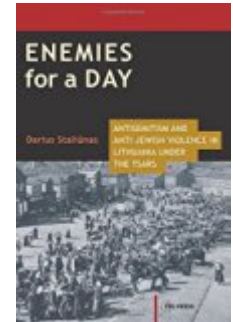


**Darius Staliūnas.** *Enemies for a Day: Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Violence in Lithuania under the Tsars.* Historical Studies in Eastern Europe and Eurasia Series. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015. 320 pp. \$39.99, paper, ISBN 978-963-386-097-7.



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Darius Staliūnas's new monograph, *Enemies for a Day: Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish violence in Lithuania under the Tsars*, is certainly the most meticulously and rigorously researched historical study of anti-Jewish violence in Lithuania so far. Drawing from primary sources located in archives in Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Belarus, plus the YIVO archives in New York, allows Staliūnas to paint a complex and ambivalent picture of the more conflict-ridden aspects of Christian-Jewish relations. At first glance, two reasons come to mind why historians should care deeply about this topic: firstly, pre-World War I Lithuania is frequently assumed to have been a "safe haven" for Jews during the pogrom waves of the early 1880s and 1903-6—a view that needs to be tested; and, secondly, the region is of high relevance to Holocaust scholars, as the mass murder of Jews was conducted with exceptional speed and totality here. Staliūnas has decided not to draw broad lines from pre-World War I anti-Jewish violence to the Holocaust, which is a reasonable choice, as the extreme violence of 1941 seems much more

grounded in the destruction of independent statehood and the dynamics of occupation than in anything else. Staliūnas's main research questions thus pertain to the exceptional character of Lithuania as a comparatively peaceful region in imperial Russia.

Staliūnas divides his study into six chapters. The first examines the spread and intensity of anti-Jewish sentiment over the course of most of the nineteenth century as exemplified by the numerous blood libels against Jews. Staliūnas notes that the increasingly critical stance of state authorities toward ritual-murder trials led to the conviction among peasants that the state institutions offered no protection against Jews. The second chapter analyzes the reception of "modern" antisemitism in Lithuania, arguing that it did not gain significant ground among national activists because of their anti-Polish and anti-imperial agenda. At the same time, national activists did not do much to actively fight antisemitism. The three following chapters cover concentrated outbursts of anti-Jewish violence during the two Rus-

sian pogrom waves (1881-82 and 1903-6) and in the year 1900. Staliūnas notes that over the whole period of time, when the southern provinces of the empire were plagued by waves of anti-Jewish violence that increased in brutality and scope, pogroms in Lithuania remained rural and continued to be characterized by the destruction and looting of property, only rarely resulting in fatalities. Local officials, although often judeophobic themselves, tried to contain outbursts of violence, even if just for the sake of maintaining the public order. Using the example of a string of acts of anti-Jewish violence around the small town of Konstantinovo in northern Lithuania in 1900, Staliūnas shows how different factors had to form a distinct constellation in which violence could erupt: rumors about the ritual murder of a girl, a misinterpreted religious procession of the local Jews, and a very specific local disagreement between Jews and Christians. As a result of the weakness of both the state authorities and their attempts to contain pogroms, peasants believed they had to take matters in their own hands in order to remind the Jews of their place in the social hierarchy. During the second pogrom wave in the Russian Empire, the pattern of pogroms in Lithuania changed slightly in accordance with empire-wide developments—especially the organization of Jewish self-defense units—but the scale of anti-Jewish violence remained low. In an interesting exchange of letters, Pyotr Svyatopolk Mirskiy, the former governor-general of Vil'na, described his impressions after having been transferred from Lithuania to Kishinev: here, pogroms occurred as a result of "a deeply rooted antagonism between the Christian and Jewish parts of the city's population," whereas in Lithuania they broke out as a result of "accidental events" (p. 201).

The sixth chapter is probably the most compelling. Staliūnas contextualizes anti-Jewish violence in Lithuania by comparing it to pogroms in Belarus and eastern Galicia and to other forms of ethnic violence in Lithuania. Here, the author offers an explanation why pogroms in Lithuania

were of such a small scale. News and rumors about the pogroms, which traveled from the southern provinces northward, made much less of an impact on distant Lithuania than on Belarus. Moreover, Belarus received a boost of industrialization in the late nineteenth century, whereas Lithuania remained rural and agricultural, which meant that mobility was lower and social fault lines remained traditional, thus creating "fewer preconditions for anti-Jewish violence than rapid economic modernization" did (p. 240). The brief but insightful contextualization of anti-Jewish violence in a broader history of ethnic conflicts in Lithuania, especially between Lithuanians and Poles, provides points of departure for further research.

The conclusions largely confirm assumptions made in recent sociologically informed studies of ethnic violence.[1] The reasons why this book does not cover a lot of new ground beyond this are mainly to be found in the definitions of its key categories: antisemitism and anti-Jewish violence. As forms of anti-Jewish violence, Staliūnas examines almost exclusively pogroms, which he defines as non-everyday "extraordinary phenomena" of anti-Jewish violence that are marked by a minimum of duration and number of participants as well as by its site: a place of mass congregation or a restricted inhabited area (p. 5). For the whole period under research, Staliūnas counts ten instances of anti-Jewish violence that fit this description, which is indeed not very many. Would an inclusion of violence against individual Jews (for example, innkeepers or peddlers) have led to insights beyond the conclusion that anti-Jewish violence was on a significantly lower scale than elsewhere? As antisemitism, Staliūnas defines "those views that attribute certain negative qualities to *all* Jews and regard Jews as irredeemably 'corrupt' and causing incorrigible harm to those around them" (p. 64). Although this definition is broad, Staliūnas explicitly dismisses as antisemitism those anti-Jewish stipulations made in the context of economic nationalism. This leaves

the chapter on antisemitism awkwardly disjointed from the remaining chapters on anti-Jewish violence and deprives the study of potential relevance for the later history of Lithuania, when these anti-Jewish economic strategies were transferred into state policy. Consequently, this regrettably leaves the study with less to say about the specifics of antisemitism in Lithuania than the reader may wish. Staliūnas repeatedly and convincingly highlights the crucial significance of socioeconomic antagonism for the pogroms, with peasants looting Jewish shops and destroying Jewish property. Anti-Jewish rhetoric of nationalists was, in that sense, no chimera, but built on these same conflicts. The clear dissociation of economic nationalism as a sphere of the national movements from the more localized "moral economy" of the peasantry is of only limited use when investigating antisemitism in eastern Europe.

These minor shortcomings notwithstanding, this is a highly useful, critical, and analytical study. While it will be most interesting for scholars focusing on the history of Christian-Jewish Lithuania and on the study of ethnic violence, it deserves a larger audience that will appreciate Staliūnas's insights into the broader history of local rule in the Russian Empire and of everyday life in the imperial provinces.

#### Note

[1]. For example, see Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); John Klier, *Russians, Jews and the Pogroms of 1881-1882* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Werner Bergmann, "Anti-Jewish Violence in 19th and 20th Century Europe: Some Theoretical Considerations," in *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 21 (2012): 26-53.

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