

Looting and Killing are Permitted: Rumors in the November 1918 Pogrom in Lviv

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Abstract

The extensive violence of November 1918 in Lviv, the Eastern Galician capital, left hundreds of Jews injured and dozens of dead. The presented paper is an attempt to understand a critical aspect of the dynamics that drove the violence of the pogrom. It seeks to illustrate the mechanism and role of rumors, shedding light on their influence and significance in driving the violence of the pogrom. Based on rich primary sources, it describes the rumors that were circulated and how people perceived the violence. One of the main goals of this paper is to emphasize the unintentional role of the Jewish militia in creating fear, uncertainty, and paranoia in the minds of Poles. The paper examines the key role of the print media in the process of validating the rumors. The investigation considers the significance of Poles' knowledge about Jews based on prejudice.

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Introduction*

During and in the aftermath of the First World War, Jews in East-Central Europe experienced brutal violence.¹ In November 1918, the city of Lviv (formerly Lemberg / Lwów) became the focal point of a conflict between two newly created states—the Second Polish Republic and the West Ukrainian People’s Republic. The retreat of the Ukrainian military units from the city was followed by a brutal pogrom which claimed the lives of dozens of Jews and left hundreds injured.² The

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¹ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Irina Astashkevich, *Gendered Violence: Jewish Women in the Pogroms of 1917 to 1921* (Boston: Academic Studies Press 2018); Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen, *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011); Michal Frankl and Miloslav Szabó, *Budování státu bez antisemitismu? Násilí, diskurz loajality a vznik Československa* [Building the State without Anti-Semitism? Violence, the Discourse of Loyalty and the Emergence of Czechoslovakia] (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2015); Frank Golczewski, *Polnisch-jüdische Beziehungen 1881–1922: Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Osteuropa* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981); Victoria Khiterer, *Jewish Pogroms in Kiev during the Russian Civil War 1918-1920* (Lewiston - Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2015); Alexander Victor Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland: War, Ethnicity, and Anti-Jewish Violence in East Galicia, 1914-1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Jeffrey Veidlinger, *In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918-1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2021); Piotr Wróbel, “The Seeds of Violence: The Brutalization of an East European Region, 1917–1921,” *Journal of Modern European History* 1, no. 1 (2003): 125-149; On the concept of anti-Semitism see David Engel, “Away from a Definition of Antisemitism: An Essay in the Semantics of Historical Description,” in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, eds. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 2009), 30-53; David Feldman, “Towards a History of the Term ‘Anti-Semitism,’” *American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1139-1150.

² See e.g. David Engel, “The Transmutation of a Symbol and Its Legacy in the Holocaust,” in *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 32-46; Christoph Mick, *Lemberg, Lwów, L’viv, 1914–1947: Violence and Ethnicity in a Contested City* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2016); See also footnotes 4-5 and 7-8.

actions of the state cannot adequately explain the wave of pogroms that occurred in Galicia (including the Lviv pogrom of November 1918), as state institutions had collapsed as the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy imploded. Galicia was in a state of civil war, wracked by chaos and uncertainty.³

In recent years several studies have analyzed the events in Lviv. Among them are two Polish-language books by Damian K. Markowski and Grzegorz Gauden. Markowski's text focuses primarily on the Polish-Ukrainian struggle for the control of Lviv, while Gauden's main aim is to describe the Lviv pogrom.⁴ Notably, Gauden's study debunks the myths surrounding the genesis of the Second Polish Republic.⁵

The works of William W. Hagen and Eva Reder also present in-depth analyses of the events. Hagen's analysis applies the concept of "moral economy";⁶ he interprets the pogrom as a public drama that reflected a desire for a return to a just world order. In Hagen's view, the symbolic nature of the violence was a key element in the events; he emphasizes the sociocultural importance of violent acts, which he views as a means of realizing socioculturally determined relations. Hagen argues that the pogrom was motivated by the desire for the re-installation of a social hierarchy in which Jews had a subordinate status.⁷ Reder focuses on the role of the state as a reference point for the perpetrators, who identified themselves with the Polish state and used it as their justification. In her view, the perpetrators considered themselves to be patriots, who were fighting on behalf of an emerging

³ Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴ Damian K. Markowski, *Dwa powstania. Bitwa o Lwów 1918* [Two Uprisings: The Battle for Lviv 1918] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2019).

⁵ Grzegorz Gauden, *Lwów-kres iluzji: Opowieść o pogromie listopadowym 1918* [Lviv-the End of Illusion: The Story of the November pogrom of 1918] (Kraków: TAIWPN Universitas, 2019); On the debunking of myths surrounding the genesis of the Second Polish Republic see also Böhler, *Civil War*.

⁶ Edward P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50, no. 1 (1971): 76-136.

⁷ William W. Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 123-172; William W. Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Ethnic Violence: The Pogrom in Lwów, November 1918," *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 31, no. 2 (2005): 203-226; William W. Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Popular Violence: The Pogrom in Lwów, November 1918," in *Anti-Semitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. Robert Blobaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 124-157.

state. They committed their acts of violence against Jews in the knowledge (or on the pretext) that their acts were sanctioned by the state.⁸

Drawing upon diverse primary and secondary sources, this paper analyzes verbal expressions by perpetrators of violence and the links between stereotype and rumor. It sheds light on the role of rumor and seeks to exemplify its mechanism. Specifically, it deals with rumors about Jews fighting alongside Ukrainians. These tales stemmed primarily from the fact that the Jewish militia was forced to enforce order against armed Poles.⁹ Whether the perpetrators in Polish ranks were bandits in the turmoil of the dissolution of the Austrian monarchy released from prison, or other Polish volunteers who behaved like them. Central to understanding the dynamics of anti-Jewish violence in Lviv is reconstruction of the previously neglected connection between the oral spread of rumors and the contents shared by the periodical press.¹⁰

First, I will describe the basic background against which the pogrom occurred. Then, I will consider the setting in which rumors operated and the crucial role of written information in validating such narratives. Later, I will concentrate on how the rumors of a supposed authorization to perform violence functioned as the pogrom's trigger and how perpetrators depended on approval or acquiescence from authorities. Finally, I will focus on the pragmatic role of rumors, which served to mobilize perpetrators by providing the possibility for immediate material gain through the opportunity to engage in looting.

⁸ Eva Reder, *Antijüdische Pogrome in Polen im 20. Jahrhundert, Gewaltausbrüche im Schatten der Staatsbildung 1918-1920 und 1945-1946* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2017); Eva Reder, "Im Schatten des polnischen Staates – Pogrome 1918–1920 und 1945/46 – Auslöser, Bezugspunkte, Verlauf," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung* 60, no. 4 (2011): 571-606.

