, though, was its scale and the fact that it was openly perpetrated in broad daylight.¹⁷⁷ More interest than the pogrom itself was aroused by the question how it was possible that a year after the war had ended – during which several million Jews perished – in the country that became a vortex of death and desolation and, at the same time, one of the principal victims of an appalling military conflagration, a several-hour-long massacre could happen in broad daylight with the participation of ordinary residents in a city where the bishop was based.¹⁷⁸

Initially, the reason why the pogrom attracted little interest could have been general indifference to all matters Jewish until the 1960s when Adolf Eichman was captured and tried in Jerusalem.¹⁷⁹ With time, the knowledge of those events diminished. After Weinryb’s work, seventeen years had to pass until 1970 before the pogrom reappeared – in a book by Yehuda Bauer only loosely connected to the history of Poland. In the first quarter of a century, only a single short publication on the pogrom came out, while since the 1970s, interest in the subject has noticeably increased.

One of the reasons for the change in the dynamics could have been a Cold War propaganda contest between the so-called free world and the Eastern Bloc. A need then arose for the negative presentation of the East and defence of the “democratic” West, for instance, by an instrumental treatment of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations.¹⁸⁰ The pogrom ideally suited the purpose of perpetuating the myth of “traditional Polish anti-Semitism” and helped show that a dislike for the Jews afflicted primitive communist countries and not “civilised ones.”

¹⁷⁵ Weinryb, “Poland,” p. 252.

¹⁷⁶ Dobroszycki, “Restoring Jewish Life,” p. 67.

¹⁷⁷ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 208; Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” p. 57.

¹⁷⁸ To the socio-historical backdrop of the pogrom, special attention is given by Yehuda Bauer (Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, pp. 206, 208; *id.*, *The Jewish Emergence*, p. 65). This question resounds strongly in Smolar’s article (Smolar, “Jews as a Polish Problem,” pp. 45–46, 48–49).

¹⁷⁹ Kovács, “Limits of Universalization,” p. 494; S. Stach, “‘It Was the Poles’ or How Emanuel Ringelblum Was Instrumentalized by Expellees in West Germany. On the History of the Book Ghetto Warschau: Tagebücher aus dem Chaos,” *Czech Journal of Contemporary History* 6 (2018), pp. 42–43, 61.

¹⁸⁰ H. Maischein, “The Historicity of the Witness: The Polish Relationship to Jews and Germans in the Polish Memory Discourse of the Holocaust,” in *Jews and Germans in Eastern Europe. Shared and Comparative Histories*, ed. by T. Grill (Berlin–Boston, 2018), pp. 221–223; S. Stach, “‘It Was the Poles.’”

The treatment of the Kielce massacre as predominantly an instance of the Polish dislike for the Jews perfectly filled the bill.¹⁸¹ Last but not least, the inclination of Western historians to identify with victims and ignore the causes and context of events contributed to the bias.¹⁸²

This explanation, however, seems inadequate. Most historians who studied the pogrom were of Jewish descent (Weinryb, Dobroszycki, Chęciński and Smolar were Polish Jews, Brumberg spent his childhood in Poland while Bauer and Kochavi came from Israel), five emigrated from Poland (Weinryb, Dobroszycki, Chęciński, Smolar and Mushkat), of whom three left Poland in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Dobroszycki, Chęciński, Smolar) and three maintained relations with the communist authorities in Poland in the past (Dobroszycki,¹⁸³ Chęciński¹⁸⁴ and Mushkat¹⁸⁵). Although the climate was favourable to writing emphasising anti-Semitism in Poland, there were no British or American, German or French authors who would publish on this subject in prestigious American or British journals. Nor were there any ethnic Poles who would take a closer look at the pogrom after leaving the country. Hence, the question can be asked why an event that was considered a manifestation of anti-Semitism was studied by those whose people had suffered a greater tragedy than the Shoah and did not arouse any interest of historians who were not personally involved in Polish-Jewish relations.

¹⁸¹ For more on the stereotypical presentation of Poles as primitive anti-Semitic churls, see D. Goska, *Biegański. Stereotyp Polaka bydlaka w stosunkach polsko-żydowskich i amerykańskiej kulturze popularnej* (Cracow, 2015). This stereotype probably persists to an extent to this day. J. Tokarska-Bakir called the July 1946 events in Kielce a “low-tech massacre”. She did not explain why the inclusion in the “low-tech” category should matter for its victims and how it helped to understand the pogrom better. What she did, however, was to characterise the tools – simple household objects – used to kill people. Her description failed to mention, however, that some victims were stabbed to death with bayonets or shot with firearms that can hardly be called primitive technology. Such a description paints the picture of Kielce residents as primitive churls and defines them as the major group of perpetrators responsible for the massacre (J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*, pp. 60–61). Tomasz Domański observed that the authors of *Dalej jest noc* referred to village residents during the German occupation as *wieśniak/wieśniacy* – terms that have pejorative connotations in Polish (T. Domański, *Korekta obrazu?*, p. 303).

¹⁸² T. Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York 2010), p. 399.

¹⁸³ A. Czyżewski, “Lucjan Dobroszycki (1925–1995) – zapomniany historyk (nie tylko) Zagłady,” *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* 1 (2022), vol. 67, pp. 12 ff.

¹⁸⁴ Michał Chęciński was a commissioned officer in the Polish People’s Army, associated with counterintelligence.

¹⁸⁵ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięi Narodowej [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, hereinafter AIPN], 2386/15141, Information on the conduct of selected (former) higher state officials who emigrated to Israel, Warsaw, 21 September 1959, pp. 32–33.

