



**Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, Helmut Walser Smith, eds..** *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern Germany.* Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany Series. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002. 210 pp. \$80.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-472-09796-8.



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In modern Jewish history, "pogroms" are associated in particular with Russia. In 1881, 1903, 1906, and 1918/19 some of the worst atrocities against Jews before the Holocaust were committed in Russia and the Ukraine. "Pogrom" is, after all, a Russian word meaning "devastation." For the period before 1933, such brutal violence directed against Jews is not associated with Germany. The German states emancipated their Jewish populations, albeit in a long and uneven process. The anti-Jewish riots of 1819 and 1848 were, according to most scholars, the last vestiges of the collapsing feudal order. In the late 1870s, modern anti-semitism developed as a response to the full emancipation granted to Jews in Germany. A radical ideology, it was not of necessity connected with violent acts. While pervasive in many social spheres, such as the Prussian military, its political influence was limited. Admittedly, there were a few isolated incidents of antisemitic violence directed against Jews, but these occurred in backward rural regions in the Prussian East and the state authorities quickly intervened. During the First World War antisemitism as an ideology entered a much more radical phase. After the war,

antisemitic violence became increasingly common and widespread, even during the stable years of the Weimar Republic.

The essay collection *Exclusionary Violence*, with contributions by German and American historians, subtly challenges this narrative, especially for the period from 1815 to 1918. It is a major achievement for two reasons:

1. In several detailed case studies, the contributors analyze violence against Jews in Germany before and after 1918. They argue that collective violence against Jews was systematic and "modern" as early as 1819. "Modern," of course, is a complex term. The case studies suggest that an important cause for "modern" anti-Jewish violence before and after the 1870s was opposition to Jewish emancipation. As Richard S. Levy argues in his concluding essay, before full emancipation was granted in 1869-1871, the rioters could and in fact did make a real political impact, delaying the progress of emancipation, especially in Bavaria, Hamburg, and Baden. After emancipation was achieved, however, political motives played a less important role for most rioters. But after the

1870s, antisemitic political activists, representing a nationally organized movement, could exploit local riots for their own ends and give them "national publicity" through their own media (pp. 193-95). Thus a convincing case is made for rethinking the history of modern antisemitism in Germany. The volume is part of a number of recent publications on modern antisemitism in Imperial and Weimar Germany whose authors focus on individual and collective violence.[1] The contributions can also be read as a very substantial and differentiated response to Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, especially his chapter on the historical background of "eliminationist antisemitism." [2]

2. The book presents a thorough discussion of concepts dealing with collective violence directed against (perceived) minorities beyond the Jewish case. The editors have developed the concept "exclusionary violence," which they apply to the riots directed against Jews treated in the book. An "exclusionary riot" is defined as a "one-sided, non-governmental form of collective violence against an ethnic group that occurs when one ethnic group (usually the majority) no longer expects to receive redress from the state for the (perceived) threat caused by another ethnic group (usually the minority)" (p. 12).

The editors have arranged chronologically six essays examining individual "exclusionary riots" in detail; two concluding essays offer evaluations. Most authors touch on two important articles by Eleonore Sterling and Jacob Katz respectively on the anti-Jewish riots of 1819 in several German towns and cities. While Sterling interpreted the so called Hep Hep riots as "displaced social protest," Katz emphasized that the riots were a consequence of a real Jewish-Gentile conflict and that rioters consciously chose Jews as targets of their violence. The violence, therefore, was not an epiphenomenon of a general crisis but clearly directed against Jewish emancipation.[3] In his concluding essay, Levy provides illuminating back-

ground on the origins of Katz's and Sterling's essays.

The differing approaches by Sterling and Katz shape the first two articles. It is perhaps no coincidence that Stefan Rohrbacher, who follows the Katz line, has focused his research on violence directed against Jews, while Manfred Gailus has analyzed "social protest" at large and in general between 1847 and 1849 in the German states. Rohrbacher's article on the 1819 Hep Hep riots is based on his dissertation, *Gewalt im Biedermeier*, which deals with anti-Jewish violence between 1815 and 1848. Rohrbacher describes the riots, especially its center Würzburg and the diffusion to other German states, notably to Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Heidelberg. While describing the riots as "heterogeneous" in many ways, he nevertheless explains the rioting as an act of "violent politics" against Jewish emancipation. For the 1830 riots Rohrbacher accepts Sterling's approach (socio-economic context), but regarding the 1848 riots he regards the opposition to Jewish emancipation as the primary motive. Gailus, on the other hand, stresses the "multidimensionality" of the riots of March and April 1848.[4]