⁹ On the activities of Jewish self-defence groups, see e.g. Artur Markowski, *Przemoc antyżydowska i wyobrzeżenia społeczne. Pogrom białostocki 1906 roku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2018), 260-306; Vladimir Levin, "Preventing Pogroms: Pattern in Jewish Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Russia," in *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, ed. Jonathan Dekel-Chen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 95-110. Gerald Surh, "Jewish Self-Defense, Revolution, and Pogrom Violence in 1905," in *The Russian Revolution of 1905 in Transcultural Perspective: Identities, Peripheries, and the Flow of Ideas*, ed. Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2013), 55-74.

¹⁰ Tim Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia: Agitation, Politics, and Violence against Jews in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (New York: Berghahn, 2020), 111-179; On the significance of rumors, see Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 74-85.

The Complicated Situation of the Jewish Population

On 1 November 1918 Ukrainian forces, wearing yellow and blue armbands, occupied strategic buildings in the city of Lviv. At the outset of the battle for the Ukrainian side had a numerical advantage, as more Ukrainians than Poles served in the Austro-Hungarian army. In secret, Polish military organizations formed resistance groups, which included men, women, and boys. Once the Polish forces had recovered from their initial shock, skirmishes with the Ukrainians began.¹¹

The Jewish population (which made up 57,000 of the city's 194,000 inhabitants¹²) found itself in a very complicated situation. At that moment, nobody could predict which side would emerge victorious. Moreover, it was possible that if the Jewish inhabitants were to gamble on one side's victory, the consequences for them would be dire were the other side to gain victory. Lviv's Jews therefore settled on a compromise, which appeared to be the best solution under these circumstances. On the day when the Ukrainians occupied the city, representatives of the Jewish population of Lviv met at the offices of the Jewish Religious Community, formed a Jewish security committee, and declared neutrality. Since, following the Ukrainian takeover, the institutions responsible for maintaining law and order had ceased to function, the representatives present at the meeting also decided to establish a militia in order to defend the Jewish population.¹³

The newly established security committee defined its goal as ensuring peace and order in the Jewish quarter and protecting Jewish property. It called on the Jewish

¹¹ Mick, *Lemberg*, 144-146; Christoph Mick, "Legality, ethnicity and violence in Austrian Galicia, 1890-1920," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 26, no. 1 (2019): 757-782; 771; Torsten Wehrhahn, *Die Westukrainische Volksrepublik* (Berlin: Weißensee Verlag, 2004), 127-133.

¹² The population belonging to the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic confession in 1918 was around 100,000 and 34,000 respectively. Of the total population of Eastern Galicia, Greek Catholics made up 61.7% of the population, Roman Catholics 25.3%, Jews 12.4%. Mick, *Lemberg*, 157; Mick, "Legality, ethnicity and violence," 759.

¹³ Josef Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom* (Wien: Hickl, 1919), 18-19; "O neutralność," *Chwila*, January 12, 1919, 1; Jewish neutrality in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict had already been declared on 28 October. Thus, in the case of a further declaration of neutrality, it was merely a confirmation of what had already been established. Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 153.

population to remain strictly neutral. It is important to mention that the Jewish declaration of neutrality was immediately recognized by both the Polish and Ukrainian sides. The commanders of both sides in the conflict accepted the creation of an armed Jewish militia comprising 200 men. The militia was commanded by Captain Eisler.¹⁴ The city was partitioned into three sectors: the central part was held by the Ukrainians, the Kraków suburb was controlled by the Jewish militia, while the Poles held the south-eastern part of the city.¹⁵

The creation of the Jewish militia appeared to be a logical step, as the public order situation in Lviv was precarious.¹⁶ Gangs of deserters and local criminals exploited the confusion that reigned in the city, looting shops, and railway wagons.¹⁷ The police, formerly part of the Austrian administration, had effectively ceased to function. When the Ukrainian forces occupied the strategic points in the city on 1 November, they offered the local police chief, Józef Reinlender (?-1941), the option of remaining in his post, but he rejected this offer. The post was formally taken over by Stepan Baran (1879-1953);¹⁸ however, only a small number of police officers belonging to the Ukrainian ethnic group remained on duty.¹⁹

The Jewish militia began to lay claim to the control public spaces. According to the unwritten rules derived from popular culture, the Poles expected the Jews would submit to them.²⁰ However, the order began to be questioned. The streets became a place of emotional interaction and conflict.²¹ For instance, in his

¹⁴ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 14-15; By mid-November, the militia already numbered 45 officers and 302 soldiers. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 78.

¹⁵ Mick, *Lemberg*, 148.

¹⁶ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 14; Leon Chasanowitsch, *Die polnischen Judenpogrome im November und Dezember 1918: Tatsachen und Dokumente* (Stockholm: Verlag Judaea, 1919), 43; "O neutralność," *Chwila*, January 12, 1919, 1.

¹⁷ Mick, *Lemberg*, 148; "Rabusie" [Robbers], *Pobudka* [The Wake], November 7, 1918, 4.

¹⁸ Stepan Baran a Ukrainian lawyer and politician.

¹⁹ Mick, *Lemberg*, 144.

²⁰ Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 56.

²¹ Stefan Wiese, *Pogrome im Zarenreich. Dynamiken kollektiver Gewalt* (Hamburg: Verlag des Hamburger Instituts für Sozialforschung, 2016), 121-123; On pogroms as a consequence of a contested social hierarchy see also other works of Hagen (see footnote 7) and Wiese. See Stefan Wiese, "'Spit Back with Bullets' Emotions in Russia's Jewish Pogroms, 1881-1905," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 39, no. 4 (2013): 472-501; Stefan Wiese, "Jewish Self-Defense and Black Hundreds in Zhitomir. A Case Study on the Pogroms of 1905 in Tsarist Russia," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History, Journal of Fondazione CDEC* 3 (2012): 241-266, <https://www.quest->

memoirs, Maciej Rataj (1884-1940) claimed that the Jewish militia “treated the Polish population brutally and provocatively”.²²

The situation of the Polish forces in Lviv was desperate as they were outnumbered by the Ukrainians. Every person who volunteered received a weapon. Within just a few days, around 2500 rifles had been issued, but many of the recipients were criminals and bandits. Many had been released from prisons during the last days of Austrian rule. Lviv became a magnet for criminals and bandits from the entire region, who probably viewed the situation as an opportunity for looting and theft.