A partial answer is the language barrier,¹⁸⁶ but a more convincing one is the very experience of the Holocaust. Although the Kielce pogrom was one of the many momentous events in the history of the world at that time, for many Jews, it was the end of their community in Poland and the last large pogrom of Jews in European history.¹⁸⁷ It was also a signal that despite the egalitarian slogans proclaimed by the communists, the Poland they ruled was not a friendly place for Jews, with the ultimate proof being the Kielce pogrom followed by the March of 1968.¹⁸⁸ Thus, the pogrom became an integral part of Jewish history, especially of the Jewish minority in Poland, as well as the final paroxysm of the Holocaust – and thus its part; it also represented a major stage on the road to the foundation of Israel. It was this last-named aspect that made the pogrom interesting to researchers of Jewish origin but not so to Western ones. Not insignificant was the fact that some saw the massacre victims as not only people or Jews but also Holocaust survivors.¹⁸⁹

If this is true, it would mean that for the first half a century, the Kielce pogrom was viewed from a pre-set perspective, while what motivated the researchers was emotions and questions of identity. This would also explain why no researcher, even Michał Chęciński, was interested in reconstructing the course of the

¹⁸⁶ Researchers who spoke only congress languages would not have been able to avail themselves fully of sources in Polish, Hebrew and Yiddish or to talk to witnesses. For this reason, they would have sourced their knowledge on the pogrom, mainly from Shneiderman's book and English-language newspapers that contained communist propaganda. However, specialists in Polish or Jewish history could be expected to know, at least to a degree, the languages they needed for their research. There have been no publications of sources concerning the Kielce pogrom translated into English. The first such publication will probably be the translation of the second volume of *Pod klątwą* by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir.

¹⁸⁷ Albeit not the last instance of anti-Jewish riots. In late July and early August 1947, the so-called Sergeants affair broke out in Palestine and the United Kingdom. The Jewish militant organisation Irgun kidnapped two British soldiers and threatened to kill them if the British authorities would execute three members of the organisation captured earlier. Carrying out their threat, Irgun militants killed the soldiers, triggering anti-Jewish riots by British people and soldiers in Tel Aviv and the United Kingdom.

¹⁸⁸ In the wake of the March 1968 incidents, Aleksander Smolar, for one, was expelled from a university.

¹⁸⁹ The aspects of the Holocaust, its survivors and the pogrom are linked by: Weinryb, "Poland," pp. 247–253; Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 206; *id.*, *The Jewish Emergence*, p. 43; Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life," pp. 66–67. Chęciński, in his article, does not refer to the Holocaust in the context of the pogrom, although a mention to this effect does appear in his book, in the introduction to the Kielce events (Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," p. 57; *id.*, *Poland*, p. 21; Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic*, p. 264). The question thus should be asked if the treatment of pogrom victims as Holocaust survivors contributes anything to the discussion of the pogrom or if it is merely a rhetorical device.

pogrom,¹⁹⁰ and greater interest was aroused by the fact that the pogrom occurred in the first place.

Although the simplified view of the pogrom found in the literature on the subject fitted well the stereotype of the anti-Semitic Pole, the source of ascribing dislike for the Jews to the Poles *en masse* lay elsewhere. It followed from the adopted perspective and perhaps from researchers' own experience or the authors they availed themselves of. The same factor, therefore, made researchers of Jewish origin alone study the pogrom but also view it in a specific way. The origin of the pogrom researchers and authors of testimonies related to it made them more credible to the Western elites than the Poles, who were entangled in a political struggle and accused of anti-Semitism. They were lent more credence still by the simple fact that it was the Jews who mostly perished in the pogrom in contrast to Poles, its perpetrators.¹⁹¹ Then again, however, it must be remembered that the

¹⁹⁰ A lack of sources can hardly explain the reluctance to reconstruct the course of the pogrom. Michał Chęciński talked to well-informed people about the pogrom but simplified the account of events. The course of the pogrom was, in fact, reconstructed using interviews with its witnesses by Marc Hillel (M. Hillel, *Le massacre des Survivants*, pp. 256–281). Dispersed information could also be found in American newspapers and recorded testimonies of the Kielce Jews (Cytron, *Sefer Kielce*, pp. 253–258; D. Shtokfish, *Al betenu she-harav-Fun der khorever heym* [About our house which was devastated] [Tel Aviv, 1981], pp. 64–66). Foreign archives held resources usable in the study of the pogrom, as shown by Kochavi's article, containing copies of documents related to the Kielce pogrom. Unfortunately, they were not used in the account of the pogrom given there. The documents he found have not been used by the other researchers (Kochavi, "The Catholic Church"). Antony Polonsky, likewise, included copies of pogrom-related documents in his article but did not give any account of the massacre; they, too, have not resurfaced in later publications (A. Polonsky, "Jews in Eastern Europe after World War II: Documents from the British Foreign Office," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 10/1 [1980], pp. 52–70). In the collection of American diplomacy documents, several sources refer to the Kielce pogrom (*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, vol. 6: *Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union*, ed. by R. Churchill and W. Slany [Washington, 1969], pp. 478–480, 483–484). Adolf Berman's report is worth mentioning among Israeli archive holdings as it concerns the Kielce pogrom; it can be found in the Ghetto Fighters' House. It was quoted in part in the 2004 book by Arnon Rubin (A. Rubin, *Facts and Fictions about the Rescue of the Polish Jewry during the Holocaust*, vol. 6: *The Kielce Pogrom. Spontaneity, Provocation or Part of a Country-Wide Scheme?* [Tel Aviv, 2004], pp. 310–313). Rubin's copy was included by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir in her most recent book on the pogrom (Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*, vol. 2: *Dokumenty*, pp. 113–116). The last-mentioned author, despite the significance of the report, left out its fragments, distorted its contents and did not reach the original, which had one more page (Ghetto Fighters House Archives, 11248/3, The July 4, 1946 pogrom in Kielce: reports, correspondence, responses, and excerpts from the press, fols 1–6). All these records show that during the Cold War, information that could help reconstruct the pogrom was still available.

¹⁹¹ A similar view was taken of the credibility of Jewish relations concerning the pogrom itself. Communists were believed to deserve little credence, while the opposition and the Church were accused of anti-Semitism. Hence, the most credible information source from the point of view of Western observers

pogrom, and Polish anti-Semitism in its context, was in most cases only one of several subjects discussed by the historians. They could have used widespread stereotypes themselves, as would suggest a limited number of source references in pogrom accounts written by some researchers, and due to the failure to go into details and only cursory study of the pogrom, perpetuate the stereotypes.

The above interpretation of publications on the pogrom raises a major doubt. Suppose the massacre in Kielce was pictured as an episode of Jewish history. Why was it written only in the 1970s and later, and not right after it occurred when memories were the freshest and public interest the greatest? Perhaps, an answer to this question can be found in the studies by Audrey Kichelewski, who observed that among the Jews who emigrated from Poland to France, two attitudes could be noticed. Those who left in 1946 did not feel attached to Poland, while for those who left in 1956, and especially in 1968, Poland was part of their identity and history, inspiring love or hatred for itself.¹⁹² Therefore, such a phenomenon and emotions stirred up by the past could be responsible for the motivation of some scholars studying the subjects in which the theme of the pogrom was present. Moreover, a delay in the study of the pogrom could have also been caused by the fact that migrating pogrom witnesses had to re-establish themselves in new environments and cope with the trauma caused by it and the Holocaust alike.