The two strongest essays of the volume treat the chain of anti-Jewish riots in Pomerania and West Prussia in 1881 and 1900, respectively. Both authors have thoroughly researched two events that hitherto were hardly mentioned in the literature. Both events illustrate characteristic aspects of the "exclusionary riot" concept, outlined in the introduction: a "low level of organization" of the rioters, the "spreading in waves," and an "episodic character" (pp. 12-16).

Christhard Hoffmann analyzes what contemporaries described as the "Pomeranian Civil War." The rioting fell into a phase of intense antisemitic political agitation in Imperial Germany. In February 1881, a few days after an inflammatory speech by a notorious antisemitic politician, the Neustettin synagogue went up in flames. A few months later, in June 1881, an anti-Jewish riot in

Neustettin quickly spread to surrounding towns. Hoffmann explains the events as a combination of socio-economic crisis, intense agitation by radical antisemitic activists who spread rumors partly through newspaper articles, and dilatory and incompetent government reaction. Many rioters were convinced that they acted in the best interest of the government—Hoffmann speaks of a "loyalist pogrom," as opposed to a "state-led pogrom." Given the context of the "Zweite Reichsgründung" (second founding of the Reich), Bismarck's political turn towards the right, and his (temporary) tactical support of antisemitic politicians, the "loyalist" behavior was not entirely without cause.

Helmut Walser Smith's essay on the Konitz riots in 1900 is derived from his recently published monograph, *The Butcher's Tale*.<sup>[5]</sup> Walser Smith reconstructs the evolution of the riots in a detailed narrative. Parallels to the Neustettin events are obvious. Again antisemitic agitators quickly appeared on the scene, employing manipulative tactics. Newspaper articles clearly played a role in charging the atmosphere and spreading the riots. The rioters attacked not only Jews, their shops, homes, cemeteries, and synagogues, but also state authorities because these were allegedly acting in the "Jewish" interest. The highly reflective essay illustrates the concept of "exclusionary violence" better than the other contributions. After the chain of events that led to the riots and their suppression, Walser Smith concludes, the "Jews of Konitz [were] strangers in their own hometown" (p. 121). Although the process had its own dynamic, the persistence of widespread belief in anti-Jewish stereotypes ("blood libel") was a major determinant for the course of events. The article and Walser Smith's monograph demonstrate the complete breakdown of the social fabric in the West Prussian town within a few months, prefiguring 1918 and 1933.

David Clay Large treats the notorious Berlin "Scheunenviertel" riot of 1923. The article draws on his research for a recently published hefty vol-

ume on Berlin history.<sup>[6]</sup> While some scholars describe this incident as a "pogrom" and draw a direct line to Nazi violence after 1933, others, including Large, are more cautious. The riot reflected the extreme social and political tensions at the height of the inflation. On the day that violence broke out, food riots erupted all over the city, partly because the price for a loaf of bread had risen to 140 billion marks. Nevertheless, the mob that attacked the "Scheunenviertel," an area with a highly visible transmigrant population of Jews from Eastern Europe, singled out Jews and shops which were regarded as "Jewish" (that included also shops not owned by Jews). The authorities were slow to react. When the police finally arrived, many rioters had already moved to targets in other neighborhoods. Large recounts the events and summarizes differing newspaper editorials. The article is largely descriptive; the one important conclusion is that the emergent Nazi party may have "learned" from this event. For a contextualized and thorough analysis, interested readers should turn to Dirk Walter's recent study on anti-Jewish violence in the Weimar Republic.<sup>[7]</sup>

The contribution by Wolfgang Benz on the "Reichskristallnacht" (Night of Broken Glass) also disappoints. The article provides little in the way of new information and research. Benz's conclusion is brief and simple: he sees no connection between the "Reichskristallnacht" and the exclusionary riots described by the other authors. Indeed, the assault was not spontaneous but carefully orchestrated and systematically carried out by party and state officials in hundreds of villages, towns, and cities throughout the Reich. Yet, in more than a few isolated cases, bystanders joined the violence, a point that Benz treats but regards (wrongly in the reviewer's opinion) as utterly irrelevant. Benz also contends that while most "ordinary Germans" did not openly resist the pogrom or support its Jewish victims, they silently disapproved of the material destruction and open violence. This may well have been true, but does not mean

that the "silent majority" did not harbor anti-semitic feelings of its own. Nor does it prove that they did not find largely acceptable the marginalization and persecution of Jews per se. It was the means--violent and public--not the ends they found objectionable.

