

Speaker 1:

I'm working on this book now on pogroms in the Russian Civil War, and that's what I'm going to be talking about today. I've called this talk, Pogroms, Genocide, and Migration Crises in 1919 to 1921 Ukraine. When I actually got down to the writing the talk, I really didn't get much past 1919. I'm having the same problem with the book, which was supposed to cover a much larger period of time, and is really getting bogged down in 1919, because so much happened in 1919, and I'm now thinking of turning the rest of it into just a kind of an epilogue sort of thing. So, my talk will be structured like that as well, but I'd encourage you, you can ask about migration in the question period, because the migration actually is an important part of what happens next.

Speaker 1:

I want to begin with a slide from a New York Times headline. This is from September 8th, 1919, which is really what made me become interested in the pogroms as a phenomenon. Well, actually there were two things that made me become interested. I'd spent several years going through Ukraine, interviewing Yiddish speakers about their life. For about 10 years over the summers, I would go with a research team and interview people. I was struck by how many people talked about the pogroms of 1919. We were interviewing Yiddish speakers, so these are people who were born in the 1900s, 1910s. And many of them, the oldest people that we interviewed, actually had very strong recollections of the pogroms or the pogroms entered their memories in very important ways.

Speaker 1:

One guy we interviewed in Tulchin showed us... As soon as we started interviewing him, he rolled up his sleeve and showed us this huge scar across his arm, which is a scar from the bullet that killed his mother while she was holding him as a newborn, and it ricocheted across his body, he told us, during the pogroms of 1919 in Tulchin, where the [Alchovic 00:01:49] gang had carried out this pogrom. He, as a six month old child, was left in a mass grave with members of his family. A priest actually came by and found him and took him, and brought him, saved him, for a few months and then returned him to a distant family member.

Speaker 1:

Other people we spoke to also had stories of these 1919 pogroms, that made me realize the resiliency of these stories, and the impact that they had on what happened afterwards in the region. The way the pogrom stories were integrated into people's memories, also about the Holocaust, of how they talked about mass graves of the pogrom periods they differentiated from mass graves of the Holocaust period, which was not something I had thought of.

Speaker 1:

The other thing that made me think of these connections is the way people that we interviewed in Yiddish spoke about the Holocaust as a pogrom. They used the term pogrom to describe massacres that took place in their towns. The Holocaust in Eastern Europe, as I'm sure many of you know, and in the Ukraine in particular, wasn't characterized by concentration camps and extermination camps. There were some concentration camps, but most people were killed closer to home in episodes of violence that resembled pogroms much more so than the type of Holocaust that we imagine as being very mechanized, and epitomized in places like Auschwitz and the death camps. Whereas here again, it was pogroms. This correlation between the terminology of pogrom from 1919 and the Holocaust and the similarities really got me thinking in that direction.

Speaker 1:

Then I stumbled across this headline again from September 8th, 1919 in The New York Times. The New York Times is reporting on the murder of 127,000 Jews in a spate of violence in Ukraine. You can see [inaudible 00:03:35] here is that 127,000 Jews have been killed and six million are in peril. This headline struck me, particularly because of the number six million that has a lot of resonance. There are warnings here that six million people in Ukraine are in danger. In fact, the article concluded with this statement here, you can see... I'll actually read it from here it's easier for me, but it's a statement by Joseph Seth, who's the president of the Federation of Ukrainian Jews, who writes, "This fact, that the population of six million souls in Ukraine and Poland have received notice through action and by word that they are going to be completely exterminated, this fact stands before the whole world as the paramount issue of the present day." Here we have, 21 years, if a little less than 21 years, before the Nazis first moved into Ukraine, we have a warning, in not a very obscure place, The New York Times, stating that six million Jews in Poland and Ukraine are slated to be exterminated. It struck me.

Speaker 1:

Then I started going through other journals of the period, looking at the pogroms and see that they were being spoken about as genocidal and as extermination. Here's an article that The Nation did on the pogroms that they called The Murder of a Race. This is before the word genocide had been invented. They're still talking about the murder of a race.

Speaker 1:

In 1920, a year after The Times warned of the mass extermination of six million Jews in Ukraine and Poland, the American Jewish Committee declared, "The very existence of the Jewish population is in jeopardy." A comprehensive report on the pogroms by the head of the information branch of the Committee for the Aid of Victims of Pogroms, which was organized by the Russian Red Cross, concluded, "The task that the pogrom movement set itself was to rid Ukraine of all Jews, and to carry it out in many cases by the wholesale physical extermination of the race."

