Klaus Richter, *Antisemitismus in Litauen. Christen, Juden und die “Emanzipation” der Bauern (1889–1914)*, Berlin: Metropol, 2013. ISBN 978-3863-311-24-7

It is an old and well-known truth that there is not a single definition of Antisemitism about which the majority of scholars can agree. One of the most frequently discussed problems in this context is the question of what is the relationship between the earlier forms of hostility to Jews and modern ‘scientifically’ based Antisemitism. In his book about Antisemitism in Lithuania in 1889–1914, the German historian Klaus Richter criticises the approach that radically separates the old and new (modern) hostility to Jews. Following Christhard Hoffmann, he points out that it is impossible to discern any clear phases between religious and modern Antisemitism. Therefore, the author of the book chooses a very broad understanding of Antisemitism, ‘manifestations of conflicts of interest’, thus a certain form of ‘making foreign’ (p. 25).

The theme of hostility toward Jews in Lithuania is not new in historiography. Over the past few decades, historians, first of all in Lithuania, have written many works on the subject, and in one way or another, Richter uses them.¹ This book differs from current Lithuanian historiography not

¹ It should be noted that in his book the author mentions the most important works by Lithuanian authors on Antisemitism. From those not mentioned, one can distinguish the work of Vytautas Berenis: V. Berenis, ‘Bažnyčia ir Lietuvos žydai – sugyvenimo, priešiško ir supratimo istoriniai aspektai’, *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis*, 14 (1999), pp. 61–68; idem, ‘XIX a. nacionalinis judėjimas: lietuviai ir žydai’, *Metai* (1997), nr. 6, pp. 99–106. True, one might desire a broader discussion of Linas Venclauskas, who has written a thesis on the subject: L. Venclauskas, *Moderniojo Lietuviško antisemitizmo genezė ir raida (1883–1940 m.)* PhD diss. (Kaunas, 2008). The interpretation of the works of some Lithuanian historians could be more precise. Here is how Richter writes about the situation at the beginning of the 1880s: ‘In his study devoted to the relatively smaller number of outbreaks of anti-Jewish pogroms in Lithuania in the first wave (1882/83), Darius Staliūnas emphasizes the role of the Governor General of Vilnius, who decisively, but not always effectively, tried to hinder the outbreak of pogroms’ (p. 87). Here one should just quote the final part of that article: ‘Thus at this stage in research it is possible to explain the failure of the violence against the Jews to develop into “classic” pogroms in the north-western provinces in the way that it did in the south-western provinces not only by the decisive action taken by the local authorities, but also by the economic “backwardness” of the north-western region. It is likely that the traditional day-to day relations between Jews

only in the already mentioned definition of Antisemitism, the up to now not more broadly analysed analysis of the relations of various societies, first of all of consumers, toward hostility to Jews, but also the concept of 'contact zones'. The author tries to explain how the Lithuanian intelligentsia and priests understood, described and tried to change these 'contact zones'; what role these zones played in occurrences of collective violence; how, while establishing various cooperatives, efforts were made to change them.

The first section of the book analyses how the Lithuanian intelligentsia and priests defined the 'emancipation' of the peasants, who were seen as the basis for the modern Lithuanian nation, and in this context what role the hostility towards Jews played. In this part of the book, Richter shows the influence of Polish Antisemitism on the Lithuanian intelligentsia, but also convincingly demonstrates that the hostility to Jews of one of the main promoters of Lithuanian Antisemitism, Vincas Kudirka, was determined by his personal problems. We have to agree with the author that Antisemitism does not remain in the liberal stream of Lithuanian nationalism from the beginning of the 20th century. Richter also correctly notes that in the image of the Jew promoted at the end of the 19th century by both priests and the intelligentsia, the picture of the Jew as an exploiter of Lithuanian peasants played an important role. However, another thesis of the author, the fact that the *shtetl* was the most important space for the Lithuanian national project, is harder to accept. Also, I would not be so convinced that the examples of the negative image of the Jew in the section entitled 'The "Jewish" and "Lithuanian Spaces" of Kudirka and the *varpininkai*'² (pp. 141–150) provided by Richter are in fact related to the problem of space. In this context, one can present one more general doubt: I would think that the problem of the national territory in the case of Lithuanian nationalism, about which the book writes very often, in fact, was very important, but not in the context of relations with the Jews, but first of all with the Poles, and usually it was articulated when talking about Vilnius and the Vilnius region.