Sources

One of the characteristics of early publications on the pogrom was the limited use of source material. The most-quoted one was the book by Shneiderman,¹⁹³

was the Jews, apparently politically neutral victims of the massacre. It is very likely for this reason that the American ambassador to Poland, Arthur Bliss-Lane, in a telegram to the Secretary of State, wrote in the context of the pogrom about his “best Jewish sources” (“The Ambassador in Poland [Lane] to the Secretary of State, Warsaw, July 15, 1946,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, vol. 6, p. 479).

¹⁹² A. Kichelewski, “In or Out? Identities and Images of Poland among Polish Jews in the Postwar Years,” in *New Directions in the History of the Jews in the Polish Lands*, ed. by A. Polonsky, H. Węgrzynek, and A. Żbikowski (Boston, 2018), pp. 475–476.

¹⁹³ Weinryb, “Poland,” pp. 319–320; Dobroszycki did mention it, but not in the context of the pogrom (Dobroszycki, “Restoring Jewish Life,” p. 70; Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” p. 72; *id.*, *Poland*, p. 33; Smolar, “Jews as a Polish Problem,” p. 72). Bauer must have used it or gained knowledge of it from someone who knew it, which is attested by the information about the killing of Seweryn Kahane by the mob and not soldiers (Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 208). Kochavi quotes the works of the authors mentioned above who relied on the information included in Shneiderman’s book (Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, p. 116; Szaynok, “The Pogrom of Jews,” pp. 201, 222).

whereas the other sources and relations were quoted far less frequently. Some researchers made use of interviews with eyewitnesses. This was undoubtedly done by Yehuda Bauer and Michał Chęciński¹⁹⁴ and probably by Weinryb,¹⁹⁵ although the last-named author did not inform about this in his publication. Although only Weinryb's chapter was written before the 1957 publication of *Sefer Kielce* and Shtokfish's book came out in 1981, the memoirs of Jews concerning Kielce met with limited interest from historians.¹⁹⁶ Only Szaynok and Chęciński included extensive bibliographies of the pogrom in their respective works, whereas the others did not go beyond earlier narratives. At best, they supplemented them with materials that were easily accessible to them. For example, the authors who had left Poland used Polish newspapers,¹⁹⁷ while Israeli researchers – the relation of Dawid Kahane.¹⁹⁸ Except for Szaynok, they did not undertake an archival search for possible pogrom-related materials either.

The limited choice of literature and sources did not result from a language barrier.¹⁹⁹ This testifies to the conviction prevalent at that time that there was nothing else to be discovered about the pogrom²⁰⁰ and would also explain the limited interest in the event shown by scholars. The main lines of interpretation were set as it seems not by researchers but by the first reports of the pogrom

¹⁹⁴ Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," pp. 61, 72.

¹⁹⁵ The information he gives goes beyond the scope of the publications he quotes. See the section on his book.

¹⁹⁶ Szaynok extensively quotes *Al betenu she-harav-Fun der khorever heym* by Shtokfish (Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews," pp. 204, 212–213, 215, 235), and even more extensively – *Sefer Kielce* by Cytron (*ibid.*, pp. 204, 211–212, 214, 216–217, 227, 234–235). *Sefer Kielce* was used by Chęciński, too (Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," p. 72). Smolar does not quote the above publications but notices instead the French-language publication by Marc Hillel (Smolar, "Jews as a Polish Problem," p. 72).

¹⁹⁷ Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," p. 72; *id.*, *Poland*, p. 33; Smolar, "Jews as a Polish Problem," pp. 71–73.

¹⁹⁸ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, s. 344; Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 116–117. Kahane was also quoted by Weinryb (*id.*, "Poland," p. 249).

¹⁹⁹ Most of the researchers were of Jewish descent, many came from Poland, and all discussed articles were written in English.

²⁰⁰ This view prevailed also in Poland, in the opinion of Krystyna Kersten. In the introduction to Bożena Szaynok's 1992 book *Pogrom Żydów*, Kersten claims that "the reluctance to undertake the study of the history of the Kielce pogrom stemmed from the view that after the publications on this subject that had come out outside Poland, there was nothing new to be said, everything was known. A mistaken view for even a cursory review of relevant sources showed clearly that we knew nothing about the mechanism of the massacre and that the issues underlying the tragedy and its situational context called for a more thorough study" (Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów*, p. 7).

in the press,²⁰¹ relations of Jews fleeing Poland²⁰² and the book by Samuel Leib Shneiderman.²⁰³ It was from there that three recurrent *topoi* emerged to be encountered later in research:²⁰⁴ the anti-communist underground was strong and anti-Semitic,²⁰⁵ the Catholic Church was influential, anti-Semitic and re-

²⁰¹ The American press abundantly drew information on the massacre from official communist propaganda supplied by Wiktor Grosz. See J. Tyszkiewicz, "The Pogrom in Kielce as Reported by Opinion-Making US Newspapers in 1946," *Polish Jewish Studies* 3 (2022), pp. 262–276.

²⁰² The experience of the Holocaust, post-war violence and the necessity to leave the country must have no doubt left an impact on how the Jews perceived the Poles and, consequently, the pogrom (K. Kersten, "Pogrom of Jews in Kielce on July 4, 1946," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 76 [1997], p. 197). Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that some members of the Jewish community purposefully exaggerated the threat of violence and pogroms, shaping thus the opinion of Poland in the world. David Kahane mentioned earlier reputedly said while abroad that "the Polish government has the best intentions, but it is not able to control the situation because seventy, eighty per cent of the Polish nation is overcome with anti-Semitic venom." He also accused General Anders and his followers of the perpetration of murders of Jews. The communist authorities pressurised him in relation to slogans he proclaimed abroad, probably using the evidence of embezzlement of Jewish Religious Congress funds he was entrusted with against him. They also charged him with purposeful exaggeration of the threat of pogroms and the scale of anti-Jewish violence. Finally, he was characterised as "being officially favourably disposed to People's Poland, while in fact, he was its masked enemy" (AIPN, 0192/28, Memo, Warsaw, 19 January 1947, pp. 29–30; *ibid.*, Agent Report, [no place], early 1947, pp. 35–36; *ibid.*, Note, 13 August 1947, p. 39; *ibid.*, Profile of Kahane, Dawid, [no place, no date], c. 1948, p. 169). Kahane himself was a Zionist and, in conversations with the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States, criticised the communists and opposed the assimilation of Jews (M. Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland, 1944–50* [London–New York, 2009], p. 70 and endnote 58 on page 164; see Ghetto Fighters House Archives 15184rm, Testimony of Rabbi David Kahane, fols 1–11).

