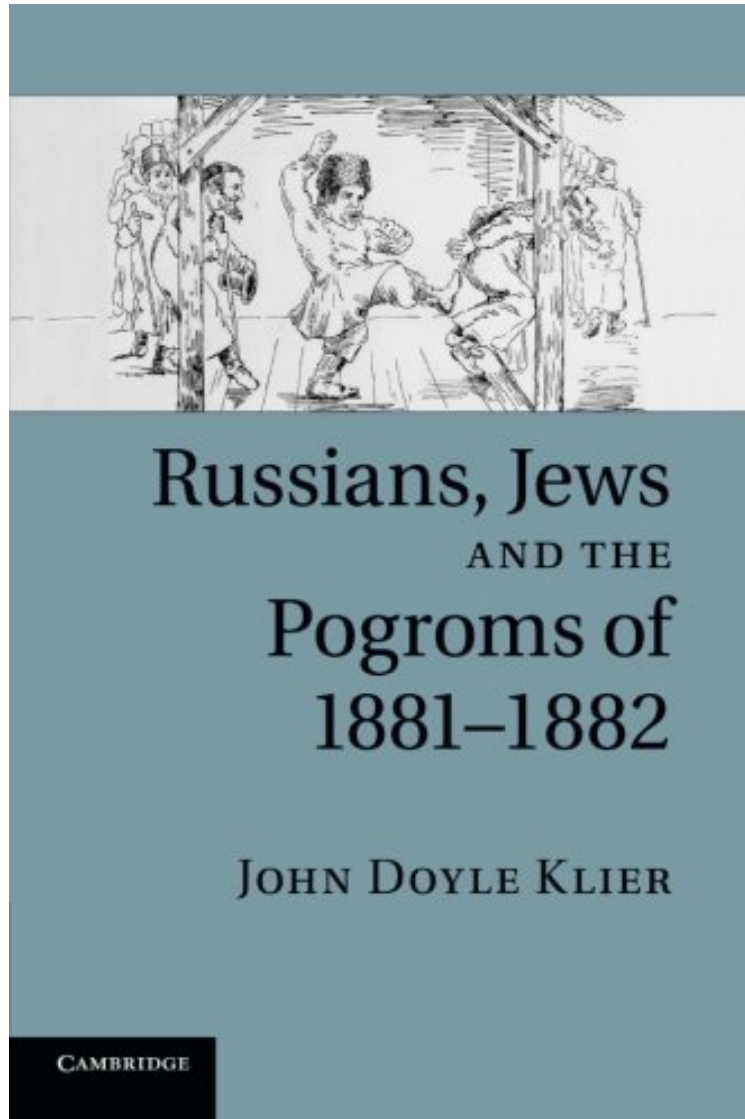


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Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882

John Doyle Klier

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#2328534 in Books Klier John Doyle 2014-01-30 2014-01-30 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.02 x 1.02 x 5.981, 1.51 #File Name: 1107634156518 pages Russians Jews and the Pogroms of 1881 1882 | File size: 28.Mb

John Doyle Klier : Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Encyclopedic Detail on Russian Pogroms. Conspiracies Rejected. Blame-Christianity Myth Rejected By Jan Peczkis This work examines the pogroms in tsarist Russia, and does so from various angles. Author John Doyle Klier includes a map of the pogrom occurrences, as well as a catalogue of archival

descriptions of many of the events. He strongly rejects conspiracy theories that blame the pogroms on the tsarist Russian government and its supposed attempts to scapegoat the Jews for Russia's problems. He analyzes the pogroms in terms of the reactions of local friends and foes of the Jews, evaluates the government commissions that studied the pogroms, and comments on international reactions to the pogroms. Finally, the author places the pogroms in the broader context of the place of Jews in Russian society. Klier warns against exaggerating the pogroms. He quips, (quote) Yet when applied indiscriminately to events in Eastern Europe, the term can be misleading, the more so when it implies that "pogroms" were regular events in the region and that they always shared common features. In fact, outbreaks of mass violence against Jews were extraordinary events, not a regular feature of East European life. (unquote). (p. 58).

