

REVOLUTION, VIOLENCE, AND THE JEWS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE, 1904–1907

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The Jews of the Russian Empire in a Time of Revolution and Violence, 1904–1907: An Introduction*

Surveying the course of modern Jewish history and the historical phenomenon and historiographical subfield that he helped trace, define, and codify as “modern Jewish politics,” Jonathan Frankel, the legendary, canonical scholar of Russian and east European Jewry, pointed to the critical role that wider political or social crises often played as key turning points in the history of political organization, action and thinking among Europe’s Jews. Pointing to the two crises that would serve as the background and framework for his seminal works, *Prophecy and Politics* and *The Damascus Affair*, Frankel argued throughout his illustrious career that seismic events like wars, revolutions or even environmental crises repeatedly sparked wide-ranging, long-term changes among Jewish thinkers and activists.¹ As Frankel noted in one of his most cited articles, “The crises created by acts of Judeophobic, antisemitic aggression played a crucial role in the history of the Jewish people during the nineteenth century . . . these crises in Jewish life were the nearest equivalent to war and revolution in the history of a state, a sovereign society.”² Artfully nuanced and unassumingly bold, Frankel’s thesis changed the way generations of scholars

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¹ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge, 1981); id., *The Damascus Affair: “Ritual Murder,” Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge, 1997).

² Jonathan Frankel, “Crisis as a Factor in Modern Jewish Politics, 1840 and 1881–1882,” in id., *Crisis, Revolution and Russian Jews* (Cambridge, 2009), 15.

thought and wrote about the very intersection between Russian, Polish, and Jewish societies, politics, and histories.

Although not consciously conceived as such, the following volume of *Studia Judaica* on “Revolution, Violence, and the Jews of the Russian Empire, 1904–1907” is deeply influenced by Frankel’s thinking regarding the role of larger crises in the course of modern Jewish history and politics in Eastern and East-Central Europe. Indeed, all of the articles, sources, and even book reviews in this volume explore the different ways that the larger social and political upheavals between 1904 and 1907 influenced the course of Jewish (and Polish) politics and societies in Congress Poland and throughout the Russian Empire. Although never formally articulated or agreed upon by the various contributors, the underlying assumption guiding many authors in this volume—which is based on a conference organized by Warsaw University’s Department of History in early 2015—is that the Revolution of 1905 was no less than a moment of truth for many of the Jewish, Polish, and Russian residents of the Empire. Time and again, the various and sundry events during this period would force political leaders and individual actors to make critical, fateful decisions regarding their own particular vision for the future direction and shape of society and politics in turn-of-the-century Eastern Europe.

The different contributors to this volume are, of course, not the first to point to the series of tumultuous events that together composed the Revolution of 1905 as major turning points in Polish, Jewish, and Russian histories. Writing under the watchful eye of Communist censors and government officials in the Polish People’s Republic, Polish historians like Stanisław Kalabiński, Feliks Tych, Anna Żarnowska, and others published a staggering amount of historical material in a series of source collections and monographs that would provide extensive material and a clear academic agenda for future scholars.³ The structure and content of many of these studies were influenced by earlier works on the topic penned by scholars in the Soviet Union.⁴ Tych, in particular, dedicated an extraordinary

³ Stanisław Kalabiński (ed.), *Carat i klasy posiadające w walce z rewolucją 1905–1907 w Królestwie Polskim: Materiały archiwalne* (Warsaw, 1956); Stanisław Kalabiński, Feliks Tych (eds.), *Walki chłopów Królestwa Polskiego w rewolucji 1905–1907*, 4 vols. (Warsaw, 1958–1961); Feliks Tych, *Związek Robotników Polskich 1889–1892* (Warsaw, 1974); Anna Żarnowska, *Robotnicy Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1985); Halina Kiepuska, *Warszawa w rewolucji 1905–1907* (Warsaw, 1974).