Unfortunately, Benz touches upon but does not discuss the "ritual" elements of the "pogrom." The parallels between the "Reichskristallnacht" and "traditional" anti-Jewish riots are obvious. While the "Reichskristallnacht," as Levy points out, is in many ways the "antithesis" of the other riots, Nazi officials clearly borrowed elements for their "script" from traditional anti-Jewish violence, as they imagined it. Levy underlines this crucial aspect in his concluding essay: the instigators of the "Reichskristallnacht" attempted quite consciously to "place" their actions in the "historical tradition" of anti-Jewish riots (p. 201). This connection suggests that one or two essays on anti-Jewish violence in the medieval and early modern periods might profitably have been included in the volume, not least to define more clearly what was "modern" in respect to "traditional" forms and norms of violence directed against Jews and other social groups.

The two concluding essays offer a sociological and an historical assessment. Werner Bergmann seeks to provide a theoretical framework for the "exclusionary riot" concept. He develops a rather complex model with different theoretical sub-models. For all of its potential theoretical benefits, the introduction to the volume succeeds far better in defining and contextualizing the concept historically and methodologically. Moreover, the individual case studies, especially by Hoffmann and Walser Smith, demonstrate the limits of rigid theoretical models. Levy, on the other hand, has written a substantial essay that sums up the contributions, discusses their relevance, and fills conspicuous voids (for instance, in the case of Benz).

The essays (especially those by Hoffmann, Walser Smith, and Levy) succeed in establishing

the concept of "exclusionary riots." Nevertheless, the editors do not really explore one significant question. What was unique to the German episodes of exclusionary violence, and what did they share with riots outside of German-speaking Europe? Are these riots really so closely connected that they can be understood without going beyond the German milieu? Quite apart from their "multidimensionality," the anti-Jewish riots of 1848 were not limited to the German states proper, but occurred across Central Europe. The 1923 Berlin riot, too, it could be argued, was part of a broad wave of social unrest in Berlin in early November 1923 at the height of the inflation. That leaves the Hep Hep riots of 1819 (which also occurred in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Krakov) and the two significant riots in Pomerania and West Prussia. Despite its strengths, the volume might have benefited from a comparative approach--on an intra-European level (especially regarding the East-West dimension of anti-Jewish violence) but also on a structural level (comparisons with social violence directed against other groups).

#### Notes

[1]. Dirk Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt: Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Verlag Nachf., 1999); Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Antisemitism in a German Town* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002); Christoph Nonn, *Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder. Ger=cht, Gewalt und Antisemitismus im Kaiserreich* (G=ttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002); Johannes Gro=, *Ritualmordbeschuldigungen gegen Juden im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871-1914)* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2002).

[2]. Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1999), esp. pp. 49-79.

[3]. Eleonore O. Sterling, "Anti-Jewish Riots in Germany in 1819: A Displacement of Social Protest," *Historia Judaica* 12 (1950): pp. 105-42; Ja-

cob Katz, "The Hep Hep Riots in Germany of 1819: The Historical Background," *Zion* 38 (1973): pp. 62-117 (in Hebrew).

[4]. Stefan Rohrbacher, *Gewalt im Biedermeier: Antij=dische Ausschreitungen in Vorm=rz und Revolution 1815-1848/49* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus 1993); Manfred Gailus, *Stra=e und Brot: Sozialer Protest in den deutschen Staaten unter besonderer Ber=cksichtigung Preu=ens 1847-1849* (G=ttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

[5]. Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale*. For reviews see: Richard S. Levy, review of Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Antisemitism in a German Town*, H-Antisemitism, H-Net Reviews, December, 2002 (URL: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=278141043567312>); Milos Vec, "Das ist etwas f=r einen Fachmann, wie ich es bin," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 13, 2003: p. 40.

[6]. David Clay Large, *Germany's Metropolis: A History of Modern Berlin* (New York: Norton, 1999).

[7]. Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalit=t und Gewalt*.

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