In keeping with the above definition, the author finds Antisemitism in the writings of authors such as Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, Julija Žymantienė (Žemaitė), Sofija Pšibiliauskienė and Marija Lastauskienė, Marija Pečkauskaitė and Sofija Kymantaitė, because even though they

and gentiles, or in other words, the particular sort of "social institution" that had developed there, had still not changed very much in early 1882 and so there were fewer opportunities for pogroms to arise.' D. Staliūnas, 'Anti-Jewish Disturbances in the North-Western Provinces in the Early 1880s', *East European Jewish Affairs*, Number 2/Winter (2004), p. 133. And of course, the starting date should not be 1882, but 1881. The author apparently did not have time to include the works on this theme that appeared in 2012.

² Supporters and distributors of a monthly Lithuanian newspaper *Varpas* (The Bell) (1889–1905) were referred to as *Varpininkai*.

fought openly against Antisemitism, they also thought that the Jews were competitors for Lithuanians, hindering the ‘emancipation’ of the peasants (pp. 191–196, 209, 389). So, if I understand it correctly, calling the Jew a competitor, a ‘foreigner’, is understood in this book as Antisemitism.

The second section is devoted to manifestations of violence against Jews at the beginning of the 20th century.³ Some of the pogroms that took place in Lithuania are discussed, devoting most attention to events in north Lithuania in 1900, and the pogrom in Dusetos in 1905. The author notes correctly that there were many important differences between manifestations of collective violence in Lithuania and in the southern provinces of the Romanov Empire: in Lithuania there was not a single pogrom in a large city; also, the nature of the violence differed fundamentally: there was no desire to kill, only to humiliate; nationalism also did not play a great role here.⁴

Pursuing the thesis formulated at the beginning of the book about the importance of ‘one’s own’ and ‘foreign’ space in Christian/Lithuanian-Jewish relations, Richter tries to look for manifestations of this phenomenon in cases of collective violence; but, if I understood it correctly, the author himself comes to the conclusion that these outbursts of violence were not associated with the ‘capture of space’: during the pogrom, the *shtetl* became a space of Christian dominance, but the abusers did not have such a goal. The author also emphasises that violence always started and took place in the so-called ‘contact zones’ of Christians and Jews, and the goal of the rioters was to ravage the areas, where ‘Christians and Jews would meet: shops, pharmacies, inns’ (p. 305). Indeed, the fact that collective violence usually began in the marketplace should not be surprising. After all, the largest concentration of people was in the market square, which increased especially after Mass in the church, and the Jewish shops were the closest targets. On the other hand, there were also cases (for example,

³ In the title of the chapter the dates 1900–1906 are specified, although in a separate section the collective violence against the Jews in Buivydžiai in 1908 is discussed.

⁴ One can find similar theses also in Lithuanian historiography: *Kai ksenofobija virsta prievarta. Lietuvių ir žydų santykių dinamika XIX a. – XX a. pirmojoje pusėje*, ed. V. Sirutavičius, D. Staliūnas, (Vilnius, 2005); V. Sirutavičius, D. Staliūnas, ‘Was Lithuania a Pogrom-Free Zone? (1881–1940)’, *Anti-Jewish Violence. Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, ed. J. Dekel-Chen, D. Gaunt, N. M. Meir, I. Bartal (Bloomington-Indianapolis, 2010), pp. 144–158; D. Staliūnas, ‘Dusetos, Easter 1905: The Story of One Pogrom’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 43 (2012), pp. 495–514; idem, ‘Antisemitic Tension during the 1905 Revolution in Lithuania’, *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, 21 (2012), pp. 54–88; idem, ‘How insulted religious feelings turned into pogroms: Lithuania in 1900’, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 42, no. 2 (2013), pp. 119–142.

in Pašvitinys in 1900⁵ and elsewhere) when Jewish homes were devastated too, which we would probably not assign to the ‘contact zones’.