Speaker 1:

Then I started going through memoirs of the period and testimonies of the period. There's actually three different rounds of testimonies that we have. In 1919, as these pogroms were taking place, and I'll talk a little bit about some of the pogroms in a minute, but as these pogroms were taking place, there were lawyers, Russian Jewish lawyers, and groups affiliated with this Committee for the Aid of Pogrom Victims, that went into towns in the immediate aftermath of pogroms and took testimonies. They took thousands... Actually there's about 80,000 pages of documents, most of which are testimonies, giving testimonies of these pogroms.

Speaker 1:

In 1919, in the immediate aftermath of the pogroms, groups of lawyers went in, they went door to door and they took statements from people who had been victims of the pogroms. Then in 1921, whence the Soviets came into power, they tried to try pogrom perpetrators and they carried out a whole series of investigations and tribunals to punish pogrom perpetrators. For those tribunals, there's also a whole nother round of testimonies. And then in 1926, after Symon Petliura was assassinated in Paris by Solomon Schwartzbard, there was a whole nother round of testimonies taken. So there's three rounds of testimonies. There's a lot of evidence about what took place, most of which comes from personal testimonies, which is most of what I'm using, but there's also circulars that were issued by various

governments and various entities that weren't full governments, but proto-government entities that were in power, also on these pogroms.

Speaker 1:

By and large, the testimonies also say that the goal of the pogrom perpetrators was the complete elimination of the Jewish population. There are instances of pogroms like in Tetiev, for example, there's a pogrom in May 1920 in which local bandits who are affiliated with a little gang of bandits, not with any particular government, but were affiliated with a band of bandits, moved into the town of Tetiev, ordered all of the Jews to assemble in the synagogue, and then burn the synagogue down, killing 800 people. As Jews were jumping out of the windows of the synagogue, they fired at people jumping out, they rounded out people who had fled the synagogue, and then they went door to door to find people in cellars. This was intended as the wholesale extermination of the Jews in this town.

Speaker 1:

In other towns, we have lists of the names of victims, with lists going up to 927 people, or actually I think it's 922 people, who are on the list of victims of the Proskurov pogroms. This is a low figure of an individual pogrom that killed 920 people. Probably some of you have heard of the Proskurov pogrom, but I imagine that many of you have not. That's a pogrom that took place over the course of four hours, in which approximately 1,650 people were killed, although we only have the names of 921. So these are real large scale massacres of the Jewish population that were taking place in 1919.

Speaker 1:

This comes from the same Nation article. You can see, it's just a little indication of who they blame for most of the pogroms. It shows, that you can see here, they blame the Polish army for 38 pogroms, they blame Petliura, the Ukrainian National Republic for 54 pogroms, they blame Denikin and the Whites for 93 pogroms, and the vast majority of them were carried out by so called bands, which is just groups of peasants, locals really, who decided to move into the towns, to move into the lively Jewish towns and massacre the population. It's those that I think are the most disturbing, because those are not carried out by any actual military organization, but those are relatively spontaneous acts of violence carried out by people in the countryside who are moving against the cities.

Speaker 1:

Again, all of this, I think, is relevant in and out itself, but it's also relevant in particular because of what took place 21 years later, which was the Nazi invasion. In fact, the very first mass killings of the Holocaust took place in this region as soon as the Nazis started to move in in 1941. If you look at Nazi propaganda of that period also, you could see that... And this is just one of hundreds of articles that use the same type of language of Judeo-communism, of accusing Jews of being communists, accusing Jews of being Bolsheviks, and equating the two. This is the type of propaganda that the Nazis found most useful in Ukraine when they came in. This looks exactly like the leaflets that were distributed in 1919. It's the same rhetoric that the Nazis are finding had such resonance there.

Speaker 1:

I think, despite all of the alarms that it raised at the time, we don't really think of the pogroms as being all that significant now. They've kind of been subsumed in our memory by the Holocaust. But I think if you take them out, you can see that there's something significant about them. In fact, in the 1920s and 1930s, if you go through Jewish newspapers, or you read any Yiddish fiction or Jewish fiction, all you

hear about are the pogroms and the impact this has. Israel Zangwill called them... Israel Zangwill, who's the prominent, how you call him, a journalist writer, and the guy who wrote The Melting Pot, the play The Melting Pot, the prominent diaspora nationalist, whatever, he even called them a holocaust. He referred to the pogroms as a holocaust before the Holocaust was being used as a term.

