



Pogroms and Riots

German Press Responses to Anti-Jewish Violence
in Germany and Russia (1881–1882)

Sonja Weinberg



PETER LANG

Introduction

The granting of universal suffrage and legal equality for its Jews in the 1860s and 1870s gave way to an unprecedented increase in political anti-Semitism in Germany. In Russia too, in the aftermath of the Reform Era (1855-1881), the Jewish Question became one of the most hotly-debated topics. In 1881 and 1882 the anti-Semitic climate both in Germany and in Russia culminated in anti-Jewish riots (pogroms) which swept over parts of Prussia and Southern Russia.

The synchronicity of the pogroms in Russia and Germany offers a unique opportunity to examine the responses of German commentators to anti-Jewish violence at home and abroad. Regarded by most Western observers as backward and primitive, nineteenth century Russia provides an interesting comparison when considering German press responses to violent manifestations of anti-Semitism. Did German commentators, for example, feel less inhibited when expressing their interpretations of anti-Jewish riots in the 'backward' and 'uncivilised' East, far removed from the social and political pressures and restrictions at home?¹

Until the 1980s when there was a marked increase in historical and sociological research into collective ethnic violence in the wake of civil wars in Africa and former Yugoslavia, there was little systematic research relating to the modern period.² Similarly, collective anti-Jewish violence in nineteenth century Germany, unlike the pogroms in Russia, has only recently attracted considerable scholarly attention.³ Studies of collective anti-Semitic violence in modern Ger-

-
- 1 E.g. John D. Klier, *German Antisemitism and Russian Judeophobia in the 1880's: Brothers and Strangers*, in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 37 (1989), 531. Hereafter Klier, *Brothers*.
 - 2 For an overview of some of this research, see Dirk Schumann, *Gewalt als Grenzüberschreitung: Überlegungen zur Sozialgeschichte der Gewalt im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 37 (1997), 366-86; Werner Bergmann, *Pogroms*, in Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan, *International Handbook of Violence Research* (London, 2003), 351-367. Hereafter, Bergmann, *Pogroms*.
 - 3 For Russia, see Michael Aronson, *Troubled Waters* (Pittsburgh, 1990). Hereafter Aronson, *Waters*. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge, 1992); John D. Klier, forthcoming. For Germany, see Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, Helmut Walser Smith, eds., *Exclusionary Violence* (Ann Arbor, 2002); Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale* (New York, 2002); Christoph Nonn, *Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (Göttingen,

man and Russian history have tended to focus on the incidents themselves, namely on the “who, when, where, how, what and why of the ethnic riot behavior.”⁴ Important though such investigations undoubtedly are, they tell us little about contemporary public perception of such incidents, and the few studies which do exist concern the Russian or the English press.⁵ Research into German press responses to anti-Semitism has concerned itself primarily either with anti-Semitic stereotypes⁶ or legal cases that provoked public debates about Jewish legal rights and the nature of Judaism.⁷ In the case of anti-Semitic violence, the research is mainly concerned with reviewing the German Jewish press.⁸ Thus it is a rich and untapped source which has provided the impetus for this book, which particularly focuses on attitudes to anti-Semitic violence in nineteenth century Germany.⁹

The two main positions are, first, that the desire for anti-Semitic violence—kept under control by the machinery of state—was an integral part of late nineteenth century German anti-Semitism. There is, however, little evidence to support this argument.¹⁰ The second suggests a general rejection of collective anti-

2002). Barnet Hartston has examined anti-Semitic violence by concentrating on the courtroom, see Barnet Hartston, *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question* (Leiden, 2005). Hereafter Hartston, *Jewish Question*.

4 Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (California, 2002), xiii. Hereafter Horowitz, *Riot*.

5 John D. Klier, *The Russian Press and the Anti-Jewish Pogroms of 1881*, in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 17, 1 (1983), 199-221. Hereafter Klier, *Press*. John D. Klier, *The Times of London, the Russian Press, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882*, in *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, 308 (1984), 1-26. Hereafter Klier, *Times*.

6 E.g. Amine Haase, *Katholische Presse und die Judenfrage* (Munich, 1975). Hereafter Haase, *Presse*.

7 Hartston, *Jewish Question*; Gerd Hoffmann, *Der Prozess um den Brand der Synagoge in Neustettin* (Schifferstadt, 1998); Christoph Jahr, *Ahlwardt on Trial: Reactions to the Antisemitic Agitation of the 1890s in Germany*, in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XLVIII* (2003), 67-85; Bernhard Vogt, *Antisemitismus und Justiz im Kaiserreich: Der Synagogenbrand in Neustettin*, in Margret Heitmann and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *“Halte fern dem ganzen Lande jedes Verderben...”* (Hildesheim, 1995), 379-99.