²⁰³ Shneiderman's *Between Fear and Hope* contains many distortions of the picture of post-war Poland. He was a well-known American journalist of Polish-Jewish descent, witness of the Spanish Civil War and promoter of Yiddish, writing about Poland. Sympathising with socialist views, he was probably intentionally used by the communist authorities to spread the propaganda image of Poland under communist rule. With respect to the years 1945–1946, his dossier reads: "In 45–46 [...] the above-named [S.L. Shneiderman] contacted Polish People's Republic's diplomatic personnel in the USA and as Com. Oskar Lange says, 'he rendered us very great services with his work and contacts'. Com. Litauer writes about the above-named: 'He is sincerely devoted to the new democratic Poland; he worked with us in America'. What the merits and collaboration consisted in, we do not know" (AIPN, 01136/17, Report, Warsaw, 14 December 1955, p. 14). Faced with the discredit of the communist authorities and their failure to fulfil egalitarian promises made to the Jews, he became a critic of Poland's political system, as could be seen, for instance, in his book *The Warsaw Heresy* (New York, 1959). The book was re-published by Sagwan Press in 2015.

²⁰⁴ This article does not discuss the legitimacy of charges made in the press and Shneiderman's book or in publications of other authors. Szaynok's article does not contain any of the leading topics named earlier, but its author does not make her narrative overly general with respect to the pogrom and does not relate to foreign historical writings on the pogrom, focusing solely on a detailed account of what happened.

²⁰⁵ Weinryb, "Poland," pp. 248–249, 252–253; Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, pp. 113–115, 209; Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life," pp. 68–69; Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," pp. 60, 71; Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence*, p. 65; Chęciński, *Poland*, p. 31; Smolar, "Jews as a Polish Problem," pp. 50, 70; Mush-

mained passive with respect to anti-Semitism,²⁰⁶ and the communist authorities were well-disposed to the Jews, but were too weak to defend them.²⁰⁷ Fi-

kat, *Philo-Semitic*, pp. 138, 140–142, 244. See also: R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1945–1948* (Kielce, 2002). For the organisation of anti-communist forces and accusations of organising the pogrom levelled against them see *id.*, “Pogrom w Kielcach – podziemie w roli oskarżonego,” in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, pp. 25–74. The opinion of the omnipotence of partisan units in the vicinity of Kielce, researchers believe, can be traced to communist propaganda and probably was an element in an intelligence game. A July 1947 report of the American intelligence, “Survey of the Illegal Opposition in Poland,” is worth quoting in this context. It says that in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, “The population is as much controlled by the Partisans as by the government. There, even those elements which otherwise would be inimical are kept in line by fear of the Partisans.” It continues by saying that the Kielce area was one of the regions with the highest concentration of partisan units. Supposedly, “Szary” was still active there with his 7,000–8,000 men (Archives of the Central Intelligence Agency, General CIA Records, CIA-RDP82-00457R000500200011-6, Survey of the Illegal Opposition in Poland, [no place], 1 August 1947, pp. 3–4, 6). Actually, Antoni Heda, nom de guerre “Szary,” ceased his operations after the attack on the prison in Kielce on 5 August 1945. It is estimated that due to the amnesty announced on 22 February 1947, 1,100–1,800 partisans – in total in Poland – stayed in the woods by the spring. From January 1946 to April 1947, the number of partisans stayed below 450 in the Kielce Voivodeship. Only a tiny percentage belonged to the National Armed Forces, and a majority of the partisans were concentrated not in the Kielce area but in the vicinity of Radom (*Atlas Polskiego Podziemia Niepodległościowego, 1944–1956*, ed. by R. Wnuk, S. Poleszak, A. Jaczyńska, and M. Śladecka [Warszawa–Lublin, 2007], pp. XXXII, 523–524).

²⁰⁶ Weinryb, “Poland,” pp. 249–250; Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, pp. 209–211; Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 58, 60, 71; Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence*, pp. 43, 65; Chęciński, *Poland*, pp. 21–22, 33–34; Smolar, “Jews as a Polish Problem,” pp. 52–55; Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 116–119; Brumberg, “Poland,” p. 15. The last-named author faulted Krystyna Kersten for not discussing this subject in her 1981 article (*ibid.*, p. 24; Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic*, pp. 142–143). Jan Żaryn argued against the thesis about the anti-Semitic and passive Church (J. Żaryn, “Hierarchia Kościoła katolickiego wobec relacji polsko-żydowskich w latach 1945–1947,” in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, pp. 75–110). Worthy of note is the fact that the conviction about the Church’s ability to influence Polish post-war society was adopted *a priori*, while the statements of particular hierarchs illustrated its alleged anti-Semitism and passiveness.

²⁰⁷ Weinryb, “Poland,” p. 253; Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, pp. 113–114, 219–220; Dobroszycki, “Restoring Jewish Life,” pp. 60–61, 63, 70. Dobroszycki also observed that communists could be anti-Semites and contribute to violence at a local level (*ibid.*, p. 68). Michał Chęciński argued against the thesis about the weakness of the communist authorities in Kielce in 1946, which also suggests that he must have heard such an opinion after leaving Poland (Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 66–70; Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence*, pp. 64–65). In his book, Chęciński informed about the increasing impression that the authorities were weak but did not comment on whether the impression was right (Chęciński, *Poland*, p. 31; Smolar, “Jews as a Polish Problem,” p. 60; Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, p. 116). An elaborate opinion on the communist authorities in the context of the pogrom was given by Mushkat. On the one hand, he pointed out the anti-Semitism of some communists (Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic*, pp. 143, 264); on the other hand, he showed what assistance Jews received after the war (*ibid.*, p. 186). He also observed that the communist authorities were not weak and had the support of the Soviet Army (*ibid.*, p. 266). For the instrumental treatment of the Jewish question by the communist authorities, see M. Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland*. The strength and efficiency of the communist authorities and their enforcement tools are attested by the effective rigging of the referendum results on 30 June 1946 and the preceding crackdown on the opposition.