Speaker 1:

My contention is that historians have overlooked the role that the bloodshed of 1917 to 1921 played in normalizing the killing of Jews and setting the preconditions for genocide. When the German Wehrmacht and mobile killing units moved into Ukrainian towns in the summer of 1941 and began the physical extermination of the Jewish population of Europe, they were inserting themselves into a decade's old battleground, in which the murder of innocent Jews was a well-recognized pattern. Everybody immediately knew what to do and knew what to expect when the opportunity came, to assemble the Jews in a town and to massacre them. It was not unthinkable. Much of what we traditionally argue about the Holocaust is that the wholesale slaughter of the Jews was simply unthinkable. In fact, it was unthinkable in Western Europe, it was unthinkable in Germany, it was unthinkable in much of Poland, which is why it didn't happen there. Even though the Nazis came to power in 1933, didn't really begin massive killings, targeted killings didn't begin until '41, '42, until this part of Europe was brought in.

Speaker 1:

It's not just these facile and coincidental similarities, I think, that link the bloodshed of the pogroms with the violence of the Holocaust. I guess this relates to what I said, that the nascent Ukrainian government justified the 1919 massacres as a defense against Bolshevism, just as the Germans did in 1941. This article actually comes from 1943, from during the German occupation.

Speaker 1:

In both the Holocaust and the civil war, violence was also a means of enrichment. In 1919, the poverty-stricken and hungry peasants who arrived in the city were armed with sabers and with sacks. They came prepared to kill and to haul away all of the stolen loot. The Germans and Ukrainian who carried out massacres during the Holocaust were also meticulous in the collection of Jewish loot. Historians have only recently begun to investigate that motivation of the Holocaust as well.

Speaker 1:

I'd argue that only now that we've come to understand that the Holocaust in the East was characterized more by local hatred than bureaucratic process, was carried out more with bullets than gas, and was justified by political differences rather than racial ideology, is it possible to see how the pogroms of the civil war prepared the ground for the genocidal violence that took place in the same towns and against the same people 21 or 22 years later.

Speaker 1:

I'll now turn just to a couple individual pogroms. There were about 1,200 pogroms that took place between 1918 and 1921. I've identified either the names of about 26,000 people who were killed in those pogroms. This comes from lists of names of people that were sent by individual towns. The leaders of individual towns sent names. I actually have a picture of one of those names. Well, I'll just kind of skip ahead to show you that. Whoops. Where is it? Here you go. As you can see, this is one of the lists of what these look like of the people killed in the Ovruch pogrom. You can see there 58 people

killed in that pogrom. I'll show you some other ones of these as we go through. I've assembled all of these lists, and I've got about 26,000 names. The Soviet government tried to do the same thing. They came up with 37,000 names. They concluded that that represents about a third of the number of people killed. So, the official number that the Soviet government gave was 112,000, although sometimes they actually said 200,000, sometimes they even said 300,000. I think about 100,000 is a decent estimate for the number of people who are killed in this instance of violence, as I'm going through these.

Speaker 1:

One of the very first of these major pogroms took place in the town of Ovruch for three weeks in December 1918 to January 1919. The warlord Alexei Kozyr–Zirko reigned over Ovruch and its district, looting Jewish property, stripping Jews of their boots and clothing, degrading and humiliating Jews, and ultimately murdering them with the type of sadistic brutality normally associated more with the Holocaust than with pogroms. One of the officers who served with Kozyr-Zirko after the Ovruch pogrom recalled him as a very handsome man who was as dangerous as a cat and as cowardly as a hare. These local bandits, who became prominent figures, often tended to be very charismatic. They tended to be charismatic peasant leaders who could assemble bands against them.

Speaker 1:

I think that much of the violence that was instituted against these towns came about as a result of population disparities between Jews and Christians. I've got these little charts here that just give you an idea of the structure of Jewish communities in Ukraine. You can see, this one here shows that 89% of all Ukrainians, sorry, of all people living in Ukraine, 89% were rural and 11% were urban. This is based on the 1926 census. So in 1926, you can see that Ukraine was about 90% rural, whereas the Jewish population, by contrast, was exactly opposite, it was 90% urban. The other chart there shows the urban/rural residences of Jews in Ukraine. You can see that there's a stark division between town and country, where the country is predominantly Ukrainian and the city is predominantly Jewish. This just reflects urban residences versus rural residence, but even individual cities have Jewish streets and Jewish quarters and Christian streets and Christian quarters. So even once you get into the city, it's even more starkly divided.