8 Ita Shedletzky, *Die Reaktion der jüdischen Presse in Deutschland auf die Judenpogrome in Russland 1881-82*, in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, 59 (1981). Hereafter Shedletzky, *Presse*.

9 For a review based on recent research, see Richard S. Levy, *Continuities and Discontinuities of Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Germany, 1819-1938*, in Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, Helmut Walser Smith, eds., *Exclusionary Violence* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 185-202. Hereafter Levy, *Continuities*.

10 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996), 70, 72. Hereafter Goldhagen, *Germans*. Werner E.

Jewish violence in late nineteenth century Germany. According to Christhard Hoffmann, anti-Semites appeared ‘civilized’, ‘democratic’, ‘social’ so that whilst, for a short time, both government authorities and sections of German society condoned anti-Semitic violence, it was the ‘civilising’ of Jew-hatred which rendered anti-Semitism acceptable in Germany and, in the long run, resulted in its ‘pacification’. Physical violence towards Jews was generally neither accepted by German society nor tolerated by the government. Could it be, as Hoffmann suggests, that the radical and destructive brand of anti-Semitism that came to the fore only after 1918, developed out of this ‘civilising’ of Jew-hatred?¹¹ Barnett Hartston’s more nuanced interpretation of violent anti-Semitism during the Bismarck era suggests it demonstrated a degree of government sympathy for anti-Semitic rioters.¹²

This study will demonstrate how incidents of anti-Semitic violence gave rise to a public rhetoric which was sympathetic to violence against Jews and in a more complex way than described by Hoffmann. It is intended as a contribution to the debate about the nature, continuity and discontinuity of anti-Semitism in late nineteenth century Germany.¹³ Four newspapers representing important conservative and Jewish voices within the political landscape of the *Kaiserreich*

Mosse, *From ‘Schutzjuden’ to ‘Deutsche Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens’: The Long and Bumpy Road of Jewish Emancipation in Germany*, in Pierre Birnbaum, Ira Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton, 1995), 90.

- 11 Christhard Hoffmann, *Geschichte und Ideologie: Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit 1879/81*, in W. Benz and W. Bergmann, eds., *Vorurteil und Völkermord* (Freiburg, 1997), 239-43, 250. Hereafter Hoffmann, *Geschichte*. Christhard Hoffmann, *Political Culture and Violence against Minorities: The Antisemitic Riots in Pomerania and West Prussia*, in Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann and Helmut Walser Smith, eds., *Exclusionary Violence* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 87, 89, 92. Hereafter Hoffmann, *Violence*. See also Shulamit Volkov, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. & 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1990), 28, 33, 64, 74. Hereafter Volkov, *Leben*. Blaschke argues that German Catholics generally rejected anti-Semitic violence, see Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen, 1997), 56, 96, 102-3. Hereafter Blaschke, *Katholizismus*. Niewyk also argues that both the Centre Party and the Catholic press usually spoke out against anti-Jewish violence, see Donald L Niewyk, *Solving the ‘Jewish Problem’: Continuity and Change in German Antisemitism, 1871-1945*, in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXXV* (1990), 345. Hereafter Niewyk, *Continuity*. Dirk Walter suggests that hard core anti-Semites in late nineteenth century Germany did not approve of anti-Jewish violence, see Dirk Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt* (Bonn, 1999), 9, 10.
- 12 Hartston, *Jewish Question*, 125. See also Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History* (Cambridge, 2008). Hereafter Smith, *Continuities*, 115-166.
- 13 Levy, *Continuities*.

have been examined:¹⁴ the *Kreuzzeitung*—by far the most prestigious conservative newspaper of the period representing the most radical and reactionary wing of the Conservative Party; the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* with its close links to the political establishment; the *Germania*—defiantly anti-Bismarck, anti-liberal, and anti-Semitic, appealing to conservative Catholics and the right wing of the Centre Party; and finally the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, the most popular and well-respected Jewish newspaper of the time, politically unaffiliated, with a generally liberal outlook.¹⁵ There are two reasons for focusing primarily on conservative-minded newspapers. First, the importance of the conservative movement as a political force in the *Kaiserreich*. Second, it was conservatives rather than liberals who largely opposed the newly-established liberal order of 1871, a stance due not least to the liberal approach of putting the individual centre stage, as opposed to the conservative ideals of a collective and hierarchically corporate world order. Thus conservatives opposed Jewish emancipation as a manifestation and symbol of the liberal egalitarian order, arguably encouraging the expression of anti-Jewish views to promote political mobilisation. The inclusion of newspapers with affiliations to the two main religious groups—Christians (representing the two denominations, Protestantism and Catholicism) and Jews—reflects the significance of religious and denominational affiliation in the political debate despite the growth of secularism. Furthermore the question arises whether the Protestant rhetoric surrounding anti-Jewish violence can be attributed to Protestantism being the majority denomination (and thus proportionately

