

Post-Pogrom Research Processes Cited in Documents and Newspapers Published in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Abstract:

There are multiple contradictory theories regarding the basic causes of pogroms in the Russian Empire and Vistula Land. Some theories claim that pogroms were organised by the government and propose hypotheses and logical solutions which could be interpreted in support of their theories. For example, they ask how otherwise to explain that the police stood aside during the Kishinev massacre in 1903. Among those who support this theory is Simon Dubnov, and a further reputable example is found in G. Sliozberg, who was an eye-witness of the pogroms. Yet modern researchers, including Weeks and Gessen have found archival evidence that the government was fighting against the pogroms and did not support these incidents. However, it is not possible to assert that these contradictory versions are altogether right or wrong. The evidence found during this research supports both versions. Additionally, in historical papers and books about pogroms, it is common to find much generalisation of facts. Claims that the government was involved or planned pogroms are frequent, but such accusations were often made in very broad terms, for instance that the government allowed the organisation of propaganda, that it was not sufficiently engaged in preventing pogroms, or simply that it was to blame for apathy and inactivity. It is impossible to construct a precise picture of the culprits of mass slaughter from the use of such generalisations, which, moreover, confuse the reader. In many cases also, the 'government' referred to whichever narrow identification of a unit of state power or person was engaged in the specific event. Behind each action stood people, groups of people, or organisational units who were responsible for the pogroms.

Keywords: Jews, pogrom, twentieth century, Russia, local authorities.