Speaker 1:

It's not only a rural/urban division, but also occupations are starkly divided between Jews and Christians. For instance, Jews were overwhelmingly artisans. Cobblers tended to be Jewish. There were certain professions that tended to be Jewish, and there were other professions that tended not to be Jewish. Jews were rarely farmers. Jews were rarely railroad workers. If you look at this, this is from Tulchin district, which is a region that I've done a fair amount of work on, you can see that there are stark differences between occupations. If you look at barbers in Tulchin district, about 90% of all barbers were Jewish, and 10% weren't. Coopers is about 75%. Glasers is 97% of glassmakers, of glasers, were Jewish. Coachmen, tailors, dentists, doctors, musicians are about half and half, and then you go rail workers and farmers and it's the exact opposite.

Speaker 1:

So Jews were segregated not only by religion, not only by language, they spoke, particularly in these towns and smaller towns, over 99% of them spoke Yiddish in 1897, based on the 1897 census, a little bit less in 1926. But at the time of the pogroms, they're speaking a different language, they're engaged in

different occupations, they follow a different religion, they're living in different streets. These are starkly demarcated populations. They certainly overlap, they interact with each other, but they're demarcated.

Speaker 1:

Anyway. Back to Ovruch where this ataman Kozyr–Zirko who I showed you before... Is he up there? Yeah. Ataman Kozyr–Zirko was in charge. Ovruch was in many ways a microcosm of Ukraine. It was a town that looked like many of the other towns. It had been, like much of Ukraine by 1919, had been devastated by the Great War followed by 18 months of civil war, and a typhus epidemic that had hit the town already. With no roots in the countryside to which they could flee, Jews and Poles tended to remain in the city during the typhus epidemic, whereas Christians were able to go out into the countryside.

Speaker 1:

In the six months prior to the December pogrom in Ovruch, the city had changed hands eight times. Eight different regimes had moved into town. At one point during the period of German domination, nearby peasants sought to establish a socialist republic in Ovruch and peasants had risen up against other regimes. There had been a whole bunch of... I won't all go through this, but there had been a whole bunch of government changes and rebellions in the town before. The Ovruch republic was a feeble institution. Eventually the Bolshevik faction in the town had managed to gain control. When they gained control, the Bolsheviks executed the leaders of the peasants' republic. There is a group of peasants who are vying for control and the Bolsheviks were vying control. The Bolsheviks got control. They executed the peasants. The Bolsheviks were then overthrown by a local right-wing organization.

Speaker 1:

It was at this point at which the Ukrainians in the city called for assistance from the Ukrainian National Republic, from Petliura's government. Petliura's government at the time was very feeble, had very little control of what was going on, hardly had more control beyond the railway car that he was based out of. He sent in this Kozyr–Zirko in order to take control of the situation in Ovruch. From the first entry into town, Kozyr–Zirko and his men interpreted their mission to route out Bolsheviks as a license to terrorize the Jewish population and pillage their property. On December 26, soon after their arrival in town, Kozyr–Zirko's men arrested the town rabbi and berated him, saying, "I know that you are a Bolshevik, that all of your kin are Bolsheviks, and that all the Yids are Bolsheviks. Know that I will exterminate all the Jews in the city, gather them in the synagogue and let them know."

Speaker 1:

Kozyr–Zirko and his men enjoy torturing Jews, stripping men naked and forcing them to dance in public as Kozyr–Zirko's drunken men whipped them. Elderly Jews who happened to be passing by were strung by the neck from high branches, stripped, and hung to die. Sometimes the soldiers would leave signs warning passersby not to remove the bodies hanging from the trees on pain of death. He ordered all of the Jewish tailors and cobblers to work for him, outfitting his troops with clothing and fabrics stolen from the Jewish population. Kozyr–Zirko assembled a group of Jewish musicians and ordered them to play music for him while he whipped other Jews who he forced to dance for him. Jews were selected to clean the railroad station and the railway cars. Kozyr–Zirko's troops roamed the streets and randomly selected Jews to bring to the warlord's encampments. There, as Kozyr–Zirko lay in bed, his assistants dressed these Jewish prisoners in outlandish costumes, whipped them, and forced them to sing Yiddish songs and dance for their amusement.