²³ The Polish units thus included elements of the “*urban underclass*,” long demoralized by the material desperation caused by the war, and “*fighting without regard for life, not for ideals, but in hope of material gain*”.²⁴ The Polish armed resistance against Ukrainian forces involved, beyond released prisoners, but also deserters who literally flooded eastern Galicia, soldiers of the disintegrating Austrian army, and others who intended to take advantage of the chaos following the disintegration of state institutions.²⁵

The Influence of Rumors on Perceptions of the Jews

On the morning of 22 November, seven soldiers wearing Polish insignia, followed by a mob, entered a house where Jews lived. Referring to the alleged order for a 48-hour pogrom, one of the soldiers declared: “We have been given this order because

cdecjournal.it/jewish-self-defense-and-black-hundreds-in-zhitomir-a-case-study-on-the-pogroms-of-1905-in-tsarist-russia/.

²² Maciej Rataj, *Pamiętniki, 1918-1927* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1965), 25; Maciej Rataj was a Polish politician and writer. In 1940 he was executed by the Nazis.

²³ “Raport delegacji Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych R.P. w sprawie wystąpień antyżydowskich we Lwowie,” [Lwów, 17 grudnia 1918], reproduced in Jerzy Tomaszewski, “Lwów, 22 listopada 1918,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 75, no. 2 (1984): 279-285; 282; The Austrian administration released around 800 prisoners. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 78.

²⁴ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 26. It should also be remembered that after four years of war, uniforms were a common sight, and they were worn by a large proportion of the population (Ibid).

²⁵ Wróbel, “The Seeds of Violence,” 137; “Wright Report,” in *The Jews in Poland: Official Reports of The American and British Investigating Missions* (Chicago: American Commission to Negotiate Peace, 1920), 45.

you cut our ears off [Mamy rozkaz taki, boście naszym obcinali uszy].”²⁶ A market trader witnessed “a legionnaire’s murder by Jews, who plucked out his eye.” When interrogated about the alleged incident, the woman admitted that she had not seen it but had only heard about it, though she added that in fact both his eyes had been “dug out.”²⁷ Other widespread rumors claimed that Jews had murdered injured Polish soldiers, or that Jews had informed the Ukrainian side of the Polish positions.²⁸ One rumor that became very widespread claimed that Jews were using machine guns to shoot at Poles. During the pogrom, there were three arson attempts targeting the progressive synagogue (the Tempel),²⁹ in fact the alleged motivation was the suspicion that the Jews were storing machine guns there. When Herman Feldstein heard that the Tempel was on fire, he went to see Captain Czesław Mączyński (1881-1935).³⁰ Mączyński told Feldstein that he was aware of the fire, but it was impossible to enter the building because machine guns were being fired from it. Feldstein denied this claim, to which Mączyński replied: “It’s difficult [trudno]—I got that information from my people, and I have to believe the reports they give me [takie sprawozdanie strzymałem od moich ludzi, a ja na sprawozdaniach moich ludzi polegać muszę].”³¹ The rumor was deliberately exploited. A doctor who was serving during the pogrom treated a soldier who had sustained a stab wound in the region of his eye. Asked what had happened, the soldier replied that he had been sent to commandeer provisions from Jewish-owned shops, and that Jews had fired a machine gun at him.³² A delegation (including a Jewish member, one Fishel Waschitz³³) later searched for Jewish

²⁶ Tsentral’nyj Derzhavnyj Istorychnyj Arkhiv Ukraïny, L’viv [Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Lviv] (TsDIAL), f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 5, protocol 458.

²⁷ Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 166.

²⁸ Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 78-81.

²⁹ Jan Kutilek, “Anomie and Post-imperial Transition: Anti-Jewish Violence in Galicia and the Czech Lands, 1918–1919,” *Střed/Centre* 16, no.1 (2024): 35-59; 48.; The synagogue was razed to the ground by the Nazis in 1941.

³⁰ Czesław Mączyński was a Polish officer, politician, and the commander-in-chief of the Polish forces in the battle for Lviv in November 1918.

³¹ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 12, protocol 97.

³² *Ibid.*, 35, protocol 260. This doctor also rejects the claim that Jews poured boiling water on Polish soldiers; he did not encounter any such case during his service.

³³ Fishel Waschitz was a Zionist activist. On his activities in Galicia, see Jan Rybak, *Everyday Zionism in East-Central Europe: Nation-building in War and Revolution, 1914-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

weapons, but no weapons or ammunition were found.³⁴ As Tim Buchen points out, rumormongers are conscious actors, and their role is not merely to spread disinformation; they also contribute to the content of the rumors, and they claim that their narrative is factually true. These notions become established as such in the public consciousness via oral communication.³⁵

Rumors—social constructs formed during private conversations—are rooted in “meta-rumors.” Rumors emerge by means of narratives, but such spoken words only gain genuine significance (and take on the dimension of historical events) if they can draw on a reservoir of knowledge that enables people to understand and believe what they heard. In the case of the Lviv pogrom, this reservoir of supposed knowledge concerning Jews was the meta-rumor.³⁶ In the definition of the German philosopher Theodor Adorno, anti-Semitism is the rumor about the Jews.³⁷ To simplify the issue and take a specific example: reports about Jews fighting against Poles were believed because they corresponded with preexisting prejudice.

One element that formed a common denominator in such perceptions of Jews was the notion of their supposed insidiousness. This character trait can already be found in traditional Polish representation of Jews as mischievous economic usurpers, profiting from Poles’ poverty. During the First World War there were widespread tales of Jews profiteering from the situation while Poles were suffering dire hardships. It was said that Jews were responsible for price rises, and that they hoarded essential commodities such as flour and bread.³⁸ The fact that such rumors had taken root even among the highest echelons of the political scene is evident from the words of Stanisław Grabski (1871-1949),³⁹ who claimed that Jews had profited from the war. However, the trope of economic exploitation was not

³⁴ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 21, protocol 96; Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 166.

³⁵ Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 115-116.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

³⁷ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexe z porušeného života* [Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life] (Praha: Academia, 2009), 110; Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 116.

³⁸ Kutílek, “Anomie and Post-imperial Transition,” 45.