14 These newspapers could be called ‘opinion leaders’. Despite not having a large circulation (and in the *Kaiserreich* many did not) they influenced political opinion. ‘Important’ people, including politicians, industrialists, academics, and clergymen, paid attention to them not least because many of their editors had important links to political parties. Evidence for the degree of influence is their frequent citation both in the German and foreign press, see Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, ed., *Deutsche Zeitungen des 17. bis 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1972); Konrad Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 2004), 92ff. Hereafter Dussel, *Tagespresse*. Bernhard Rosenberger, *Zeitungen als Kriegstreiber? Die Rolle der Presse im Vorfeld des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Cologne, 1998), 72, 104. Hereafter Rosenberger, *Zeitungen*. For instance, the *Germania* cited the *Kreuzzeitung* and vice versa, see, e.g. *Germania*, 184 (16 August 1881); 185 (17 August 1881); *Kreuzzeitung*, 193 (19 August 1881). Often, as in both these instances, the newspapers disagreed over certain issues. For an example of a citation of the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* abroad, see *Norddeutsche* 129 (18 March 1881).

15 See Appendix for a brief description of each newspaper. The authorship of most of the articles is difficult to determine because as a rule, they were unsigned or, rarely, supplied with an initial. The term ‘Jewish newspaper’ refers to a newspaper whose editor and journalists were mainly Jewish and which addressed primarily a Jewish readership.

represented in the political, military and academic spheres.) Protestantism became the dominant denomination in Germany after the establishment of the North German Confederation in 1866 and the unification of Germany in 1871 (with the exclusion of Austria's Catholic population); Catholics were the denominational minority, Jews the religious minority.¹⁶ Did Protestants, for example, express their views on anti-Jewish riots more openly than Catholics due to their majority situation? Were Catholics, as a fellow minority, sympathetic to the Jewish victims of violence? Or was there rivalry between the two minorities?

This study does not pretend to deal with the opinion of German society as a whole, neither is it a comprehensive account of published German opinion on anti-Jewish violence in the 1880s, nor does it devote equal weight across the whole spectrum of the German and Jewish press throughout the *Kaiserreich*. Whilst the omission of many newspapers, and other source material, is regrettable, it has been in the cause of a detailed and systematic examination of the response to anti-Jewish violence over a period of two years, achieved by concentrating on a small selection of German newspapers.

Research questions and approach

This is a study of the perception, not the perpetration, of violence. At its heart are four questions:

1. What was the position adopted by the newspapers in question on the Jewish Question and the Jews?
2. Did they endorse or condemn the anti-Jewish violence in Germany and Russia? Did they consider it premeditated or spontaneous? Did their rhetoric change during elections? Whom did they regard as responsible for the riots? What measures did they propose to restore order? Was there a significant difference in their treatment of anti-Jewish violence in Germany as against that of the pogroms in Russia?

16 Till van Rahden, *Jews and the Ambivalence of Civil Society in Germany, 1800-1933: Assessment and Reassessment*, in *Journal of Modern History* 77 (December, 2005), 1029-30. Hereafter Rahden, *Ambivalence*. Van Rahden rightly points out that not only Jews and Catholics but virtually every group which asserted its own vision of individual and collective identity acted as a 'minority' in relation to the universal, i.e. the state, the nation and the public sphere. Nevertheless, this study proceeds on the factual majority-minority situation, believing that it influenced these groups' perceptions and arguments in political debates. *Ibid.*, 1029.

3. What position was adopted by the same newspapers to the Russian Jewish refugee crisis triggered by the pogroms?
4. What political motives were likely to have influenced the answers to these questions in the case of each newspaper?