A lot of attention in this part of the book is devoted to social-revolutionary as well as national agitation, on which the government wanted to place the blame for the 1900 pogroms, but the author rightly concludes that this agitation did not have a direct impact on the outbreak of violence. Richter associates the anti-Jewish violence in northern Lithuania in the summer of 1900 with the better-developed communication structure in the region, and the higher economic and social development, which resulted in the faster propagation of news; moreover, in this region, the population at the time was already inclined to be hostile towards the government, which made the suppression of the violence more difficult (pp. 244–245). The author questions whether the outbreak of violence in northern Lithuania in 1900 was related to the blood libel accusation. Richter presents the following arguments. The story about the alleged abduction of a girl became known only after the start of the investigation of the mass violence. Juozas Tumas (Vaižgantas) wrote about the event also only at the end of the summer (that is, after the pogroms). Several months passed from the alleged abduction of the girl to the outburst of violence. On the other hand, the author immediately notes that in almost all cases in previous years when there was violence against Jews, it was linked to accusations of ritual murder (p. 228; also p. 308). In fact, the discussion of the situation in 1900 is thankful in the respect that a lot of primary sources have survived (Richter also uses some of them), allowing us to look at these events through the eyes of various players. An analysis of the abundant sources, I believe, lets us assert that a certain accumulation of stimuli caused the violence in the summer of 1900: before Easter a rumour about the attempt of a ritual murder began to spread,⁶ an alleged procession of Jews on 30 May, during which Christianity was allegedly mocked, and the conflict that took place on 3 June in Konstantinovo (Vaškai) between a priest’s workers and Jews.⁷ I think it is difficult to link this outbreak of violence with the better communication. After all, the violence did not occur on the same day, and between the main outbreaks of violence there was a break of a week or even two, so the conventional means of communication were totally sufficient for the spread of information/rumours. Moreover, it is important to emphasise that although the region of northern

⁵ Ibid., p. 122.

⁶ In fact, several months passed from this event to the first pogrom. This, in my opinion, shows that this irritant alone was not a sufficient stimulus to generate collective violence; but from the analysis of other cases, we know that such cases remained in folk memory for a long time: D. Staliūnas, ‘Žydai ir kraujo vartojimas: vieno prietaro apraiškos XIX amžiaus Lietuvoje’, *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2012/1 (2013), pp. 51–80.

⁷ Staliūnas, ‘How insulted religious feelings’, pp. 119–142.

Lithuania was an important area for the Lithuanian national movement, it was by no means the most important one.

This section also discusses individual cases of physical violence against Jews (pp. 300–305). Some situations could actually have been manifestations of hostility towards Jews, but in each such case, one would have to prove that the Jewish man/woman was attacked because they were Jews, and not, for example, simply to rob them. After all, not only Jews were robbed and killed with criminal intent. In some cases, interactions between peasants acquired no less brutal forms than the situations of violence against Jews.

The third section of the book discusses the establishment of cooperatives as a tool for the ‘emancipation’ of the peasants. The collected impressive base of sources lets the author provide reasoned conclusions. Richter notes that anti-Jewish rhetoric was particularly important in cases when priests established cooperatives. Cooperatives of consumers were more Antisemitic than others. The author also notes that the success of the cooperatives is very questionable, i.e. the participation in their activities of peasants was much less than the secular intelligentsia and priests had expected.

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