nally, the statement by August Hlond of 11 July 1946 was regularly referred to as well.²⁰⁸

Details

Early publications on the pogrom showed little interest in its details. Even though contradicting and unreliable information could be found in the press and other sources, researchers did not compare or verify it with other sources. The distinction between the mob, militia and army was often obliterated, and it did not matter who murdered the Jews – the perpetrators were Poles motivated by their anti-Semitism.²⁰⁹ What is more, all these publications skirted the issue of Soviet troops and did not ask any questions about their absence/presence during the massacre that lasted several hours.²¹⁰ Only Chęciński's works brought into discussion the theme of Soviet secret services and showed what a mysterious event the pogrom was. In contrast, Szaynok showed that treating particular groups as a uniform mass was quite wrong.²¹¹

Similarly, the issue of Henryk Błaszczyk's absence between 1 and 3 July did not interest researchers much. A terse and simplified account of Henryk's disappearance is strange as much as they could access at least one attractive and

²⁰⁸ Weinryb, "Poland," p. 250; Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, pp. 210–211; Chęciński, *Poland*, p. 22; Smolar, "Jews as a Polish Problem," p. 53; Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 116–117.

²⁰⁹ This point of view was excellently expressed by Abraham Brumberg. In his opinion, a potential provocation on the part of communist authorities did not alter the fact that "Who, if not thousands of Poles descended upon the survivors of Auschwitz and Treblinka with axe and knife on the strength of a rumour that Jews had committed 'ritual murder'?" (Brumberg, "Poland," p. 16. Likewise, Smolar, "Jews as a Polish Problem," p. 49).

²¹⁰ The issue of Soviet troops was not raised in press reports on the pogrom or Shneiderman's book. Jechiel Alpert reportedly informed the reporter about the participation of Polish soldiers in the pogrom, but he mentioned it only perfunctorily. The question of whether Alpert brought to Shneiderman's attention the total passiveness of soldiers faced with the pogrom a few days after the rigged referendum remains open (see Testimony of witness Jechiel Alpert before the Court of Peace, Tel Aviv, 16 July 1996, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, p. 361). For the account of the pogrom in Shneiderman's book, see *id.*, *Between Fear and Hope*, pp. 85–107.

²¹¹ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir has expanded the phenomenological approach to the pogrom actors. She has recommended that pogrom participants should not be tagged anymore as members of particular social or occupational groups. Instead, she suggested that specific persons should be scrutinised from the angle of their past and practices. For more on the methodology used in *Pod klątwą*, see J. Tokarska-Bakir, "Sous anathème," in *Les Polonais et la Shoah: une nouvelle école historique*, ed. by A. Kichelewski, J. Lyon-Caen, J.-Ch. Szurek, and A. Wiewiorka (Paris 2019), pp. 191–204.

elaborate, albeit not necessarily true, line of interpretation. Shneiderman in *Between Fear and Hope*, one of the most important early sources on the pogrom, quoted his conversation with Henryk Błaszczyk that supposedly took place on 5 July 1946. In it, the boy reportedly said that when he stayed in Pielaki, the house of the Bartosińskis was visited “after sunset, by several people and they talked for a long time.” What is more, it was also Tadeusz Bartosiński who reportedly took the boy to the village and told him to tell the story about Jews under threat of beating.²¹² Wiktor Grosz, too, told foreign journalists about an “anti-Semitic Pole” teaching Błaszczyk a story about being kidnapped by Jews.²¹³ It was this version that made its way to the American press, for instance, to *The New York Times*.²¹⁴

Meanwhile, the historians gave the following accounts of Henryk Błaszczyk’s disappearance. Weinryb wrote that Błaszczyk had been fed the story of kidnapping and suggested that the underground was responsible for it.²¹⁵ Bauer, in turn, mentioned only Henryk telling his story at the militia station.²¹⁶ According to Dobroszycki, the boy had gone missing and upon his return spoke about being held by Jews, whereas he supposedly stayed with some friends of his father’s 25 kilometres from Kielce and he invented the story of kidnapping and murdering children out of fear, and as an excuse.²¹⁷ Chęciński devoted to Henryk three pages in his article on which he wrote about Antoni Pasowski and Pielaki, but concentrated on the latter version. Ultimately, he considered the boy’s disappearance a part of the conspiracy of “Dyomin” and Henryk’s father (“Przelot”) who allegedly brought about the pogrom in the name of the NSZ.²¹⁸ In the book, Pasowski was not mentioned, while its author even more strongly argued that the intrigue he described

²¹² Shneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope*, p. 94.

²¹³ Shapiro, “Poland,” p. 384.

²¹⁴ *The New York Times*, among others, wrote that the peasant (with whom the boy stayed in the countryside) had given Henryk Błaszczyk the story about being kidnapped by Jews (“Poles Declares Two Hoaxes Caused High Toll in Pogrom,” *The New York Times*, 6 July 1946).

²¹⁵ Weinryb, “Poland,” pp. 252–253.

²¹⁶ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 206. In his second publication, he reduced the entire theme to the accusation of ritual use of blood (*id.*, *The Jewish Emergence*, p. 65).

²¹⁷ Dobroszycki, “Restoring Jewish Life,” p. 67.