³⁹ Stanisław Grabski was a Polish politician, economist and academic. In 1892 he cofounded the Polish Socialist Party, and he later became one of the leading members of the National Democracy movement.

the only one he mentioned.⁴⁰ Engaging the image of political treachery, he also insisted they caused 30,000 Poles from Galicia to be hanged.⁴¹ Grabski's accusations corresponded with the general backdrop prevailing in Galicia during the last year of the war; the belief that duplicity was inherent among the Jews was widespread. Mere Jewish loyalty to the Habsburgs was interpreted as a betrayal of the Polish cause.⁴² References to Jewish perfidiousness were especially common after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the cession of the Chełm region.⁴³

To summarize, information about Jews attacking Polish troops in Lviv validated deep-rooted stereotypical perceptions. One consequence of the formation of an armed Jewish militia was the intensification of the Poles' traditional feelings of fear and hatred towards Jews. If the Jewish militia was not to fan the flames of the situation, it had to restrict itself to a strictly defensive strategy. However, amid the chaotic turmoil it was difficult to discern the existence of such a strategy. Therefore, there was a substantial risk that any resolute defense of the city's Jewish districts would further escalate the conflict. Having established the basic setting upon which rumors operate, this section will now consider the crucial role of written information in validating rumors.

On 5 November 1918, the first issue of the Polish newspaper *Pobudka* was published;⁴⁴ it would later become a key channel for disseminating information to Lviv's Polish population during the battles against the Ukrainian forces. However, the first issue was confiscated by the Supreme Command because the editorial office announced that it was an organ of the Polish Army in Lviv and was published on its authority. This revelation exposed the true nature of the

⁴⁰ On how anti-Semitic tropes work see Sol Goldberg, Scott Ury, and Kalman Weiser, eds., *Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

⁴¹ Israel Cohen, "My Mission to Poland (1918-1919)," *Jewish Social Studies* 13, no. 2 (1951): 149-172, 164.

⁴² Mick, *Lemberg*, 103.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 105; Rybak, *Everyday Zionism*, 167; On February 9, Germany and Austria signed the so-called "bread treaty" with the newly established Ukrainian People's Republic. The essence of the agreement was to establish a German protectorate over Ukraine. The newly formed Ukraine, however, was partly located on the territory of *Kresy* perceived by Polish nationalists as essentially Polish. The issue of the Chełm region proved particularly sensitive. See Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 92-93. Also see Jan Kutilek, "Jews in Limbo: Decay of the State Authority in Galicia in 1918 as a Prelude to Post-War Anti-Jewish Violence," *Slovanský přehled/Slavonic Review* 109, no. 2 (2023): 169-191; 176-183.

⁴⁴ *Pobudka* was the press organ of the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces in Lviv.

newspaper, prompting the Supreme Command to intervene and conceal the fact that it was directly controlled by the Polish Command. On 6 November 1918, *Pobudka* began to be published as a press organ of the Civic Committee of the 6th district of Lviv. In fact, it was still the newspaper of the Polish army; the editorial and administrative offices were located in the building of the Military Printing House at Lew Sapieha Street.⁴⁵ The foundation of *Pobudka* represented an important milestone, as the Slavic-language press had been subject to censorship up to the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy.⁴⁶ As a result of this censorship, people had lost trust in information from official sources. The desire for alternative information was partially satisfied by rumors.⁴⁷ *Pobudka* was a trusted source of information, as it was considered to be the opposite of the Habsburg-controlled press. Moreover, it was the only Polish-language periodical that was published in Lviv at the time.

Throughout November, *Pobudka* mentioned various acts of treachery supposedly committed by Jews. On 8 November, *Pobudka* ironically stated: “new heroes have also emerged.” The newspaper alleged that the Jews had allied themselves with the Ukrainians. The author of the piece not only depicted the city’s Jews as Zionists, but also accused them of providing direct support to the Ukrainian forces. This is clear in the author’s claim that “to their Zionist badges they have added Ukrainian cockades”.⁴⁸ The influence of *Pobudka* on Lviv’s population—at a time when other Polish media were no longer in circulation—is evident from the memoirs of Maciej Rataj: “We read issues of *Pobudka* avidly, and we passed them among ourselves like relics [...]”.⁴⁹

It is evident from the above-cited text that an important topic for investigation is the connection between the individual oral dissemination of rumors and their validation and propagation by means of the written word. Oral communication is

⁴⁵ Eugeniusz Wawrkowicz and Józef Klink, eds., *Obrona Lwowa. 1-22 listopada 1918* 3 [Defense of Lviv. November 1-22, 1918 3] (Lwów: Towarzystwo badania historii Obrony Lwowa i województw południowo-wschodnich, 1939), 349.

⁴⁶ Mark Conrnwall, “News, Rumour and the Control of Information in Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918,” *History* 77, no. 249 (1992): 50–64.

⁴⁷ Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 126.

⁴⁸ “Co słycać śródmieściu?” [What’s happening downtown], *Pobudka*, November 8, 1918, 3.

⁴⁹ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 23.

more effective when it appropriates and reinterprets pre-existing information. Undeniably, the fact that *Pobudka* acted as a conduit for the dissemination of rumors about Jews' alliance with the Ukrainian troops attacking Polish soldiers (at a time when Lviv's other Polish-language media were inactive) meant that this information came to be perceived as accepted knowledge.⁵⁰ This accusation was published in *Pobudka* on 17 November: Jews were accused of shooting at Polish units from their windows, and it was claimed that the synagogues on Żółkiewska and Cebulna Streets were being used by Jews as arms depots. The newspaper also wrote that almost all Jews were armed, and that although the weapons were meant to be used for self-defence, in fact they were being employed to attack Polish troops as well as the Polish civilian population. These claims were supported by a list of specific incidents. It was claimed that on November 10 at 11 a.m., a group of armed Jews had run out from the synagogue in Żółkiewska Street and opened fire. Another incident was reported to have taken place in the Kraków suburb, where a Jew allegedly fired a revolver at civilians. Finally, it was also claimed that Polish Catholic shops had been looted by Jews.⁵¹

Certain incidents may indeed have occurred. For example, on the night of November 13-14, a sizeable militia patrol organized by a Jew named Mojżesz Olmütz encountered a patrol consisting of three Polish "legionnaires"⁵², leading to a tense confrontation. The militiamen disarmed and detained the Poles until a Polish lieutenant arrived and persuaded the militia to release two of the detainees; initially they were reluctant to release the third, who was a known criminal, but eventually he was freed as well. Shortly thereafter, a Polish unit arrived at the scene, with the aforementioned criminal among them. He accused Mojżesz Olmütz of having fired at the "legionnaires," and as a result Olmütz and his 11 companions were detained.⁵³

Naturally, looting and thefts from Jewish shops and houses did not escape the attention of the Jewish militia, whose principal duty was to protect Jewish

⁵⁰ Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 115-116.

⁵¹ "Neutralni" [Neutral], *Pobudka*, November 17, 1918, 1-2; "Raport," 283; Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 20.

⁵² As Hagen points out, the term "legionnaires" was a synonym for the irregular soldiers fighting Ukrainians; there were no legionary units in Lviv at the time. See Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 148.