Speaker 1:

On the night of January 14th to 15th, as Bolshevik forces from the north, coming down from Mazyr from Belarus, surrounded the city, Kozyr-Zirko ordered all the Jewish men to gather at the station. About 50 went, where they were surrounded by soldiers, by Kozyr-Zirko's soldiers, who pursued them with whips and made them sing and dance. After amusing themselves with this scene, these soldiers began massacring the assembled Jews, killing 32 people at the train station, after which they got on a train and left the city as the Bolsheviks came in a few hours later. This then, again, is that list of the murdered people in this pogrom, the 58 people killed in the Ovruch pogrom.

Speaker 1:

Kozyr-Zirko's crimes reverberated around the world. Reports of this pogrom were spread around the world and reports of his reign of terror in Ovruch leaked out. Locally as well, young peasants watched and learned about this type of behavior. In the immediate aftermath of the Ovruch pogrom, there were a series of other pogroms, some of which were considerably worse. There was another pogrom in Zhytomyr in January, and then other pogroms in February and March.

Speaker 1:

I'm going to gloss over them, but I want to show you a few little charts. I started trying to map out the pogroms by finding where pogroms happened in what months. It got too big. I now have a database or a spreadsheet of 890 pogroms I've got on the spreadsheet. I don't have little pins, probably 190 of them. I started doing this and then realized it was futile. I need to actually hire somebody to make this map for me. But this will give you an idea of what's going on with the pogroms.

Speaker 1:

This is February 1919, and this is where there are pogroms. The biggest pogrom in February 1919 is this Proskurov pogrom that I mentioned kills about 1,650 people. In March 1919, there is another series of pogroms. These yellow dots now are the March ones. And you can see this is going along the railway lines. You can see that's why it's in such a straight line, that's where the pogroms are based. In April, there's another series of pogroms here. April is also when the Petliura government now is now fleeing to Rivne and Odessa has fallen. Odessa that was under French control is fallen by this point. So there's a lot going on in April, and there's some more pogroms.

Speaker 1:

But then over the summer, in May, June and July, is where things really start to explode. This is where nobody has control. Nobody has effective control in Ukraine. No government is really exercising any control. Instead, most of the regions just fall onto these regional warlords, these bandits, people like Grigoriev is the most famous of them. Here you can just see the proliferation of pogroms in May. And again, this is only a partial list. By this point, there should be, if this were complete, there'd be about 600 of those dots by May, and then this continues through June and July. But you get the idea, with another proliferation of pogroms.

Speaker 1:

Here, by the way, is that list that I've mentioned of those killed in the Proskurov pogrom. You can see it goes to 911. Then I have another list, actually, where there's hand written in a few more names, so it's

like 923 is the total number. But this is several pages of a list of the names of individuals killed in the Proskurov pogrom. Anyway, that's the nature of these early pogroms.

Speaker 1:

I want to move now to one of the July pogroms in the same region as Ovruch, which is the Slovechna pogrom, another pogrom that we happen to know a lot about, because Itsik Kipnis, the Yiddish writer, was from Slovechna, and he wrote a book about that pogrom called Months and Days. It's interesting because Months and Days, it's not the most famous work, it's not the most famous of Kipnis' work and Kipnis isn't the most famous of Yiddish writers, so it's not like the book has been studied all that much. But what's interesting when it has been studied, it's been studied as a novel, as a work of fiction.

Speaker 1:

The few people who have written about it treat it as a work of fiction. But I've actually gone through documents, some of which have even been published in English already in 1921, some of these documents were published, but there are documents that we have on the Slovechna pogrom that actually back up exactly what Kipnis is saying, with the correct names of people, the dates, the numbers, the exact instances are backed up by other testimonies. Actually, Kipnis calls the book a chronicle, not a novel. So it actually shouldn't be a work of fiction, but I think people didn't believe the story that he's telling. It seems so remarkable that people imagined he was making it up. But in fact, the names are all correct and it's a true story of what happened in Slovechna.