⁴ Key studies of the period written by scholars in the Soviet Union and afterwards in Russia include: Sergey Pavlov, *Opyt pervoy revolyutsii: Rossiya 1900–1917* (Moscow, 2008); Oleg V. Budnitskiy, *Terrorizm v rossiyskom osvoboditel’nom dvizhenii: Ideologiya, etika, psikhho-*

amount of time, energy, and knowledge over the course of his long and variegated scholarly career to the publication of a number of source collections, many of which have enriched the work of contemporary scholars.⁵

A generation later, on the other side of the Cold War divide, a group of scholars educated at Berkeley, Stanford, and other locations under the guidance of Terence Emmons and Reginald Zelnik composed a series of detailed local histories that helped cast the die for the way that many in “the West” would think, teach, and write about the Revolution of 1905. In addition to monographs by Laura Engelstein on Moscow, Gerald Surh on St. Petersburg, and Robert Weinberg on Odessa, Abraham Ascher composed what is considered by many to be the definitive, two-volume study of the Revolution of 1905 in the Russian Empire, and Robert Blobaum’s monograph *Rewolucja* on developments in the former Congress Kingdom remains absolutely indispensable to any scholar who wishes to gain an understanding of how these events unfolded in Polish lands.⁶

Nor were these intellectual developments limited strictly to scholars of Russian and east European history and society. Inspired by works in parallel fields as well as the critical place of 1905 in larger narratives of Jewish political resurrection and transformation, scholars of Russian and east European Jewry similarly dedicated a fair amount of time and effort to uncovering and documenting the impact of the events of 1905 on Jewish society and politics in the region. In addition to a lengthy section in Frankel’s seminal study *Prophecy and Politics*, Eliyahu Feldman, Mikhail Krutikov, Vladimir

logiya (vtoraya polovina XIX – nachalo XX v.) (Moscow, 2000); Rafail Sh. Ganelin, *Rossiyskoe samoderzhavie v 1905 godu: Reformy i revolyutsiya* (Sankt Petersburg, 1991); Yevgeniy D. Chermenskiy, *Burzhuaziya i tsarizm v revolyutsii 1905–1907 gg.* (Moscow–Lenigrad, 1939).

⁵ See, e.g., Feliks Tych (ed.), *Polskie programy socjalistyczne 1878–1918* (Warszawa, 1975); id. (ed.), *PPS-Lewica, 1906–1918: Materiały i dokumenty*, 2 vols. (Warsaw, 1961–1962); and id. (ed.), *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy: Materiały i dokumenty* (Warsaw, 1962). Recent scholarship on the topic in Polish includes: Marek Przeniosło, Stanisław Wiech (eds.), *Rewolucja 1905–1907 w Królestwie Polskim i w Rosji* (Kielce, 2005); Wiktor Marzec, *Rebelia i reakcja: Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne* (Łódź–Kraków, 2016); Anna Żarnowska et al. (eds.), *Dziedzictwo rewolucji 1905–1907* (Warsaw–Radom, 2007); Krzysztof Stepnik, Monika Gabryś (eds.), *Rewolucja lat 1905–1907: Literatura – publicystyka – ikonografia* (Lublin, 2005); and Waldemar Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego przez PPS w okresie rewolucji 1905 roku* (Warsaw, 2008).

⁶ See: Laura Engelstein, *Moscow, 1905: Working-Class Organization and Political Conflict* (Stanford, 1982); Gerald Dennis Surh, *1905 in St. Petersburg: Labor, Society, and Revolution* (Stanford, 1989); Robert Weinberg, *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps* (Bloomington, 1993). See also Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, 2 vols. (Stanford, 1988–1992); and Robert E. Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca, 1995).

Levin, Theodore Weeks, Joshua Zimmerman, and others have all written book-length studies that explored the events of 1904–1907 within the context of Jewish society and politics in the Russian Empire.⁷

It is worth noting that in all three cases, the study of 1905 very often remained a generational affair, one that was characterized and bound by the parallel experiences and common practices of ostensibly separate circles of scholars working in Eastern Europe, Israel, and the United States. Thus, while they were divided and influenced by the whims of geopolitics, many (although certainly not all) of the scholars of the Revolution of 1905 were attracted by the sheer excitement involved in uncovering and tracing moments of widespread revolutionary upheaval that were deeply imbued with the enticing allure of secular redemption. After centuries of tsarist domination and seemingly arbitrary rule, the long reign of the House of Romanov appeared to be entering its final days. Hence, much like the iconic historical painting by the Russian artist, Ilya Repin, the Revolution of 1905 is often understood and portrayed as a brief but transformative moment characterized by euphoric hopes and great expectations in the long, dark, and bitter history of the region. Among many scholarly observers, this sense of unfulfilled promises regarding the revolutionary path not taken was exacerbated by the revolution's collapse in mid-1907 and the subsequent fact that unlike the revolutions of 1789 or 1917 there was no period of post-revolutionary violence or repression associated directly with the Revolution of 1905. If history often belongs to the victors, then the history of revolutions—in particular those in Eastern Europe—is, perhaps, better served by those movements that failed to achieve their larger political goal and ultimately remained romantic anti-heroes that lacked political power and, thus, also historical responsibility.