²¹⁸ Chęciński, “The Kielce Pogrom,” pp. 61–64.

was true.²¹⁹ Smolar and Mushkat left out this part of the pogrom,²²⁰ while Kochavi and Brumberg reduced it to a rumour about a ritual murder.²²¹ Szaynok wrote several pages about the kidnapping and Henryk's visit at the militia station. She opted for the Pielaki version in which the story about Jews was suggested to the boy by adults upon his return. If so, why on July 5th, in the presence of UB officers, did Henryk Błaszczyk tell this version of events to two American journalists? Szaynok offered no comment. The discussion and presentation of other versions of young Błaszczyk's absence were relegated to a footnote.²²²

Inspired by the communist authorities and reported by *The New York Times* and Shneiderman, the story would suggest that the people who visited Bartoszyński were partisans and so the pogrom was planned by the NSZ. Information to this effect was available to the communist authorities already on 5 July and they decided to inform the world about this already on the next day after the pogrom. Shneiderman himself believed that the NSZ organised the pogrom²²³ and that Walenty Błaszczyk was a NSZ member.²²⁴ The belief in this version was also shared by some researchers, especially in Jewish circles.²²⁵ Others, in turn, were not interested in Henryk's disappearance; instead, a more important question to them was why in the middle of the twentieth century people could believe that children were murdered to procure their blood.²²⁶

Faced with contradicting information on presumed intrigue plotters, researchers outside Poland could thus opt for a communist provocation or a conspiracy by the underground. Alternatively, they could choose not to side with either opinion and reduce the cause of Henryk's disappearance to the belief of the Poles in the medieval legend about a ritual murder, thereby reinforcing the stereotype of ubiquitous and eternal anti-Semitism of the Poles. It is also worth noting that in

²¹⁹ *Id.*, *Poland*, pp. 24–27.

²²⁰ Smolar, "Jews as a Polish Problem," p. 47; Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic*, pp. 137–143.

²²¹ Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, p. 116; Brumberg, "Poland," p. 24.

²²² Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews," pp. 199–204. A discussion on Shneiderman's thesis and the version about Pasowski is included in fn. 7, p. 201.

²²³ Shneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope*, pp. 85–86.

²²⁴ J. Bookstein, "Variations on a legend. Dictionary of the Kielce pogrom. Ethnography, legend, and narrative" (University of Oregon 1993), p. 162. [unpublished BA thesis]

²²⁵ Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów*, p. 20.

²²⁶ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 206; Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, p. 116; Brumberg, "Poland," p. 24.

Poland the anti-communist underground stopped being accused of organising the pogrom within a few weeks of it and ultimately no connection was established between the massacre and the underground at the show trial.²²⁷

That the researchers were not interested in pogrom details can be seen in the number of casualties they gave. Weinryb gave the number of forty-two murdered Jews,²²⁸ Bauer – forty-one Jews and four Poles in the book²²⁹ and forty-two Jews in the article,²³⁰ Dobroszycki – forty-one persons,²³¹ Chęciński – thirty-six to forty-two in the article and ultimately sixty to seventy Jews,²³² and forty-two in the book and ultimately sixty to seventy Jews,²³³ Smolar – several dozen Jews,²³⁴ Kochavi – forty-seven Jews,²³⁵ Brumberg – one hundred killed or injured Jews,²³⁶ Mushkat – forty survivors,²³⁷ Szaynok, in a footnote – forty-two Jews,²³⁸ at the end of the article – forty-two persons, including forty Jews and two Poles.²³⁹ It can be seen that the numbers given most often are forty-one and forty-two Jews; they come from the time close to the pogrom.²⁴⁰ Curiously enough, only two researchers mentioned killed Poles. This shows that pogrom details were of little interest to the researchers as even inaccuracies in the number of casualties did not arouse anybody's interest.

²²⁷ For more on accusations against the underground in the matter of the Kielce pogrom, see R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Pogrom w Kielcach*

²²⁸ Weinryb, "Poland," pp. 252–253.

²²⁹ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, p. 208.

²³⁰ *Id.*, *The Jewish Emergence*, p. 65.

²³¹ Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life," p. 67.

²³² Chęciński, "The Kielce Pogrom," p. 59.

²³³ *Id.*, *Poland*, p. 23.

²³⁴ Smolar, "Jews as a Polish Problem," p. 47.

²³⁵ Kochavi, *The Catholic Church*, p. 116.

²³⁶ Brumberg, "Poland," fn. 4, p. 24.

²³⁷ Mushkat, *Philo-Semitic*, p. 142.

²³⁸ Unnumbered note in Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews," p. 199. It is possible that the note was added by the editors of the *Yad Vashem Studies*.

²³⁹ Szaynok, "The Pogrom of Jews," p. 234.

²⁴⁰ The number of 41 murdered Jews probably comes in a distorted way from the court judgment in the Kielce pogrom case. It named 39 Jews and 2 murdered Poles (AIPN, 0397/591/1, Judgment in the Name of the Republic of Poland, Kielce, 11 July 1946, p. 22). This number is also found in a chapter by Shapiro (*id.*, *Poland*, p. 384). The number of forty-two Jews for the first time most likely appeared in Shneiderman's book (*id.*, *Between Fear and Hope*, p. 86). He was informed about the number of casualties by Jechiel Alpert on 5 July 1946 who had got it from a UB officer, probably Albert Grynbaum (Testimony of witness Jechiel Alpert before the Court of Peace, Tel Aviv, 16 July 1996, in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, p. 361).

Conclusion

To recapitulate, in spite of the Cold War climate and an increased interest in Jewish Studies in the second half of the twentieth century, the pogrom was not popular with researchers, as seen in the fact that only three longer publications had dealt with it and a few by way of comment between 1946 and 1992. Most of their authors were of Jewish descent, which, on the one hand, influenced the way they viewed the pogrom, but on the other hand, introduced pogrom-related questions to the international academic debate, even though communist archives were inaccessible at that time.²⁴¹

Except for Bożena Szaynok's article, the English-language publications saw the events in Kielce as an "ordinary" massacre or a "typical" pogrom of Jews (perpetrated by Poles).²⁴² Even Michał Chęciński, opting for the provocation theory, wrote in his book that an intrigue plotted by the communists would be feasible and usable for propaganda purposes for the very reason of Polish society's anti-Semitism and acceptance of murdering Jews.²⁴³

The treating of the Kielce pogrom as a typical occurrence was reflected primarily in the absence of any discussion of massacre details, provision of only general information and reliance on a limited number of sources. Importantly, more sources were available at that time than those referred to by the authors writing about the pogrom. Since it supposedly was a typical occurrence, they rejected the potential external factors that could have led to it and were rather inclined to

²⁴¹ Already in 1993, Jonah Bookstein pointed out that the pogrom was significant for the Poles and Jews not only as a massacre but also as a symbol, mythologised event and element of building a collective identity. For the Jews, it was the last pogrom, the final spasm of the Holocaust and the last stage preceding the foundation of the State of Israel. Bookstein was an American Jew who chose to write a thesis on this subject being attracted by the pogrom's symbolic meaning (*id.*, "Variations on a legend," pp. 2–7, 17, 22, 73).

