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Robert Blobaum (ed.), *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005)

By the late nineteenth-century, anti-Semitism was pervasive in virtually all European countries, though was probably at its most virulent in France (as exemplified by the Dreyfus Affair), Germany, Russia and the Habsburg Empire. Specifically anti-Semitic political parties, organisations and demagogic politicians had achieved a certain notoriety and influence before 1914, paving the way for far more extremist manifestations of the same phenomenon during the interwar era. Poland, therefore, provided but one example of a pernicious attitude which found its macabre apotheosis in the Nazi-directed Jewish Holocaust in the Second World War.

This study examines the development and changing character of anti-Semitism, as well as the relative strengths and weaknesses of the resistance to it in Poland, from the latter decades of the nineteenth-century until the present day. As Robert Blobaum acknowledges in his editorial introduction, there is hardly a more complex and controversial theme in the history of modern Poland. The scholars from the United States and Poland who contribute fifteen chapters to the book have been involved in a collaborative project since 2000 and have all published work, of varying quality, on Polish-Jewish relations. The contributors do not attempt collectively to offer a complete examination of anti-Semitism in Poland, stressing that their primary concern is to break new ground by addressing little-known, under-researched aspects or by offering fresh perspectives and interpretations. Thus, the place of gender, sexuality and concepts of social deviance in shaping perceptions of the ethnic and religious 'other' in modern Poland are discussed here for the first time. However, the essential substance of the book is provided by the debate about how best to define 'anti-Semitism', the relationship between traditional Judeophobia and more modern expressions of hatred, the question of Jewish assimilation into Polish society, the nature and composition of those Poles and groups who actively opposed anti-Semitism, the impact of stereotypical images, the causes and wider significance of pogroms and other forms of anti-Jewish violence, the social and political dimensions of anti-Semitism, and not least, the relationship between the Catholic Church and anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, this still leaves a number of conspicuous thematic and chronological gaps, including the role of Jewish opponents of anti-Semitism, and the character and dynamics of the Jewish community and its institutions in Poland. Consistent with the overall thrust of the historiography of Polish-Jewish relations, however, is the disturbing omission of the crucial corollary of Jewish anti-Polonism. This means, therefore, that the book's theme is inevitably analysed in all chapters within a somewhat limited and tendentious framework.

As in most anthologies of essays by different hands, the present volume is of uneven quality, level of interest and originality. Theodore R. Weeks reminds us that the relative absence of hostility between Poles and Jews until the January Rising of 1863 was progressively undermined thereafter by the impact of industrialisation, urbanisation and mass migration, which upset traditional Polish and Jewish links and caused Poles and Jews to develop separately from each other. Keely Stauter-Halsted underlines the economic pressures that resulted in pogroms in Western Galicia in 1898, when Jewish moneylenders and innkeepers came to be perceived by Polish peasants as exploiters, while Jerzy Jedlicki pinpoints the role of liberal and socialist

intellectuals, invariably dubbed 'Jewified Poles', in combating anti-Semitism before the First World War.

Developments in the interwar Second Republic are examined much less convincingly. Brian Porter, true to past form, notably in his monograph, *'When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland'* (New York, 2000), excoriates the Polish nationalist movement (*Endecja*), and William H. Hagan misrepresents the death of some 150 Jews in Lwow in November 1918 as a pogrom, when, in reality, they were killed by the Polish Army for being either Ukrainian insurgents or Bolshevik subversives. Hagan adds the ridiculous point that this Lwów episode was a precursor of the much-debated Jedwabne massacre of Jews in 1941. Little better is Szymon Rudnicki's re-hashing of the discredited claim that certain pieces of legislation passed by the Polish parliament (*Sejm*) in the late 1930s (without being fully implemented, it must be noted) were anti-Semitic rather than social-reformist in character. Joining these authors in roundly condemning the Catholic Church and most of its clergy for supposedly playing an instrumental role in propagating anti-Semitism are Konrad Sadkowski, with specific reference to the Church in the Lublin area before 1939, and Dariusz Libionka, in his study of the Church's response, which he describes as limited and unsuccessful, to the Nazi persecution of Jews during the war. Katherine R. Jolluck records the low opinion Polish women exiled to the Soviet Union had of their 'unpatriotic' Jewish and 'primitive' Russian counterparts. The striking absence of balance and objectivity in most of these chapters constitutes the most unsatisfactory part of the book.

Of the four contributions relating to the postwar era, the most noteworthy are Dariusz Stola's argument that the anti-Zionist campaign conducted by a faction within the ruling Communist Party (PZPR) in 1968 was intrinsically a pretext to allow other concerns to be addressed, including student unrest and the fallout on public opinion of the 'Prague Spring', and Janine R. Holc's analysis of the bitterly conflicting Jewish and Catholic understanding of the meaning of Auschwitz. Stephen D. Corrsin completes the volume with a useful, selective bibliography of works on Polish-Jewish relations published since 1990.

The undisguised left-liberal political bias that informs almost all chapters is foreshadowed by the editor's gratuitous swipe at right-wing nationalist and Catholic parties in present-day Poland (p. 18). Consequently, it should come as no surprise that the sum achievement of this book is to furnish some useful information and quite interesting, if usually unconvincing, discussion of Polish-Jewish relations, but, above all, to perpetuate the erroneous view that there was always only one side as victim and another as aggressor in that tortured symbiosis.

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