The hermeneutical-interpretative methodology employed to research the answers involved an examination of sources between January 1881 and December 1882. The analysis of the content of newspaper articles is informed by a selection of terms, concepts and aspects of rhetorical analysis.¹⁷ The central purpose of rhetoric is to communicate effectively with a given audience and to persuade it of the rightness of the speaker's (or, in this case, the writer's) point of view. This can be done in various ways and there are three concepts relevant to this study: informative teaching; using argument to prove a theory; and inventing a thought. According to Heinrich F. Plett, informative teaching seeks to inform the reader/listener about a particular issue through factual reporting: for example, that an anti-Jewish pogrom lasting two days had taken place in Elisavetgrad. Using argument to prove a theory means intentionally making an issue rationally plausible.¹⁸ The arguments employed can be determined either by a person or by an issue. Arguments which focus on a person rather than on an issue are often personal attacks which denigrate him by referring, for example, to his religion, nationality or character. Thus, it was frequently suggested that the Jews brought hatred upon themselves by their arrogant and mercenary behaviour. Arguments determined by an issue refer *inter alia* to cause, possibility, definition, comparison, allegation, circumstance.¹⁹ For example, it was argued that the pogroms in Russia were caused by the decline of law and order and the rise of nihilism in Russian society. The concept of inventing a thought is based on the assumption that every incident in the world is a construct of typical possibilities. For example, when a riot occurs, there will be perpetrators, victims, reasons for the actions, solutions to the actions and much more. The characteristic of this construct is not the incident itself but the composition of its typical possibilities which it is the newspaper reporter's task to present.²⁰ Thus, a newspaper may interpret a riot by suggesting that the cause of the riot can be traced to the Jews and their

17 Rhetorical analysis embodies a broad spectrum of approaches and terminology. The terminology and approach used in this study are based on Karl-Heinz Göttert, *Einführung in die Rhetorik* (Munich, 1994). Hereafter Göttert, *Einführung*. For other approaches, see *ibid.*, 9ff, 194ff.

18 *Ibid.*, 22. Heinrich F. Plett, *Einführung in die rhetorische Textanalyse* (Hamburg, 2001), 3.

19 Göttert, *Einführung*, 26-37.

20 *Ibid.*

harmful behaviour or, in contrast, that it is political and economic factors which caused the incident. It may go on to suggest either that the Jews' legal rights should be curtailed or, conversely, that particular economic and political measures be taken to resolve the situation. It is important to understand that these compositions are unavoidably subjective and biased, shaped by the writer's values and beliefs. Using the terms and concepts outlined above, the main questions to ask when analysing newspaper articles about anti-Semitism and its violent manifestations are: What occasion gives rise to the need or opportunity for persuasion? What is the message of a given newspaper article? How is the text composed? On which parts of the composition does the writer focus and which does he neglect? How does he comment on the different parts of the composition? What are the principal lines of reasoning or types of argument used? Do the writers praise or blame, explain, justify, attack or defend? What values and beliefs are revealed and promoted in the text? Who is the intended audience?

Plan of the book

This book is divided into five parts. Part I discusses various theoretical aspects and approaches to ethnic violence and sets the press responses in their contemporary social and political context. An analysis of those responses then follows in Part II (as to the conservative Protestant newspaper *Kreuzzeitung*), Part III (as to the conservative Catholic newspaper *Germania*), Part IV (as to the semi-official government newspaper *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*), and Part V (as to the Jewish newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*). Understanding the stance of each newspaper towards Jews and the Jewish Question has proved helpful when considering their respective responses to anti-Jewish violence. This has, in turn, shaped the structure of the book: an examination of attitudes towards the Jews and the Jewish Question, followed by an exploration of the response to the anti-Jewish riots in Germany and, finally, to the pogroms in Russia.

Whilst such a newspaper-centred approach results in a repetition of themes, it seems to lend itself better to an analysis of each newspaper's rhetoric as well as providing a window onto their respective philosophies. The Conclusion draws together the findings. The Appendix provides a short description of the German press in late nineteenth century Germany and of each of the newspapers used in this study.

Terminology

A discussion of nineteenth century (modern period) anti-Semitic violence requires a definition of the term *anti-Semitism*. Anti-Semitism has been used in scholarly research “as an umbrella term for negative stereotypes about Jews, for resentments and actions which are directed either at single Jews as Jews or at the whole of Judaism, as well as at phenomena because they were allegedly Jewish.”²¹ The development of modern anti-Semitism from the 1870s differed from pre-modern anti-Judaism in various respects. The foundation of anti-Judaism was primarily economic and (Christian) religious. Modern anti-Semitism can be distinguished from anti-Judaism in four respects: it introduced new concepts, used science to defend anti-Semitic charges, added new functions and differed in the degree of political organisation.²² It can be characterised as nationalistic, anti-liberal, and racist; it introduced the concepts of a Jewish world conspiracy and maintained that the Jews judaised (*verjuden*) the world. Thus Jews were seen as ethnically different, a race with immutable, negative characteristics. Whilst Jews had been so portrayed in earlier times, the development of scientific racial theories during the second half of the nineteenth century enabled such ideas to take hold.²³ The pre-modern ‘strangers’ became, at a time of intense nationalism, ‘non-Germans’, a ‘people within a people’, a ‘state within a state’ who intended harm to the German nation.

