The history of Jewish émigré archives is still virtually unstudied.¹ We do not even have at our disposal a reasonably complete list of the archives scattered around the globe. Some of the documents stored in them still carry, figuratively speaking, the clotted blood of events and they can have a strong impact on our perception of the Russian (Ukrainian) Jewish emigration. The archive which I shall use as an example to demonstrate this undoubtedly stands out, not only because of its importance (unlike the majority of émigré archives it was collected mainly in the country of the ‘Exodus’) but also because of its unusual fate.

The Ostjüdisches Historisches Archiv was established in Kiev in 1919 where, after the February Revolution of 1917, the renaissance of Jewish science and culture was accompanied by an outburst of collecting and publishing activities. It is worth remembering that Ukraine was not only the core of the Pale of Settlement, within the borders of which the majority of Russian Jews lived, but it was also the arena of the severest confrontation during the Civil War and of the bloodiest pogroms in the modern history of Jewry.²

It is, therefore, unsurprising that numerous Jewish political parties and organizations of that time concentrated their attention on collecting materials about pogroms. Almost all of them united around the Central Jewish Pogrom Victims Aid Committee established in Kiev in January 1919. Naturally, the idea appeared to make the collected

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¹ Nevertheless, the subject has been treated by O.V. Budnitskii, ‘Materialy’, pp. 206–221; see also Iu.N. Amiantov and I.S. Rosenthal, ‘Iz istorii arkhiva Bunda’, pp. 331–346.

² The pogroms of the period are discussed in numerous papers, publications, documents and memoirs. The views of modern historians on their nature as well as statistics on the number of pogroms and their victims (with the distribution of the main parties involved in them) are cited in the article by Budnitskii in his Rossiiske eveni mezhdu krasnymi i belymi, pp. 275–343; see also Miliakova, ed., Kniga pogromov.
materials accessible to a broader public. This idea was supported by
the Kiev-based Yiddish Folks-Farlag and by the Jewish National Coun-
cil (the executive body of the Jewish Provisional National Assembly).
These three establishments formed in May 1919 the Editorial Board
for the Collection and Publication of Materials on the Pogroms in
Ukraine. Its members were the representatives of the founding organi-
zations, among them such well-known Jewish public figures and writ-
ers as Vladimir Latskii-Bertholdi, Nahum Shtif, Felix Lander and Elias
Tcherikower. The latter was formally the secretary of the Editorial
Board but in fact became its chief almost at the outset.

Elias Tcherikower (1881–1943) left a distinct mark in the field of
Jewish studies. In 1925, when he was already living in Berlin, he
became a co-founder of YIVO and headed the historical section of
that institution until his death. At the same time, between 1929 and
1939, he edited its publication *Historishe Shriftn*. He had already writ-
ten a monograph in 1913 on the history of the Society for the Dis-
semination of Enlightenment among the Jews in Russia; later, he
was involved as author and editor in the preparation of fundamental
works on the history of the Jews in France and in the USA. However,
Tcherikower’s name is mostly associated with his own works, which
became a document of the martyrology of the victims of the Ukrainian
pogroms, and with the archives on which his works are based.

Remarkably, the Editorial Board considered the creation of a sub-
stantial archive its priority. This corresponded with the main aim of
the organization which, as Tcherikower wrote later, consisted in ‘pro-
viding the fundamental and objective historical work of systematizing
documentary data, without any political tendencies’. Dissatisfied with
the available materials, the Editorial Board initiated the collection of
documents on pogroms but also on the current political situation. Sur-
vivors and witnesses, among them between ten and fifteen thousand
Jewish refugees who flooded *en masse* to Kiev, were requested to send
their testimonies while envoys who formed a net of correspondents
were appointed to work in the provinces. The Editorial Board managed
also to take into its possession materials which had been gathered by a

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3 Since the analysis and the description of Tcherikower’s historical heritage is beyond
the scope of this paper, I refer only—for those who are interested in more details—to
the recent article by Joshua M. Karlip, ‘Between Martyrology and Historiography’.
4 Tcherikover, *Antisemitizm i pogony na Ukrainе*, p. 3.