⁷ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 134–363; Eliyahu Feldman, *Yehudei Rusyah bi-yemei ha-mahapekhah ha-rishonah yeha-pogromim* (Jerusalem, 1999); Mikhail Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905–1914* (Stanford, 2001); Vladimir Levin, *Mimahapekhah le-milhamah: ha-politikah ha-Yehudit be-Rusyah, 1907–1914* (Jerusalem, 2016); Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford, 2013); Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The “Jewish Question” in Poland, 1850–1914* (DeKalb, 2006); Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia, 1892–1914* (Madison, 2004). Also note that the *festschrift* volume dedicated to Frankel's long and illustrious academic career addressed the events of 1905. See Stefani Hoffman, Ezra Mendelsohn (eds.), *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews* (Philadelphia, 2008).

Great Expectations: Revolution, Democracy, and the Allure of Secular Redemption

Of the three main political camps (socialist, liberal, and national) active among the five million Jews of the Russian Empire, the different revolutionary organizations were particularly enthusiastic about what seemed to be the imminent transformation of tsarist rule.⁸ Years of painstaking and dangerous efforts on the part of the Bund (the General Jewish Labor Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), Poale Zion, and other smaller groups seemed to bear fruit as many believed throughout 1905 and much of 1906 that the revolutionary wave would soon sweep away the last remnants of the long-despised *ancien régime*. Similar to many non-Jewish revolutionary organizations like the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), Jewish revolutionary parties and organizations were at the height of their power, influence, and status throughout the euphoric period that began with the confrontations of Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg in January 1905 and came to a collapse amidst the violent confrontations in the Polish battle-ground city of Łódź in late 1906.

Hope, of course, was never the sole possession of the revolutionary camp but, rather, the very fuel that fed the revolutionary wave regardless of its specific goals and particular direction. Moreover, the revolutionary organizations' spirited confrontations, sporadic victories and ongoing conflicts in 1905 and over the first half of 1906 gave birth to a wider—at times seemingly infectious—sense of optimism and hope among a wide range of political camps, including liberal parties, organizations, and leaders. The hopes and dreams of the liberal camp were boosted significantly in late 1905 when the embattled and tottering tsarist regime made a desperate attempt to save itself by issuing an array of semi-democratic reforms including the October Manifesto. By substantially reducing censorship regulations, permitting a wide range of political activity and promising elections to a State Duma, the October Manifesto and accompanying laws seemed to guarantee the imminent victory and sudden ascendance of the dedicated but embattled liberal camp.⁹

⁸ For a simply brilliant typology of modern Jewish politics, see: Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York, 1993), 3–36.

⁹ On the impact of these reforms, see: Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905* (Stanford, 1992), 2: 42–80; and Terence Emmons, *The Formation of Political Parties and the First National Elections in Russia* (Cambridge, 1983).

The rising sense of optimism and hope regarding the onset of a new, democratic order throughout the Empire led to surprising electoral achievements for the leading democratic force in Russian politics, the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) and their Jewish counterparts, the Society for the Attainment of Full Civil Rights for the Jewish People in Russia in the elections to the first two Dumas in the spring of 1906 and in early 1907.¹⁰ A series of local coalitions between representatives affiliated with the Constitutional Democrats and Jewish electors not only helped elect a surprising number of 179 Cadet representatives to the First Duma but also the election of 12 Jews to the First Duma and another 4 to the Second Duma. Much like the cooperation between the Cadets and their Jewish counterparts, the Polish liberal camp repeatedly joined forces with Jewish organizations and electors to create a formidable political bloc in the elections in Łódź, Warsaw, and other urban curiae.¹¹ Repeatedly, ad hoc electoral coalitions between representatives of the Polish progressive camp and local Jewish organizations composed primarily of Jewish liberals and Zionists (but no socialists), challenged National Democratic organizations and leaders for the right to lead and define society and politics in centers across the former Congress Kingdom of Poland.