²⁴² Bożena Szaynok did not take a stance on this issue in her article. Writing in the 1990s, Klaus-Peter Friedrich ascribed something entirely different to Polish historiography. He maintained that the pogrom was believed to have been an exceptional occurrence in Poland, and only Marc Hillel's *Le massacre des Survivants*, although not an academic work, supposedly showed that after the war, a disproportionately high number of Jews were murdered in Poland, which cannot be explained by a provocation (Friedrich, "Das Pogrom von Kielce," p. 415). Carla Tonini took a similar stance. In her opinion, only the emergence of a new generation of historians in the second half of the 1990s, not engaged in the struggle against Communism, helped change the perception of the pogrom and Polish-Jewish relations in Poland (C. Tonini, "The Jews in Poland after the Second World War. Most Recent Contributions of Polish History," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 1 [2010], pp. 62–63).

²⁴³ Chęciński, *Poland*, pp. 31–32.

search for the causes of the massacre in the internal conditions of post-war Poland.²⁴⁴ Anti-Semitism was supposed to explain the pogrom fully, and that same was the best proof that the stereotype of a Pole as an anti-Semitic churl was true.²⁴⁵ Furthermore, the adoption of the “Judeo-centric” perspective could be seen in painting the picture of Poland as a country in which the war afflicted only Jews, ignoring the criminal factor and Stalinist terror, leaving out the Polish victims of the pogrom or embroiling the Kielce events in the Holocaust.

For most early pogrom researchers, the question of potential intrigue was instead of secondary importance and would not change the overall perception of the pogrom. Regardless of whether it was organised and, if so, by whom, the massacre was perpetrated, according to the researchers, by Poles – militiamen, soldiers and “ordinary people.” This point of view was shared even by Michał Chęciński, who argued that the pogrom was a communist intrigue. Having made this point, he did not, however, re-interpret the event itself and continued to treat it as a typical

²⁴⁴ Friedrich ascribed opposite reasoning to the first Polish researchers of the pogrom – if they rejected anti-Semitism as an explanation of violence against Jews, it was necessary to look for external causes of the massacre, for instance, a provocation (Friedrich, “Das Pogrom von Kielce,” p. 420).

²⁴⁵ Danuta Goska believes that the stereotype of a Pole as an anti-Semite has been very much alive. She believes that “Since Polish ethnicity is, alone, enough to signify anti-Semitism, when Poles do commit anti-Semitic acts [...] no analysis beyond identifying the ethnic identity of the perpetrators is necessary. In fact, any further analysis is all but forbidden and condemned as “polemics” and an attempt to “justify” atrocity.” (D.V. Goska, *Bieganski: The Brute Polek Stereotype in Polish-Jewish Relations and American Popular Culture* [Boston, 2010], p. 33 ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/warw/detail.action?docID=3110437> [accessed 9 November 2023]) Brian Porter-Szűcs pointed out the stereotype of backwardness of East-Central Europe prevailing in the West; it is used to explain anti-Semitism (B. Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland*, [Oxford, 2011], p. 273). The picture of Poles as churls and anti-Semites was also painted by the Zionist activist Maksymilian Tauchner after the pogrom: “In societies on a higher cultural level, anti-Semitism was seen here and there in a dislike for the Jews. However, with the fading away of the objective reasons for antipathy, the antipathy itself eroded. In societies on a low cultural level, anti-Semitism was seen in hatred which, in its primitive nature, did not require even a rational justification. It was blind as a savage and uncontrollable instinct. And it will certainly find it. Of course, civilised “enlightened” anti-Semites are meant here who believe it necessary to justify their anti-Semitism. For most do not care about any justification” (M. Tauchner, “Po zbrodni nad zbrodniami,” *Opinia. Pismo syjonistyczno-demokratyczne*, 15/2, 25 July 1946). Adolf Berman, in a similar vein, spoke about backwardness at the funeral of victims: “We have been horrified by the power of ignorance, Middle Ages, barbarity!” (“Nad grobem męczenników. Przemówienie tow. posła dr. A. Bermana na pogrzebie 41 ofiar pogromu w Kielcach,” *Przełom. Organ Żydowskiej Partii Robotniczej Poalej-Syjon Lewicy* 1, June 1946). For more on the pogrom in Kielce in Polish-language Jewish press, see P. Wieczorek, “Oblicza zbrodni. Pogrom kielecki w świetle polskojęzycznej prasy żydowskiej,” in *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, vol. 4: *Holokaust i powojnie (1939–1946)*, ed. A. Grabski (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 433–452.

anti-Semitic atrocity.²⁴⁶ Instead, the researchers put much effort into determining the factors that made people kill and answering the question of who had created conditions conducive to the massacre. The answers were mostly stereotypical: the Poles were anti-Semites before, during and after the Second World War, the Church through its indifference gave moral consent to kill Jews, the anti-communist underground taught people how to do it and the communists, although they supported minorities, were too weak to oppose anti-Semitism.

Meanwhile, it has to be remembered that after the war Poland was undergoing internal strife. Audrey Kichelewski observed that due to the “civil war” and political chaos more people died during hostilities between communist and anti-communist forces, while the number of killed Jews, which she estimated at 650–750, was relatively low albeit significant from the point of view of the minority itself.²⁴⁷ By contrast, the regression to primitive human relations caused by the war and government terror are practically absent from the quoted publications, while Poland is shown there to be a country where victims were mostly Polish Jews.

An entirely different view of the pogrom was suggested by Bożena Szaynok in 1992. Her article supplied knowledge drawn from communist archives, which had been previously inaccessible, and made it possible to see the massacre through the eyes of the people who were treated as potential perpetrators. Limiting her article to the reconstruction of the pogrom allowed her to show that it escaped standard lines of interpretation at that time. Anti-Semitism did not explain everything that happened in Kielce on 4 July 1946, particular groups of Poles behaved differently for different reasons and some participants could be identified by giving their full name. Thus she proved that treating all the people who murdered as a single whole was wrong. Although the perspective Szaynok adopted prevented placing the pogrom in a broader context and drawing more general conclusions, her empirical

²⁴⁶ The general perception and account of the massacre are consistent with the other accounts and geared to show the anti-Semitic Poles, Church and underground. However, this author questioned the third pogrom stereotype, namely the weakness of the communist authorities, and even accused them of organising the pogrom. Since his claims concerning “Dyomin” and “Przelot” could not be corroborated after 1989, the impact of his reflections on later researchers was limited.