The use of scientific ideas in anti-Semitic arguments was apparent through the connection with newly developed science and research. Proponents of the older anti-Judaism would generally base their arguments on the old religious texts and traditions. Already the term anti-Semitism used science in a pseudo-scientific sense. It no longer wanted to fight the Jews primarily because of their religion, but because of their character, which found expression in their behaviour. The success of modern anti-Semitism was to define the Jewish Question not only in religious and economic terms but also in social, political, international, cultural and ethnic terms. The journalist Otto Glagau succeeded in identifying the Jewish Question with the ‘Social Question’, and the well-known historian Heinrich von Treitschke achieved the linking of his anti-socialist, anti-Democratic and anti-emancipationist ideology with anti-Semitism.

21 Blaschke, *Katholizismus*, 23.

22 The outline of modern anti-Semitism used here follows Blaschke, *Katholizismus*, 24-6. For an extensive overview of the literature on anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, see *ibid.*, 303-5n, 23-31.

23 Volker Losemann, *Rassenideologien und antisemitische Publizistik in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in W. Benz and W. Bergmann, eds., *Vorurteil und Völkermord* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997). Hereafter Losemann, *Publizistik*.

Some scholars have emphasised the new functions fulfilled by modern anti-Semitism: first, as a mechanism for integration, it complemented nationalism. Second, it served to channel the dissatisfaction of the victims of the liberal-capitalist economic system. Conservative parties and organisations used anti-Semitism for political mobilisation. Third, anti-Semitism was a *Weltanschauung* which offered a remedy for all the ills of modernisation. And fourth, anti-Semitism developed into a ‘cultural code’ which was used by conservatives to fight liberalism and emancipation.²⁴

The degree of organisation was an important aspect of modern anti-Semitism. Between 1878 and 1880 political parties and associations were established whose main aim was to combat the Jews and their alleged harmful influence. It must be emphasised that this study is not about the organisational aspects nor does it cover the establishment of anti-Semitic parties and associations and their activities. Rather, this is an investigation of anti-Semitism as an element in the political debate—used by different groups to influence either the distribution of power or to attain a share of power within the state—as seen in the political press.²⁵

The term ‘pogrom’ is used here synonymously with the term ‘riot’ to denote an “attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group, the victims chosen because of their group membership.”²⁶ ‘Pogrom’ is understood here as a spontaneous ethnic riot rather than ethnic violence which is organised and government-controlled.²⁷ During the period being considered, the term ‘pogrom’ had yet to be used in the German press whether to refer to collective anti-Jewish violence in Germany or indeed in Russia. For convenience and for the sake of clarity, however, it will be used exclusively to refer to anti-Jewish riots in Russia, not entirely inappropriate as the term originated in Russia where it was used to characterise anti-Jewish riots.²⁸ The term ‘ethnic group’ here denotes a group with a strong sense of commonality among its members and thus a sense of collective self-consciousness rooted either in early socialisation or perceived genetic affinity or both. As a result, group members

24 Volkov, *Leben*, 21-3.

25 The term ‘politics’ follows Max Weber’s definition. See Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 1978), 872.

26 As defined in Horowitz, *Riot*, 1.

27 Bergmann, *Pogroms*, 351-3.

28 For an account of the history of the term ‘pogrom’, see John D. Klier, *The pogrom paradigm in Russian history*, in John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge, 1992), 34-5. Hereafter Klier, *Paradigm*.

think of themselves as possessing attributes representative of the group.²⁹ The term ‘violence’ is used to refer to physical violence, not to verbal or psychological forms of violence. The term ‘nihilism’ was used in the contemporary German press as an umbrella term for diverse revolutionary opponents of the tsarist regime in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s. In Russia they were called *narodniki* (meaning populists) but also revolutionary socialists, anarchists and nihilists.³⁰ ‘Conservative’ and ‘Liberal’ (capitalised) designate the Conservative and Liberal parties respectively, whilst ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ are used in all other cases both to describe an association with a political party of the relevant tendency—either as a candidate or a member—or a general (non-party)—persuasion.

29 For a more complex elaboration of the concept ‘ethnic group’, see Horowitz, *Riot*, 44–56.

30 Aronson, *Waters*, 194.