⁵³ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 2, protocol 167.

property from criminals, so inevitably conflict ensued. Understandably, the use of firearms against these criminals (who were wearing Polish uniforms) could be portrayed as an attack on the Polish “defenders” of Lviv.⁵⁴ Despite attempts to maintain the militia’s strategy of passivity, incidents of this type could hardly have been prevented. Moreover, in the general confusion it was often not possible to tell who was shooting and from where. Such incidents created ideal conditions for the emergence and spread of new speculations. The actions of the Jewish militia reinforced the suspicion that the Jews were collaborating with the Ukrainians. In the first week of November, the militia became embroiled in numerous skirmishes. Maintaining neutrality was further hindered by the fact that Polish and Ukrainian units frequently operated in territory controlled by Jewish units. However, the Jewish militia also violated the agreed lines of demarcation when confiscating food that was in short supply.⁵⁵ The conviction that Jews were fighting on the Ukrainian side emerged because of a series of incidents, misunderstandings, tense situations, and the traditional anti-Jewish prejudice. Furthermore, the Ukrainians, who were still wearing the old Austro-Hungarian army uniforms, used yellow and blue armbands as a means of identification, and in chaotic situations these armbands might be mistaken for the blue and white versions worn by the Jewish militia.

As the case of Maciej Rataj shows, it is evident that Poles also got their information from Ukrainian newspapers.⁵⁶ Thus the Ukrainian print media played a role in encouraging the perception that the Jews were allied with the Ukrainians. *Ukrains’ke Slovo* wrote that “the Jews are with us [i.e. the Ukrainians]” and a Ukrainian communiqué of 18 November 1918 reported that a Polish attack had “met with the fierce opposition of the Jewish militia”.⁵⁷ These declarations were

⁵⁴ “Raport,” 282.

⁵⁵ Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 79; A report drawn up by a committee of the Polish Foreign Ministry stated that in several cases members of the Jewish militia had indeed violated their commitment to neutrality, but that these were isolated incidents involving individuals who were acting against the orders given to them by the militia commanders. See “Raport,” 283; Reder describes that there may indeed have been occasional cooperation between Jewish militia and Ukrainian soldiers. However, she states that due to the front that ran right through the town, maintaining neutrality at all times was really difficult. Reder, “Im Schatten,” 596.

⁵⁶ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 22-23.

⁵⁷ The Morgenthau Report, 10. The blue and white armbands were worn by the Jewish militia in the first days of November. They were then replaced by white armbands in order to prevent

intended to underline the legitimacy of the Ukrainian claims. The support of the large Jewish minority was of key importance for these claims, and the declarations also represented an attempt to boost the morale of the Ukrainian side.⁵⁸

If we consider that incidents in which Jews drew firearms to prevent acts of theft could potentially have sparked vehement hatred if they were interpreted as attacks on Polish soldiers “heroically defending Lviv,” some form of Polish reaction was to be expected. The perception of the Jews as allies of the Ukrainians was further strengthened by the location of the city’s Jewish quarter, which lay within the Ukrainian-controlled sector. In this scenario, anti-Semitic moods became increasingly intense.⁵⁹ The population succumbed to paranoia. Polish units distrusted the Jewish militia, whose members were frequently disarmed and interned following encounters with Polish troops. In one case, members of the Jewish militia were arrested even though they had only been extinguishing a fire.⁶⁰ In the ensuing situation, amid an atmosphere of feverish tension, on November 17 members of the Jewish militia decided to mount an operation against a gang of looters who were outside the sector of the city under Jewish control. To do so they had to obtain permission from the Polish command, so a party of seven men, carrying a white flag, approached the Polish line. However, despite the white flag, the paranoia-addled Polish troops fired several salvos. It was only then that they waved cloths in the air to signal to the Jewish militiamen that they could approach, but this was followed by further salvos, causing the death of one militiaman.⁶¹ The Jewish militiamen were detained, beaten and mistreated, and then taken to the Polish headquarters. A Polish first lieutenant commented on the incident with the words: “So this is the glorious Jewish Ukraine”.⁶²

According to Horowitz, one of the main preconditions for acts of violence is the spread of information that members of a despised ethnic group have committed

confusion with the yellow and blue armbands worn by the Ukrainians; In addition, Alexander Prusin notes that Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish uniforms were also difficult to distinguish. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 78-80.

⁵⁸ Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 79.

⁵⁹ The Morgenthau Report, 5.

⁶⁰ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶² TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 208, ark. 16, 9, protocol 477; Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 26-27, protocol 477, 9.

acts of brutal violence.⁶³ This precondition was met in November 1918, when reports circulated about Jews allegedly joining forces with the Ukrainians and treacherously attacking Polish troops: “You Jews fired at us, poured boiling water and lye on our fighters, sold them poisoned cigarettes, and gave millions to the Ukrainians—you are enemies of Poland, and Poles can no longer tolerate Jews, so today you must all die.”⁶⁴ As previously discussed, other similar rumors about the Jews were widespread.

In the memoirs of the politician Maciej Rataj we can read that the Jews sympathized with the Ukrainians and actively assisted them. Rataj states that the Polish fighters came under “treacherous fire [podstępnyimi strzałami]” from the Jewish militia. Writing about an incident in which he himself came under fire in Krakowska Street, where most residents were Jews, he concluded that it must have been Jews who shot at him, yet he also significantly expressed a degree of doubt: “But had I not succumbed to suggestion, just like the others? I don’t know.”⁶⁵

Reports of aggressions usually precede deadly ethnic violence. Such reports create panic, further entrench mistrust, and are subsequently used to justify brutality.⁶⁶ As rumors spread, violence is presented as a justified form of retaliation. References to the notion of retaliation can also be found in *Pobudka*. The third issue states: “the public itself will avenge these treacherous crimes.”⁶⁷ The article does not explicitly identify the perpetrators of the “crimes.” However, written texts are always interpreted in accordance with the norms and standards defined by a particular cultural system,⁶⁸ and the cultural system in which *Pobudka*’s readers were rooted characterized Jews as a subversive element, so readers would have been in no doubt to whom the newspaper referred.⁶⁹

Narratives that depicted Jews as treacherous aggressors exacerbated the psychological stress felt by the city’s inhabitants. The atmosphere in Lviv was hugely tense. Reports of *Pobudka* about the “cunning and treacherous [chytry i

⁶³ Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 84.

⁶⁴ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 34.

⁶⁵ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 25-26.

⁶⁶ Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 74-88.

⁶⁷ “W siódmym dniu walki” [On the seventh day of the battle], *Pobudka*, November 8, 1918, 1.

⁶⁸ Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 115.