However, in a bitter twist of fate, the sheer—and surprising—success of electoral coalitions composed of Polish and Jewish liberals laid the groundwork for the rising popularity and increasing hostility of the National Democrats and related groups. Thus, in a calculated attempt to counter the potential success of liberal-Jewish coalitions in Polish lands, National Democratic organizations and affiliated bodies injected an overtly hostile, if not antisemitic, series of images and concepts into the political discourse. Playing on both traditional anti-Jewish motifs of Jewish separateness and more modern, antisemitic themes regarding Jewish desires for political dominance, fliers, broadsides, and newspaper articles repeatedly warned Polish readers and voters regarding the ostensibly anti-Polish inclinations of Jewish organizations, their supposedly natural bond to various revolutionary organizations, and their consummate role as the definitive enemy (or Other) of Polish national politics and interests.¹² Although oftentimes

¹⁰ For more on the latter organization, see the informative: Christoph Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914: The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (New York, 1995).

¹¹ For a discussion of these developments, see Ury, *Barricades and Banners*, 172–213.

¹² On the history of “the Jew” as the consummate Other in modern Polish politics and society, see Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland’s Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln, 2006).

crude and deeply antisemitic, the National Democrats' campaign of fear regarding the potential role of Jewish parties and organizations proved to be wildly successful and helped pave the way to the National Democrats' electoral victories in Warsaw and other key locations.¹³ Moreover, the widespread turn to and use of antisemitic images, tropes and rhetoric in the early Duma elections helped set the tone for both Polish-Jewish relations and Jewish politics in Polish lands. Indeed, as the vision of interethnic solidarity and cooperation began to crumble, leaders and organizations began rallying various communities around the flag of ethno-nationalism.

The ascendance of the National Democrats in the Russian Empire's Polish regions underscores the rising influence of ethnic and national divides as liberal politics gave way to national passions and increasingly vocal demands for national rights, including autonomy, if not independence or separatism. Such demands became significantly more vocal and influential in the Empire's ethnically-mixed borderlands as the revolutionary wave began to fade in late 1906.¹⁴ The regime's abrupt dissolution of the First Duma in the summer of 1906, its attempts to rescind or even cancel many of the rights that it had granted in late 1905, and the radical restructuring of voting regulations in the elections to the Third Duma in 1907 dealt a serious blow to those liberal, democratic forces whose allure and promise were directly dependent upon the implementation and maintenance of democratic practices and institutions. Indeed, once these newly instituted and much celebrated mechanisms and apparatus were dismantled, the liberal camp and its promises of a peaceful transition to a constitutional democracy appeared to be little more than an ephemeral interruption swept away and forever erased by the counter-revolution's ever-powerful back tide. As revolutionary organizations returned underground, and liberal bodies proved to be somewhat powerless, if not essentially impotent, widespread popular resentment was re-channeled in a new, equally angry direction as national organizations and cleavages began to take hold and redefine the very contours of community, belonging and fate across the Empire of the tsars. Alongside Polish demands for local autonomy, Finnish, Lithuanian, and other ethno-national communities began to organize as national polities and demand collective, national rights.

¹³ See Ury, *Barricades and Banners*, 214–260.

¹⁴ For more on these divides, see Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier* (DeKalb, 1996).

As the revolutionary wave across the Empire passed from its socialist to its liberal to its national phase, Jewish communities across the Empire very often followed suit. As the Jewish folk saying tells us, “As the Christians go, so go the Jews” (*Vi es kristlt zikh, azoy yidlt zikh*). Hence, just as other communities began to be divided, organized, and politicized along ethno-national lines, nationally-oriented Jewish organizations began to rise to prominence in Jewish communities across the Pale of Settlement, Polish lands, and throughout other parts of the Empire. Moreover, while Zionist groups may have been the most recognized and well established of these Jewish national bodies, their early, principled opposition to political activity in the Diaspora created a gaping void in the political realm in 1905 and most of 1906, one that was quickly filled by more dynamic organizations and thinkers like the autonomist-minded historian and activist Simon Dubnow, a number of loosely affiliated Poale-Zion cells and other organizations. Indeed, it was not until after the dissolution of the First Duma and the subsequent conference of the Zionist Organization in Russia in Helsinki (Helsingfors) in late 1906 that Zionist activists and organizations throughout the Empire adopted a policy supporting political work in the present (*Gegenwartsarbeit*). Once embraced, this strategy would help return the Zionist organization back to the main stage of Jewish politics across the region. However, the solidification of this role as the leading political force in Jewish communities across the region was, ironically, dependent on additional set of external factors.