²⁴⁷ A. Kichelewski, “To Stay or to Go? Reconfigurations of Jewish Life in Post-War Poland, 1944–1947,” in *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War. Europe, 1943–1947*, ed. by S.L. Hoffman, S. Kot, P. Romijn, and O. Wieviorka (Amsterdam, 2015), p. 192.

study offered a new perspective on the Kielce pogrom and re-opened a debate in the English-language literature on a potential provocation and its significance.

Understanding the nature of the early publications on the pogrom is important as much as they represented all that was known about the massacre for almost half a century without any possibility to confront this knowledge with some other view. The idea of the pogrom that their authors had created, relying at least to an extent on sources containing communist propaganda, in turn, shaped public opinion and stereotypes about the pogrom in the “free world,” including its elites and – even more importantly – future researchers.²⁴⁸ In the Eastern Bloc, meanwhile, the pogrom was a taboo subject. A free debate about it was possible only after 1989,²⁴⁹ but it was conducted chiefly among Polish historians who tried either to prove or disprove a “communist provocation” and distanced themselves from the issue of anti-Semitism.²⁵⁰ This is not to say that knowledge was not transferred.

²⁴⁸ Examples of a stereotypical perception of the pogrom and Polish-Jewish relations include articles by David Cotter and Rivka Schiller (D. Cotter, “The Persistent Holocaust and the Kielce Pogrom of July 1946,” in *Ethical Implications of Large Scale Combat Operations. A Selection of Papers Presented at the 2019 Fort Leavenworth Ethics Symposium*, ed. by E. Ditsch (Fort Leavenworth KS, 2019), pp. 29–35; R. Schiller, “The History of Anti-Semitism in Kielce during the Holocaust Era,” *Kielce-Radom Special Interest Group Journal* 6/3 (2002), pp. 25–37). In 1999, an elaborate article was published by David Cymet, maintaining that the chief factor leading to the Holocaust was the anti-Semitism prevailing in Poland (D. Cymet, “Polish state antisemitism as a major factor leading to the Holocaust,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 1/2 [1999], pp. 169–212). Another publication in a similar vein was published by Leo Cooper a year later (L. Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle. The Poles, the Holocaust and Beyond* [London, 2000]). These publications, presenting radical opinions, have not entered the mainstream academic debate. Still, they nonetheless show that among scholars, especially those of Jewish descent, the stereotype of the Poles as anti-Semites is alive and reinforced. Importantly, Cymet’s article presenting a very bold thesis was accepted by the editors of one of the most prestigious academic journals devoted to Jewish matters. Bold claims about the pogrom can also be found in the *Epilogue*, devoted to the massacre, and in the book *In the Enemy Land* by the renowned and respected historian Sarah Bender. Giving the account of the pogrom, she uses in places terminology most likely taken from the 1940s communist propaganda. She writes about “traditional Polish anti-Semitism” or “extreme right-wing and Fascist nationalistic elements [...] such as the NSZ and WiN” who “received extensive assistance from Polish masses”. Relating to the discussion of the massacre, she factually quotes the relevant arguments of the article by Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki *Podziemie w roli oskarżonego*. In the end, however, she adds an ironic commentary: “The article leaves the unmistakable impression that the writer embraces the classic narrative, which held the Soviets responsible for what had happened.” (S. Bender, *In Enemy Land: The Jews of Kielce and the Region, 1939–1946* [Boston, 2018], p. 295. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/warw/detail.action?docID=5733000> (accessed 15 November 2023).

²⁴⁹ For the early Polish historiography of the pogrom with a commentary, see Friedrich, “Das Pogrom von Kielce,” pp. 411–421.

²⁵⁰ Tonini, “The Jews in Poland,” pp. 58–74.

Information and ideas were exchanged between the West and Polish scholars, as can be seen from Bożena Szaynok's use of foreign-language sources and Krystyna Kersten's introduction to Szaynok's book published in Polish.²⁵¹

Treating the Kielce massacre as typical and caused solely by anti-Semitism for almost fifty years, as well as most English-language scholars' reluctance to study its details, had consequences for the later reception of the theories of Polish researchers by foreign ones. Historians outside Poland acquired knowledge about the pogrom from that early literature. In contrast, however, to the first authors of Jewish origin writing on the pogrom and Polish-Jewish relations, later researchers faced a language barrier and an unknown country. Their predicament was observable already in the 1990s when Krystyna Kersten expressed the opinion that "in some Jewish circles, especially outside Poland, the very claim that a lot seems to argue in favour of the thesis about an element of provocation by communist secret services in the pogrom mechanism arouses fierce opposition and is treated as an attempt to shift the guilt for the massacre onto the communists, whereas it grew on the poisoned soil of Polish anti-Semitism."²⁵² Meanwhile, an international debate about the pogrom was only about to begin.

²⁵¹ In her Introduction, Krystyna Kersten included quite a few phrases that prominently featured in earlier English-language publications and are quoted in this article, such as "pogrom in Kielce is [...] the greatest, most tragic in terms of effects and the most notorious atrocity among many single and collective acts of violence suffered by Jews in Poland who survived the Holocaust," "it is astonishing for example how seriously the militia treated the information given by young Błaszczuk about being held by Jews and about children murdered in a house in Planty Street," "importantly, a year after the war, in Poland – in the place where the Holocaust took place – a pogrom of Jews was possible," "the thesis about a provocation on the part of the authorities [...] cannot serve as a shield protecting the criminal behaviour of ordinary people, on an ordinary day, in an ordinary voivodeship city." (Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów*, pp. 7–8, 22–23).

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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SUMMARY

The study of the Kielce pogrom accounts enjoys unflinching interest, but little attention has been given until now as to how the pogrom was remembered and interpreted outside Poland. This article intends to introduce the reader to the literature about the pogrom published in English until 1992 and analyse the sources used therein. Moreover, the article discusses why English-language historical writing took an interest in the subject and how a specific view of the pogrom developed in it.

KEYWORDS

Kielce pogrom • anti-Semitism in Poland • Polish-Jewish relations
 • historical writing on Polish-Jewish relations