

The Jewish Image in the Eastern Galician Press in the End of 19th at the Beginning of 20th Century

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INTRODUCTION

My dissertation project analyzes the “Jewish image” in Eastern Galicia during the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. I especially look at how Jews were depicted in the press – the main source of my investigation – at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. For this purpose, I chose ten Ukrainian and Polish newspapers which deal prevalingly with political issues, namely Dilo – (1881 – 1939) Gazeta Narodowa – (1862 – 1912), Praca (1879 – 1892), Slovo (1861 – 1887), Kurjer Lwowski, Słowo Polskie (1895/96 – 1918), Wiek Nowy (1901 – 1939), Halyczanyn (1893 – 1913), Ruslan (1897 – 1914) and Zerkalo (1889 – 1908). Using these sources, I analyze images and stereotypes of Jews held by different strata of the Galician society at that time. This includes intellectuals, politicians, public figures, writers, historians etc., as well as the rural literate part of the population, such as priests, teachers and ordinary villagers who were active readers and subscribers to local papers.

THE GALICIAN PRESS

The press played a decisive role in constituting identities at the end of the 19th century, offering an opportunity to the three Galician national groups, Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews, to socialize and unite within the community or collaborate in matters of common social, political or cultural interests. In the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the first press law dates back to 1862. From then, it rapidly developed and all nationalities in the empire received the opportunity to publish their own newspapers. At the end of the 19th and the early beginnings of the 20th century, the Galician press faced grave problems during its establishment. Newspapers had to deal with, for instance, frequent confiscations by the state authorities, financial and economic instability, lacking editorial skills, endless language discussions, a not-yet formed circle of readers who were chiefly “apathetic to the literature” or “suffering from serfdom and illiteracy.” After the next round of regulations implemented from 1868 onwards, the press became more democratic and profitable for the state. Consequently, in 1899, the state treasury of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was enriched by 2.5 million guildens coming from the taxes paid by 225 million newspaper readers.



THE JEWISH ISSUE

Already at the end of the 19th century, the “Jewish issue” was among the most frequently published and discussed topics in Ukrainian and Polish nationalist, democratic, clerical, and socialist newspapers. Editors started to explain the meaning of the notion of “anti-Semitism” to their readers and to write about the anti-Semitic congress in Dresden and its follow-ups in 1881. Their contributions towards the aim of “solving the Jewish question” were not new, but were based on an intellectual and modern ideological perspective.

The project time frame starts with the end of the 19th century and the birth or re-birth of the ideological notion of “anti-Semitism” in the 1880s, its introduction to the readers in the newspapers, the main intellectual approaches to the “Jewish question” and the search for a “solution”. The peasants’ correspondence is also a unique and important source which offers an intimate view of the personal lives of the people at that time. It also gives a kind of feedback to certain intellectual ideas which were to a large extent derived from the press. Moreover, the research period includes the two pogrom waves in the Russian Empire in 1882 and Moldavian Kishinev in 1903, which permits a look at potential impacts on Eastern Galician newspaper debates.

METHODS

Until now, investigations of the “Jewish image” in the Eastern Galician press, published mainly in Lviv, in Ukrainian and Polish, are rather an exception than a rule. In Ukrainian historiography, it has hardly been touched on at all. The systematization of newspaper archives still requires a great deal of work.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and its focus on an interpretative, contextual and constructivist approach, my research is based on the interpretation of newspaper texts (I, however, do not categorize and quantify textual features). This includes the analysis of references to Jews in connection with social topics, ideologies, stereotypes, ethnic differences, dominance and politics in general. It also involves the concept of intertextuality, without which texts cannot be studied; when analyzing texts, one always has to incorporate, reformulate and reinterpret other texts which predate them. I use content as well as thematic analyses to look into characteristics, features and peculiarities of the sources. I also look at the frequency of the usage of specific terms such as “anti-Semitism”. Another part of investigation deals with newspaper rubrics and different accounts of the same event by various newspapers, countries, villages or regions. The news about the assassination of Aleksander II in 1882 in the Galician press, the rumors about Jewish implications in the crime, and, as a result, pogroms against the Jewish population in Eastern Ukraine under the rule of the Russian Empire or the Tisza Eszlar affair in Hungary are good examples of the kind of reporting I investigate in my thesis.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the role of the press is an excellent source for learning about the historical past of Galicia during the Habsburg reign and the people living there during that period. Daily newspaper coverage of that time tells us a great deal about the dominant mindset of 19th century Galicia, especially considering its crucial role in the construction of a “Jewish image.”