⁶⁹ Alexander Prusin also notes that the Poles attributed these “treacherous” attacks to the “internal enemy,” i.e. the Jews. See Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 80.

podstępny]” enemy killing people “from windows and from behind fences [morduje z okien i z za płotów]”⁷⁰ intensified the general anxiety. Citizens’ fears were further stoked by paranoia entrenched in their mistrust of Jews. The fact that Jews lived in a street where shooting took place was considered sufficient proof that Jews were responsible. To summarize, since oral communication becomes effective through the appropriation and reinterpretation of existing information, rumors took on a new quality the moment they were distributed in writing through the Polish army press organ *Pobudka*. At this moment - crucial for the dynamics of violence - rumors became widely accepted facts.

Permission for a 48-hour Pogrom?

On November 22 the Polish forces forced the Ukrainian army to retreat, while the Jewish militia was disarmed.⁷¹ The pogrom that ensued was presented as a retaliation for alleged Jewish attacks.⁷² On the second day of the pogrom, a man wearing an Austrian uniform came to the home of Klara and Pinkas Obler and threatened to kill them. The man was one N. Kombien, the stepson of the caretaker of a building in Kochanowskiego Street. Klara Obler ran out into the street and asked a Polish officer for help. He replied: “It serves you right, you shouldn’t have collaborated with the Ukrainians and set up a militia”.⁷³ A shopkeeper named Machel Kessler stated that his attackers had shouted: “Give thanks to God that we aren’t killing you. We’ve come after the Jews, they wanted to kill us. Now we have the right to murder you.”⁷⁴ The ranks of the aggressors were swelled by Polish reinforcements, who likewise behaved with brutality: “We

⁷⁰ “W siódmym dniu walki,” *Pobudka*, November 8, 1918, I.

⁷¹ Mick, *Lemberg*, 158.

⁷² TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 49, protocol 374; The prelude to the Lviv pogrom was the outburst of violence in Przemyśl, where a similar scenario occurred. The Jewish militia was accused of taking a side with the Ukrainians. After Polish forces drove Ukrainian fighters out of the city, Jews perceived as traitors became victims of violence. See Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 149.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, spr. 206, ark. 44, 44, protocol 417.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, spr. 210, ark. 51, 41, protocol 346.

will take revenge for your Jewish militia—we're from Kraków, we hate Jews. We want to kill them all like dogs [Chcemy ich wszystkich wymordować jak psów].”⁷⁵ The Poles' fury was driven by the conviction that the Jews had fought side by side with the Ukrainians, but this alone would not have been sufficient to spark a pogrom. As Horowitz points out, perpetrators of ethnic violence rely on signals sent out by authorities assuring them that they will not suffer any consequences because of their actions, or even that their actions will be met with approval.⁷⁶ The perpetrators of the Lviv pogrom did indeed obtain official approval. Before the outbreak of the violence, a rumor began to spread that the army command had granted permission to loot the Jewish district for a period of 48 hours.⁷⁷ A major factor in the violence was the perpetrators' sense of impunity and their belief that the pogrom had been officially sanctioned. They created their own social reality in which attacking Jews was a legitimate form of action.⁷⁸

The rumor that official permission had been granted for the pogrom was widely accepted. Two days before the outbreak of the violence, Elias Zimmerman told his acquaintances that a pogrom was going to happen.⁷⁹ On November 21, an officer (Rittmeister T.) told the Jew H. that it was a good thing that the latter did not live in the Jewish district, because “a slaughter of the Jews [Judenschlächtere]” would soon happen.⁸⁰ A Polish officer warned a tailor in Pańska Street: “Take down your shop sign so that nobody can see you're a Jew”.⁸¹ On November 22, a Polish officer named Krosiński advised a shopkeeper to hide her goods before three or four days of looting broke out.⁸² Mrs F. B. stated that a relative had urged her to flee to safety as soon as possible. Asked how long the looting would last, he replied: “Probably until tomorrow, because permission has only been granted for 48 hours”.⁸³ A confectioner in Lviv, the father of a Polish officer, told a Jewish acquaintance that the pogrom would soon be over, because the soldiers had only

⁷⁵ Ibid., spr. 208, ark. 16, 16, protocol 339.

⁷⁶ Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 361.

⁷⁷ This fact is confirmed by dozens of protocols held at TsDIAL.

⁷⁸ Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 122.

⁷⁹ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 206, ark. 44, 109, protocol 499.

⁸⁰ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 57, protocol 705.

⁸¹ Ibid., protocol 351.

⁸² Ibid., protocol 31.

⁸³ Ibid., 57-58, protocol 704.

been given permission to loot for 48 hours.⁸⁴ Troops who looted the premises of one D. Sch. urged each other to hurry, because the end of the permitted period was fast approaching.⁸⁵ Troops looting the premises of Henryk Fischer likewise urged each other to hurry, because “we have 48 hours”.⁸⁶ Johann Banderowski, an employee of the municipal gasworks, took part in the looting because he believed permission had been granted for a 48-hour period.⁸⁷ Mrs Kobrysiowa, the wife of a “legionnaire,” stated that the army had received orders to pillage the Jewish quarter for two days.⁸⁸ M. S. filed a report stating that he had recognized one of the looters and had wanted to have him arrested, but when he asked a “legionnaire” acquaintance for help, the “legionnaire” replied: “I’m afraid you can’t do anything about it, because the looting has been permitted for 48 hours.”⁸⁹ Asked by a Jewish officer A. B. to send troops to help his family, who were being terrorized by a Polish patrol, the commander of the barracks in Zamarstynowska Street replied that he could do nothing, because “the Polish troops have been ordered to steal from the Jews, so I can’t help you”.⁹⁰ Moritz Anstreicher from Kazimierzowska Street asked an officer to protect him from a group of bandits who were looting his shop. The officer replied, “Looting is still permitted,” and he told his troops: “you can take the remaining coal, as well as the equipment.”⁹¹ One of the soldiers maliciously remarked to Weinreb Mojżesz that the troops “are permitted to do whatever they like to the Jews”.⁹²

The time limitation on the alleged permission lent the rumor additional credibility. It also injected a degree of dynamism into the pogrom, urging the participants to make the most of the opportunity while they were still “permitted” to do so. Moreover, the 48-hour deadline helped the looters to coalesce into a group.⁹³ As soon as the group reached a critical mass, it became a mob, which could

⁸⁴ Ibid., 56, protocol 203.

⁸⁵ Ibid., protocol 452.

⁸⁶ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 206, ark. 44, 63, protocol 331.

⁸⁷ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 56, protocol 143.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 57, protocol 554.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56, protocol 263.