Bitter Disappointments: Popular Violence, Anti-Jewish Pogroms, and the Dilemmas of Modern Jewish Politics

While the ebb and flow of Jewish politics often unfolded and progressed in ways that were similar, if not parallel, to developments among other ethno-national communities throughout the Empire, they were also deeply influenced by factors and developments that were specific to the Jewish community, in particular, the waves of anti-Jewish violence (pogroms) that erupted in late 1905 and again in the summer of 1906.¹⁵ Moreover, while

¹⁵ For more on these events, see: Leo Motzkin (ed.), *Die Judenpogrome in Russland*, 2 vols. (Köln, 1910); Shlomo Lambroza, “The Pogroms of 1903–1906,” in John D. Klier, Shlomo Lambroza (eds.), *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge, 1992), 195–247; Darius Staliūnas, *Enemies for a Day: Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Violence in Lithuania under the Tsars* (Budapest, 2015); Artur Markowski, “Ssha i yevreyskiy pogrom v Belostoke v 1906 godu: politika i obshchestvennoe mnenie,” *Chasopis dla dasle-*

scholars continue to debate the origins, nature, and scope of this violence and the influence that such moments of mass violence had on the course of Jewish politics among the Russian Empire's five million Jewish residents, newspapers, political materials and other, personal sources reflect a deep, ongoing concern with the political ramifications and existential implications of repeated outbursts of anti-Jewish violence.¹⁶ Hence, while the course of modern Jewish politics may have been influenced, if not steered, by larger developments throughout the Empire, it was, in many senses, also defined and bound by Jewish encounters with, fears of and responses to the waves of anti-Jewish violence that erupted in hundreds of locations in late 1905 and again in key Polish cities like Białystok and Siedlce in the summer and fall of 1906.

Coming immediately after the announcement of the October Manifesto in late 1905, the eruption of over six-hundred anti-Jewish pogroms in the Empire's western borderlands sent deep shock waves throughout Jewish communities in the Empire and beyond. In the immediate aftermath of the October pogroms, political leaders, community members, and other observers attempted to make sense of the popular violence that seemed to stain the otherwise glorious revolution that transpired before everyone's eyes. Furthermore, while many of these same leaders and community members were ready and indeed able to put the violent events of late 1905 behind them and take part in the elections to the First Duma in early 1906 in earnest, the second wave of anti-Jewish violence in the summer of 1906 in Białystok and several months later in Siedlce led to an additional, perhaps even more meaningful round of considerations and re-considerations regarding the connection between revolution, violence, and the place and fate of "the Jews" across the Russian Empire. In many cases, the repeated confrontations with and responses to anti-Jewish violence led to a deeper clarification of the differences and boundaries between the different political camps competing for the loyalty and support of Jews across Eastern Europe.

While history and historians are often guilty of implanting patterns and developments on the past when viewed through the lens of the present,

davannya yaurejskaj gistorii, demografii i ekanomiki, litaratury, movy i etnografii 10 (2016), 5: 72–86. For a discussion regarding the influence of the pogroms of 1906 on Jewish politics in Polish regions, see Ury, *Barricades and Banners*, 261–272.

¹⁶ Recent discussions of these and related issues include: Jonathan Dekel-Chen et al. (eds.), *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History* (Bloomington, 2011); and Robert Nemes, Daniel Unowsky (eds.), *Sites of European Antisemitism in the Age of Mass Politics, 1880–1918* (Hanover–London, 2014).

the ongoing encounters with anti-Jewish violence led, in Frankel's terms, to a generational crisis that would, in turn, serve as a major turning point in the history of modern Jewish politics across the continent of Europe and beyond. If Frankel's much-celebrated and oft-cited interpretation of modern Jewish history and politics is accurate, then there is little way to understand fully the development of modern Jewish politics over the course of the twentieth century without considering the impact of these two, successive waves of violence in 1905 and 1906. Moreover, while violence was a key part of the late imperial society and many of the movements that took part in the revolutionary wave, it played a particularly central role in shaping the course and development of Jewish politics for the better part of the next hundred years. Time and again, violence—or, more specifically, the interpretation, narration, and memory of anti-Jewish violence—would become a key prism for understanding, shaping, and defining the central differences between the main political camps (and parties) operating in Jewish communities across the region and beyond.