POGROMS NOT DRIVEN BY CHRISTIANITYA few of the pogroms in Russia were associated with the desecration of Jewish religious symbols. In other cases, the synagogues were the only Jewish buildings spared. (pp. 69-70). Pointedly, author Klier categorically rejects popular attempts to blame hostility towards Jews on traditional Christian teachings about Jews. He comments, (quote) It has not been difficult to fit the pogroms into the context of Russian religious prejudice and fanaticism, the much-invoked "traditional Russian religious anti-Semitism". This was a common assessment by Jewish publicists who could decry the pogroms as a medieval atavism, destined to soon disappear as human progress advanced in Russia. Available evidence suggests that religious considerations did not figure prominently as a trigger for pogroms. In particular, the model of peasants emerging from the Russian Orthodox Paschal service intent on settling scores with the "Christ-killing Jews" is nowhere to be found in any pogrom report. (unquote). (p. 68). It is manifestly incorrect to suppose that the Church encouraged anti-Semitism as a means of solidifying its hold on the masses. Klier writes, (quote) Almost without exception, Russian Orthodox clergy intervened to defuse pogrom situations, sometimes at risk to their own person. The clergy were ordered by the Holy Synod to preach anti-pogrom sermons, and a number of Russian Orthodox clergy were given medals and commendations for their efforts to prevent pogroms. (unquote). (p. 68).

Nor does the common association of Christian holidays with pogroms imply a religious-based cause-effect relationship. Klier writes, (quote) When violence flared up, it was invariably within the alcohol-fueled, carnivalesque atmosphere of Bright Week, far removed from the pious religiosity that was the Paschal ideal... Thus, religious celebrations provided not so much the cause as the occasion for anti-Jewish violence... There were additional reasons why pogroms tended to occur during religious festival periods: They were coterminous with fairs, market days, and hiring fairs which brought large crowds of Jews and non-Jews together and provided ample occasion for fights and squabbles. In the charged, post-regicide conditions of 1881-1882, fights possessed a higher potential to escalate into more serious forms of violence. (unquote). (p. 68, 70. See also p. 18).

Although not written in this context, John Doyle Klier's perceptive comments serve as a broad-based corrective to the anti-Christian (and anti-Polish) tendencies found in much contemporary Holocaust-related thinking. A notable recent example of the latter is neo-Stalinist Jan T. Gross, who regularly attacks Polish Catholicism in terms of Polish conduct towards Jews.

THE JEWISH TAVERNKEEPERWhich issues involving Jews were specifically Jewish, and which were not? The role of the Jews in the alcohol trade (**PROPINACJA**) deserves mention. One quoted exculpatory premise stated that the nationality of the tavern owner did not matter, as alcoholism was a common Russian problem even in Jewish-free areas of the Russian Empire. Contrary to this, Klier remarks, (quote) The Vilna [Wilno, Vilnius] commission prepared the most detailed and critical report on the Jewish tavern trade. The report consciously refuted the most common line of defense of Jewish spokesmen, the use of statistics to prove that alcohol abuse was greater outside the Pale. (unquote). (p. 190). [The reader should also appreciate the diffusion of cultural trends, in space and time. If widespread use (and misuse) of alcohol, among many groups of Slavs, developed under the considerable influence of Jewish tavernkeepers, then one should expect this "culture" of alcoholic consumption to diffuse to Slavic-inhabited locations that have no Jews, and even to continue when there were no more Jewish innkeepers.]

RUSSIAN-JEWISH AND EVENTUAL POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONSKlier delves into the role of Jews in Russian society, and focuses on the efforts to improve Jewish-gentile relations. Various perspectives are presented. For example, one article in a Russian newspaper in 1881 rejected the supposition that Jewish assimilation, and the granting of full legal rights to the Jews, would reconcile Jews and the goyim. Instead, it pointed to the vast size of the Jewish population, facilitated in part by a high Jewish birthrate, and the Jewish talent in trade and commerce, one that the economically underdeveloped Russian countryside could not accommodate. Only mass Jewish emigration, to places such as the USA, could solve the Jewish problem. (p. 148). In a similar vein, liberal newspapers complained about the compulsory settling of Jews in the Pale, and how the resulting overcrowding forced Jews to exploit and devour others through competition in crafts and petty trade, and to engage in other objectionable behaviors. (p. 144). [This massive overcrowding of Jews in the western part of the Russian Empire, and the resulting problems, were later inherited by the resurrected Polish state (1918-1939), and only ended by the Nazi German-made Holocaust (1941-1945).]

Anti-Jewish pogroms rocked the Russian Empire in 1881-2, plunging both the Jewish community and the imperial authorities into crisis. Focusing on a wide range of responses to the pogroms, this book offers the most comprehensive, balanced, and complex study of the crisis to date. It presents a nuanced account of the diversity of Jewish political reactions and introduces a wealth of new sources covering Russian and other non-Jewish reactions to these events.

Seeking to answer the question of what caused the pogroms' outbreak and spread, the book provides a fuller picture of how officials at every level responded to the national emergency and irrevocably lays to rest the myth that the authorities instigated or tolerated the pogroms. This is essential reading not only for Russian and Jewish historians but also for those interested in the study of ethnic violence more generally.