⁹⁰ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 206, ark. 44, 66, protocol 188; Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 57, protocol 188.

⁹¹ Ibid., 39, protocol 156; Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 58, protocol 156.

⁹² Ibid., spr. 210, ark. 51, 48, protocol 100.

⁹³ Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 121.

absorb individuals lending them a sense of anonymity. The perpetrators became able to commit acts of violence that they would never have committed if acting alone.⁹⁴ When an individual becomes absorbed into a mob, responsibility for actions becomes blurred, diluted among a large number of people.⁹⁵

In addition to the alleged authorization to loot Jewish property, many of the perpetrators also cited authority figures in justification of their actions—particularly an order that had allegedly been issued by the commander of the Polish forces. A Polish sergeant looting a shop belonging to the merchant Kalman Knepel stated that General Bolesław Roja (1876-1940) had ordered the troops to plunder Jewish property and kill Jews.⁹⁶ One of the victims said that a soldier “showed [her] a printed sheet of paper allegedly bearing an order to kill Jews.”⁹⁷ In fact, no such official order was given by the Supreme Command.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, it is likely that some troops were given orders to commandeer property for the Polish army. This can be deduced from the issuing of receipts for commandeered (i.e. stolen) property.⁹⁹ Additionally, it is likely there were oral indications (not officially recorded) that encouraged the troops to unleash their violent impulses. In spite of that, there is no evidence to prove that an official order was issued to indulge in pogrom. Moreover, the 1918 Lviv pogrom was not the only occasion on which rumors of official approval for anti-Semitic violence were spread. Similar rumors were recorded in Russia (1881-1882), Galicia (1898), and in Ostrava region within the Czech lands (1917).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Ibid., 114.

⁹⁵ A. Markowski, *Przemoc antyżydowska*, 280.

⁹⁶ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 206, ark. 44, 35, protocol 92; Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 56, protocol 92.

⁹⁷ Ibid, spr. 210, ark. 51, 17, protocol 61; The question is whether the soldier actually believed he carried the warrant. In 1898, a similar incident took place in the Galician town Kalwarya Zebrzydowska. Leaflets advertising a product removing ink stains were believed to be permit cards for beating Jews. Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 122.

⁹⁸ See e.g. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 83; “Raport,” 283.

⁹⁹ “Raport,” 283; Reder, “Im Schatten,” 594.

¹⁰⁰ Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 119; Frankl and Szabó, *Budování státu bez antisemitismu?*, 41; John Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 323; Daniel Unowsky, *The Plunder: The 1898 Anti-Jewish Riots in Habsburg Galicia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 148; Zbyněk Vydra, *Židovská otázka v carském Rusku 1881-1906* [The Jewish Question in Tsarist Russia 1881-1906] (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubic, 2006), 126.

Notwithstanding a lack of official orders, the fact that the army command essentially approved of the violence is revealed in an account given by Maciej Rataj, who states that he saw the Lviv commander-in-chief Captain Mączyński being driven through the city in a car and smiling as he observed the terrible scenes.¹⁰¹ Not only Mączyński, but other high-ranking officers also refused to intervene and stop the violence. The second-in-command Antoni Jakubski (1885-1962),¹⁰² when asked by a Jewish delegation to protect the Jewish population, cited a widespread rumor claiming that Jews had fired guns from their windows, and that the “retaliatory action” was therefore justified.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, as Reder points out, the Polish command structures were mired in chaos. The absence of military discipline and organization undoubtedly fueled the violence.¹⁰⁴

The pogrom was terribly brutal. “We have been ordered to kill [wyrznąć] all Jews aged two months and older,” shouted a “legionnaire.”¹⁰⁵ An officer pulled a newborn baby from its crib, holding it by its feet, and screamed at its mother: “Why do you have so many Jewish bastards?”¹⁰⁶ Jozef Rapp stated that the troops who looted his property declared that they had been given orders to rob and kill Jews, even boasting that they had already managed to kill twenty.¹⁰⁷ Another soldier boasted: “I’ve already shot one Jew.”¹⁰⁸

As has been mentioned above, an important aspect of ethnic unrest is the tendency to shift responsibility for violence and looting to a higher authority. A Lviv pharmacist stated that the soldiers told him that they had been ordered to loot the Jewish district. One of the looters, a member of the intelligentsia, cynically declared that he did not enjoy looting, but he could do nothing because “orders

¹⁰¹ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 26; Mączyński did not issue the command to restore order until 23 November. Abraham Insler, *Dokumenty fałszu: prawda o tragedji żydostwa lwowskiego w listopadzie 1918 roku* [Documents of falsity: the truth about the tragedy of Lviv's Jews in November 1918] (Lwów: Jaeger, 1933), 93; Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 83; Even afterwards, the Jews lived in constant fear as searches for Jewish-held weapons were conducted. See Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 156-157.

¹⁰² Antoni Jakubski was a Polish zoologist and university professor. In November 1918 he was a member of the Lviv Supreme Defence Command.

¹⁰³ Reder, *Antijüdische Pogrome*, 148-149; Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 155-156.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁰⁵ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 17, protocol 61.

¹⁰⁶ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 46, protocol 28.

¹⁰⁷ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 207, ark. 56, 13, protocol 358.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, spr. 206, ark. 44, 78, protocol 264.

are orders [Befehl ist Befehl].”¹⁰⁹ Numerous cases of this shift of responsibility were recorded: “I can’t help you, there’s an order, I’m not here voluntarily, it’s your own fault”.¹¹⁰ A “legionnaire” named N. Smutny likewise cited an order to engage in looting and killing.¹¹¹ This shifting of responsibility was an important psychological factor. On 22 November an armed patrol wearing Austrian and Polish uniforms entered a house in Żółkiewska Street and began plundering the contents. A clerk with the initial B. asked the captain to stop his men looting, to which the captain replied: “I can’t stop it, the troops have been ordered to loot for 48 hours”.¹¹² A soldier gave the same reply to a maid working for a Jewish family: “I can’t do anything about it, they’ve been given permission to loot for two days.”¹¹³ Simon Sold stated that the looters had told him they had been ordered to loot and kill for a 48-hour period, but because they were generous, they didn’t wish to murder all the Jews.¹¹⁴

The Pragmatic Nature of Rumors

Rumors not only focused on the notion that the Jews represented a threat. They also mobilized the perpetrators by emphasizing the opportunity for material gain.¹¹⁵ During the pogrom, there were incidents in which Jews were forced to give up their property literally in order to save their lives. On November 10 soldiers entered a house in Panieńska Street and extorted the sum of 100,000 crowns from the residents, threatening that they would “shoot the inhabitants like dogs”¹¹⁶ if they did not pay. On the following day, 42,000 crowns in cash were discovered on the body of one of the soldiers, who had been shot dead.¹¹⁷ A shopkeeper with the initials M. N. was told to hand over 10,000 crowns because he had allegedly shot

¹⁰⁹ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 57, protocol 376.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 58, protocol 19.