For members of the revolutionary camp, including not only supporters of the Bund but also Jewish (and non-Jewish) members of the PPS, the SDKPiL, and other, smaller organizations, anti-Jewish violence during the period was very often framed, interpreted, and understood as part of the larger, ideologically-based struggle between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces. Time and again, party fliers, spirited articles, and other political proclamations declared that the violence was initiated by representatives or supporters of the regime as part of a larger attempt by reactionary political forces to divert energies from the revolutionary wave, divide the various anti-government bodies, and taint the revolution and its supporters as a destructive, if not violent, project. On these and other occasions, the violence that erupted in 1905 and 1906 was viewed, explained, and understood as part of anti-revolutionary efforts to suppress the revolution. Despite the fact that many revolutionary organizations did join forces with Jewish groups to defend local Jewish communities, the anti-Jewish aspects of much of this violence were very often minimized, brushed aside, or even rationalized. Loyal to their newfound ideals, many continued to view the violence within the wider context of larger historical and political struggles and, as such, believed that the best, if not the only, way to counter the anti-Jewish violence was to work towards the ultimate victory of the revolution.

Simultaneously elated and confused by events at hand, advocates of the liberal camp were forced to reconcile their hopes for the democratic

transformation of imperial society with the repeated outbursts of violence—both revolutionary and anti-Jewish—that continued to unfold before their eyes. Which of these larger developments represented the true face of imperial society and course of history as the region entered the twentieth century? The millions of tsarist subjects who congregated in the streets and squares in towns across the Empire and demanded the implementation of democratic reforms and institutions? Or those subjects of the tsar who took part in the innumerable acts of violence directed at Jews across the Pale of Settlement and in neighboring lands? Here, too, a deep, binding, and perhaps even blinding faith in ostensibly abstract concepts like the course of history, the path of progress, and the march of democracy supported the interpretation that the tensions and violence that had erupted were little more than passing phases on the way to a better, more enlightened society. Brimming with hope regarding the long-awaited changes that appeared to be unfolding before their eyes, many liberals (including many Jewish liberals) were far too immersed, invested, and enamored with the larger political transformations taking place to view the anti-Jewish violence of late 1905 and the summer and fall of 1906 as anything more than the final whimpers of an *ancien régime* that was destined to be eclipsed by the seemingly unstoppable path of democratic redemption.

If revolutionary organizations were determined to interpret the violence as part of the larger struggle between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces, and the liberal camp was often hesitant or even unable to note that the violence targeted primarily Jews, many activists, journalists, and leaders in the Jewish national camp understood and presented the events at hand as key, definitive turning points in the course of Jewish history, society, and politics across Eastern Europe and beyond. Coming on the heels of the Kishinev pogrom of April 1903 and in the shadow of “the Southern Storm” pogroms of 1881–1882, the violence of 1905–1906 was very often deemed not only to be anti-Jewish in its expression but also in its very motives.¹⁷ Furthermore, once understood and articulated as such, these events would quickly become integral parts of a series of anti-Jewish outbreaks that would divide Jews from their neighbors in Eastern Europe throughout the course of history from the Chmielnicki Uprising of 1648–1649 to the Southern Storms of 1881–1882 to the pogroms of

¹⁷ For more on these events, see: John D. Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881–1882* (Cambridge, 2011); and Edward H. Judge, *Easter in Kishinev: Anatomy of a Pogrom* (New York, 1992).

1905–1906.¹⁸ Lastly, once inserted into a historically continuous narrative of anti-Jewish attitudes, behavior and violence, the pogroms became not only a central, heated topic of debate in Jewish national circles, organizations, and thought but, over time, a critical factor leading to, motivating, and, in turn, re-enforcing ethno-national divisions and self-definitions. Although scholars will continue to debate this and other points regarding the origins and path of nationalism, in general, and of Jewish national politics and organization, in particular, Frankel and others have repeatedly argued that these moments of violence served as key “turning points” in Jewish history, society, and politics. In this case, the repeated waves of violence in 1905 and 1906 helped shift the center of Jewish political thought, organization, and action from revolutionary fervor and democratic aspirations to national consolidation and organization.

A Missing Chapter in the History of Jewish Politics? Political Uncertainty, Physical Insecurity, and the Rise of Jewish Conservatism

The ebb and tide of Jewish political thinking, organization, and activity throughout the Revolution of 1905 (1904–1907) underscores several main themes regarding the nature and course of Jewish politics as it repeatedly intersected and interacted with imperial society and politics. First and foremost, Jewish politics throughout imperial Russia repeatedly proved itself to be a minority affair. Throughout the period, the direction and content of Jewish politics in the Russian Empire was directly influenced, bound and, at times, even defined by external political developments. When the various and sundry revolutionary organizations across the Empire appeared to be on the cusp of a sudden and imminent transformation of the tsarist regime, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Jews filled the streets and squares of Warsaw, Vilna, and other cities and towns in support of different revolutionary organizations, some overtly Jewish and others distinctly supranational. Despite this early and fervent support for revolutionary organizations, as soon as official reforms in late 1905 and early 1906 gave a distinct advantage and an accompanying sense of hope to democratic, liberal organizations and parties, Jewish activists and