¹¹¹ Ibid., protocol 673.

¹¹² TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 12, protocol 97.

¹¹³ Ibid., spr. 207, ark. 56, 11, protocol 395.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., spr. 206, ark. 44, 40, protocol 496.

¹¹⁵ Buchen, *Antisemitism in Galicia*, 114.

¹¹⁶ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 25.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., protocol 109.

at Polish soldiers.¹¹⁸ Helena Schine stated that a group of soldiers had killed her father and brother-in-law and seriously injured her brother. She herself had been forced to buy her life for 3,000 crowns. The soldiers later returned and killed her brother, before breaking open the family safe and stealing a silver tray.¹¹⁹ Soldiers broke into the home of Weinreb Mojżesz and shouted: “Now your time has come, hand over the money.” They then proceeded to loot the home, hitting Mojżesz’s father and son with their rifle butts.¹²⁰ A soldier put the barrel of his rifle in A. W.’s mouth and forced his victim to choose between death and buying his life for 1,000 crowns.¹²¹ Natan Schnips stated that soldiers had come and ordered everybody present to stand in a line, before demanding money and gold. The situation escalated into murder: “An officer shot Altman, and a soldier shot my father.”¹²²

The evidence highlights that the phenomenon of rumor goes beyond class or occupational differences. Among the aggressors were not only soldiers but also civilians—secondary school students, railway workers, and train conductors.¹²³ The victims sometimes recognized the looters, who included a young academic¹²⁴ and a high school teacher.¹²⁵ An assault in Bożnicza Street was commanded by an officer named Grubiński, a student at the Lviv Technical University.¹²⁶ Even members of the city council were recognized among the mob,¹²⁷ as were ladies wearing elegant coats, veils and gloves. In one scene, the “legionnaires” presented their ladies with the items that they had purloined for them.¹²⁸ There were even

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 26, protocol 115.

¹¹⁹ “The Samuel Report,” printed in National Polish Committee of America, *The Jews in Poland: Official Reports of The American and British Investigating Missions* (Chicago: American Commission to Negotiate Peace, 1920), 26.

¹²⁰ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 48, protocol 100.

¹²¹ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 46, protocol 228.

¹²² TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 207, ark. 56, 26, protocol 487.

¹²³ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 91, protocol 56.

¹²⁴ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 39, protocol 213.

¹²⁵ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 91, protocol 78.

¹²⁶ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 206, ark. 44, 33, protocol 100; Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 58, protocol 100.

¹²⁷ Ibid., spr. 210, ark. 51, 24, protocol 114.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 23, protocol 114; See also Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 160-161.

ladies wearing hats, accompanied by their servants, who carried away the looted items.¹²⁹

Shops throughout the Jewish district were plundered. Any owners who attempted to resist were either physically attacked (in the best case) or shot dead.¹³⁰ There were cases in which the looters included army medical staff, who took any items that could be useful for the military hospital. For example, medical staff from the Red Cross looted a Jewish-owned shop on the corner of Bożnica Street.¹³¹ Events such as these were not restricted to the days on which the pogrom raged with its full intensity; already on November 12, nurses from the hospital were seen sitting in a car being loaded with goods from a Jewish-owned business.¹³² The perpetrators did not distinguish between rich and poor victims; social status was irrelevant to them. The inclusive nature of the victimized group was mirrored by the diversity of the perpetrators.¹³³ The aggressors were driven by various motivations. There was a clear desire for revenge, motivated by the Jews' alleged alliance with the enemy and their "treacherous" attacks on Poles. However, the desire for material gains also played an important role. Some of the aggressors saw the looting as a chance to escape the poverty in which they had become mired during the war, while others spotted an opportunity to get rich quick.¹³⁴

Conclusion

The pogrom was unleashed just a few hours after the retreat of the Ukrainian forces and the disarmament of the Jewish militia. It is estimated that hundreds of people suffered serious injury and around 70 were killed, either directly by the pogromists or as a result of widespread fires.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Ibid., spr. 207, ark. 56, 21, protocol 283.

¹³⁰ Cohen, "My Mission," 168.

¹³¹ TsDIAL, f. 505, op. 1, spr. 210, ark. 51, 23, protocol 114.

¹³² Ibid., 38, protocol 550; The pogrom did not in fact last 48 hours, but three days. Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 84; Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence*, 154.

¹³³ Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, 523.

¹³⁴ Cf. Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 120.

¹³⁵ Bendow, *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom*, 45; Cohen, "My Mission," 169; Mick, *Lemberg*, 159; Wróbel, "The Seeds of Violence," 138.

The events of November 1918 in Lviv were influenced by a number of factors: the power vacuum, the social climate during the civil war, economic deprivations, and social upheaval. Nevertheless, we should not ignore the immediate causes that gave the pogrom its main impetus. A key role in sparking ethnic violence was the spread of rumors, which were based on deep-rooted prejudice about Jews. Reports of Jews attacking the “Polish defenders” of the city were widespread. These narratives validated deep-rooted antisemitic tropes of Jewish treachery. There is no doubt that the newspaper *Pobudka* contributed to the spread of these rumors; their supposed veracity was enhanced as soon as they appeared in print. The fact that the only Polish newspaper publishing in Lviv functioned as a medium for spreading rumors about the Jews’ assaulting Poles undoubtedly meant that the rumors began to be regarded as facts. The monopoly of *Pobudka* allowed it to influence public opinion and crucially reinforce the Polish population’s belief that orally spread disinformation was true.

The final key rumor, concerning a supposed authorization to unleash a 48-hour pogrom, worked to coalesce the perpetrators and brought further dynamism and urgency into the practice of collective violence. This also allowed the perpetrators to transfer responsibility away from themselves as individuals. A crucial role in reinforcing the veracity of the alleged order to kill and loot was played by further rumors spread through the city. Finally, the perpetrators were mobilized by the desire for quick material gain, revealing the pragmatic nature of rumors. Analyzing the nature and role of rumor and its mechanism allows a better understanding of the dynamics of violence.

This study underscores the significance of rumors that not only mirror existing prejudice but also actively shape perception and behavior. Rumors emerge as powerful instruments for galvanizing collective action, heightening interethnic tensions, and legitimizing acts of violence. Hence, understanding the processes of rumor acceptance involves examining how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to disinformation, as well as the psychological factors that influence their judgments, and behavior.

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