¹⁸ Israel Bartal, Scott Ury, “Between Jews and Their Neighbours: Isolation, Confrontation, and Influence in Eastern Europe,” *Polin* 24 (2012), 3–30.

community members quickly and effortlessly transferred their allegiance to these democratic bodies and processes. Thus, the electoral turnout among Jewish voters in various urban curiae was as high if not higher than that of their non-Jewish neighbors. Lastly, once the tsarist regime was able to reassert its authority and began rescinding liberal reforms and abolishing democratic institution, Jewish leaders and parties began to look inwards and focus on communal re-organization and reconstruction.¹⁹

This distinct turn away from political engagement in the larger public sphere and towards an increased focus and involvement in internal Jewish affairs was expedited further by the specter of anti-Jewish violence in late 1905 and again in the summer and fall of 1906. The response of Jewish leaders and activists to the combination of the liberal camp's rapidly declining fortunes and the ongoing fear of popular, anti-Jewish violence highlights not only the tumultuous, unpredictable nature of (Jewish) politics during this period, but also the precarious sense of belonging and security that affected so many of the Russian Empire's five million Jewish residents. Time and again, the fortune and fate of Jewish political activity and organization seemed to be determined by the will and whim of external actors and developments. While this does not contradict the larger motif of agency and self-determination that runs through and defines so much of the academic literature on modern Jewish politics, it does raise fundamental questions about the limits of agency and self-determination that Jews (or members of any other national minority) were able to achieve and maintain as members of a minority community within the context of a multinational empire. Moreover, these repeated moments of interaction and dependence raise fundamental questions regarding the very field of modern Jewish politics as it is often understood and constructed as a concerted act of (historiographical) self-determination.²⁰

Lastly, the return of Jewish politics to the internal realm of Jewish communal affairs from late 1906 until the final collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 should be seen as a key aspect of a fourth, under-researched aspect of modern Jewish politics at the time, Jewish conservatism. Parallel to and

¹⁹ This process is described in: Levin, *Mi-mahapekchah le-milhamah*. See also Scott Ury, "Civil Society, Secularization and Modernity among Jews in Turn-of-the-Century Eastern Europe," in Ari Joskowitz, Ethan B. Katz (eds.), *Secularism in Question: Jews and Judaism in Modern Times* (Philadelphia, 2015), 142–167.

²⁰ On the place of agency and self-determination in the study of modern Jewish politics, see: Scott Ury, "Be-ikvot Mendelsohn: Madrikh Ezra le-ḥokrei politikah yehudit moderanit," *Gal-Ed* 25 (2017), 188–195.

in conjunction with the rise of conservative politics throughout the Empire, Jewish politics in the period reflects many of the central characteristics of conservative politics in general. Indeed, the pressing anxieties regarding political instability and accompanying fears of ethnic violence, the increasing focus on internal, communal affairs, the rising status and popularity of Jewish nationalism (including but not limited to political Zionism), and the overall retreat from earlier calls for the large-scale restructuring of society and politics are all traits typical of conservative politics, from Burke to Reagan.

Re-Imagining the Revolution of 1905: Narrating Order, Society, and Self

With contributions from scholars based in Israel, Poland, and the United States, the articles and sources collected in this volume of *Studia Judaica* are designed both to introduce the topic to non-specialists and to shed light on questions that have hitherto evaded the attention of scholars. From a disciplinary perspective, the volume is characterized by contributions that emphasize general developments, those that highlight the experiences of the Empire's Jews and those that attempt to integrate the two dominant historiographical perspectives. Influenced by professional training, worldviews and linguistic skills, this long-standing, if not somewhat traditional, academic divide between scholars of "Eastern Europe" and those who focus on "the Jews" is complemented by an additional set of thematic questions that define and divide contributions that examine moments of social disorder from those that highlight and perhaps even help create an aura of political (and social) order. The last major theme that characterizes many of the contributions to this volume is the increasing awareness of the scholarly and historical divide between personal experience and the historical process. Here, as well, there is no sense of or pressing need for unity among the different authors as the gaps and tensions between the personal and the historical (or perhaps one should say the personal and the historiographical) as well as the very moment of or process through which the personal becomes inscribed as historical appear and re-appear throughout this volume.

Influenced by a wide array of theoretical interpretations of modern society, Piotr Laskowski opens the volume with a fascinating piece on "Revolution in a Shtetl: Literary Image and Historical Representation." Concentrating on the novella by Isaac Meir Weissenberg, *A Shtetl*, Laskowski discusses not only the very ways that popular unrest during

the period was often transformed and translated into political power, but also the different narrative strategies that generations of scholars implemented as they attempted to reconstruct the ever-changing events of 1904–1907. Scott Ury continues this discussion regarding the tension between social disorder, political order, and scholarly accounts of these intersecting phenomena in his essay on the various types of violence that unfolded and shaped the period for many Jewish and Polish residents of Warsaw. By dividing, dissecting, and deconstructing different types of violence—urban, revolutionary, governmental, and anti-Jewish—Ury argues for a re-consideration of traditional Jewish conceptions and interpretations of the waves of anti-Jewish violence that erupted in late 1905 and again in the summer and fall of 1906. The unclear origins, ambiguous nature, and various interpretations of political violence lie at the center of Inna Shtakser’s analysis regarding political thought and action among young anarchists, many of whom were Jewish. Based on a wide range of personal documents, Shtakser takes the reader deep into the individual experiences and personal dilemmas of many of the young participants in this period of social tumult, political change, and existential crises.

If the first three contributions to this volume revolve around themes of disorder and violence, the last two articles represent, in many senses, the opposite side of these larger social, political, and scholarly phenomena, the turn to, need for, and construction of order. Brian Horowitz’s article “Vladimir Jabotinsky: A Zionist Activist on the Rise, 1905–1906” examines the impact of the events at hand on the thinking of one of the central architects of modern Zionism. Focusing on a series of political pamphlets from the period as well as dozens of articles written at the time, Horowitz traces Jabotinsky’s attempts to make sense of the revolution and violence transpiring before his keenly-focused journalistic eye. Horowitz argues that Jabotinsky’s writing from the period demonstrates how he, too, struggled to make sense of the developments taking place around him as he searched fervently for and ultimately created a new path, that of synthetic Zionism, that would help catapult him from his marginal status as a young journalist to his central role as a key leader of modern Zionism. The connection between revolution, violence, and order lies at the center of Małgorzata Domagalska’s examination of how the events of 1905 and relations between Poles and Jews were portrayed in the Polish weekly *Rola*. Much like Horowitz’s discussion of Jabotinsky, Domagalska’s analysis of *Rola* also underscores how newspapers and journals often served as key

tools for the crystallization of national ideologies, political movements, and ethnic divides during this period of turmoil.

The discussions surrounding the intersection between social disorder and political order are continued in the two annotated historical sources published in this volume. Artur Markowski's translation of an anonymous letter that was sent to the General-Governor of the Vilna Province in 1903 sheds much light on the concerns and fears of Jewish communal leaders at the time as well as their relationship with (and also ongoing dependence upon) representatives of the tsarist regime. Markowski's publication of the Russian government source highlights another key divide in the very study of this period, if not the entire field, the knowledge of research languages and the different types of historical sources that this knowledge helps uncover and, in this and other cases, even produce. Worldviews, linguistic skills, and source materials as well as the connection between these factors lead to the second source published in this volume, Ela Bauer's translation of parts of Nahum Sokolow's personal diary. Long-buried in the catacombs of the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, Bauer's introduction and translation of Sokolow's personal experiences bring to light another perspective on the events of late 1905 and early 1906, that of a Jewish journalist and communal leader from Warsaw, visiting the imperial capital.

Although the different contributions to this volume address a range of topics and perspectives regarding the Revolution of 1905 in the Russian Empire, they are by no means exhaustive. Thus, while each piece fills a small part of this larger puzzle, much research remains before scholars, and readers will have a full picture of the events of 1905 and their influence on the Russian Empire's five million Jewish residents. Developments among Jews in small towns and shtetls, the response of the Jewish religious leaders, relations between various revolutionary organizations, and the experience of a range of ostensibly apolitical actors are just some of the topics that remain unexplored. This being the case, our hope is that this volume of *Studia Judaica* will not only shed new light on several key chapters in this tumultuous period in Jewish, Polish, and Russian histories but also encourage students and scholars to examine, research, and write about the critical connection between violence, revolution, and the Jews of the Russian Empire in 1904–1907 and beyond.

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