Speaker 1:

What happened in Slovechna was... This was a pogrom that was committed by locals, by neighbors who one day took up ax and sword to massacre their childhood friends. Kipnis lived on the outskirts of town. The courtyard his family shared with his aunt and uncle was adjoined to the tannery his parents had acquired for their dowry. His father worked in the tannery just as his grandfather had. On the other side of their garden, right next to where Kipnis lived, lived Marko Lukhtans and his two younger brothers. It wasn't unusual in Slovechna for Jewish craftsmen like the Kipnis family and Christian peasants like the Lukhtans to be living side by side, their fruit trees literally branching over each other's fences. In his memoirs, Kipnis recalls that the Lukhtans' were good neighbours. He says that Marko Lukhtans never seem to mind when the Jews' geese grazed in his yard, or when the Jewish children in the neighborhood would filch cherries from his trees, he had this cherry garden. Marko's brother Maxim would sometimes try to make an incident of trespassing geese or missing cherries, he says, but Marko would just smoke his pipe and laugh, So what do you care about the little Jews? So they want to grab a cherry," he would say.

Speaker 1:

We have this instance of two people living side by side and in a good situation. Marko had served in the military, had fought the Germans. When he came back, he brought candies for the neighborhood children and they recall him giving out candies. That's why it was so surprising when on July 16th, 1919, Marko Lukhtans, Kipnis' labor, neighbor rather, grabbed a revolver and saber and started massacring Jews in the town. Like Ovruch, the town had changed hands repeatedly in the 18 months before the pogrom, and like in Ovruch the economic situation further inflamed passions and led to a widening gap between the city and the country. By the summer of 1919, as Bolshevik forces amassed a few miles to the north on their drive towards Kiev, the situation in Slovechna was precarious.



Speaker 1:

The Slovechna pogrom was led by a local 19-year-old peasant named Kosenko, who liked to refer to himself as the commissar of insurgent troops. This is typical of these warlords that emerged in towns. Some of the warlords were massive warlords like Grigoriev, who had an army of some 10,000 people, and he had tanks and armored trains even at his disposal that he got when he attacked Kherson in early April. But others of these warlords were just 19-year-olds like Kosenko, who ruled no more than a village or two, and were made up mostly of kinsmen from that village, but nevertheless called themselves a commissar of the insurgent troops.

Speaker 1:

In July 1919, Kosenko started rumors that the Jews were planning on exiling the priests and shuttering the churches. This was a common accusation against Jews, because this is in fact what the Bolsheviks did when they moved into towns, and they knew of stories and other towns in which the Soviets have come in and they shuttered the churches and they arrested the priests, and this became imagined as the Jews are going to shutter the churches and execute the priests. Others reported rumors that the Bolsheviks were planning on transferring the metrical books from the priests to the Soviet Executive Committee, thereby signaling the Soviet infringement on the personal lives of individuals.

Speaker 1:

People described Kosenko as short and thin, clean-cut, long face, green eyes. He was learned. He'd finished the school. He was a local writer. He liked to write. He'd gone to school with the Jewish children. They had grown up with this fellow. He received a basic education. He'd served as a low-level local government clerk. In 1918, when he was 18 years old, he briefly joined one of the paramilitary divisions that popped up in the region, but when it was disbanded, he was left without work. Then by the summer of 1919, he enrolled in the local police force, became close with the local chief of police, and then later left to form his own band, his own band of warlords.

Speaker 1:

On Saturday, January 12th, when these rumors were rampant, of the Jews coming in and taking away the churches, [Jakob Melamed 00:30:33], one of the witnesses who gave testimony actually a few times, and the town pharmacist appealed to the local priest to use his Sunday sermon to calm everybody down. According to Melamed, "The priest replied that there is no reason to be afraid of his parishioners, and that he would explain all this to them on the next day, that is Sunday. This rather satisfactory answer reassured us a little." It's interesting that Melamed said this when he gave testimony in August 1919, immediately after the pogrom. He said that the priest reassured them and said that he would speak to them. In 1921, Jakob Melamed, the same fellow, was now a refugee in Warsaw and he gave testimony to the Red Cross. In his testimony of the Red Cross in 1921, the priest has kind of turned into one of the instigators of the pogrom.

Speaker 1:

It's interesting. We don't know what happened. It's hard to tell what happened. Maybe he heard something else from August 1919 to 1921. Maybe he heard whether the priest was actually doing other stuff than what he was saying. Maybe just memory plays trick. Maybe he's now blaming it on the priest when he wasn't willing, when he thought the priest was coming to their side. Who knows. But it's just interesting how the testimony changes on the role of the priest in this particular pogrom.

Speaker 1:

Anyway. So his quote, actually, he says the priest was one of the initiators of the pogrom, is what he says two years later. So I said when he told the Red Cross in Warsaw, it was actually the Joint Distribution Committee he told in Warsaw, so when he told the Joint Distribution Committee.

Speaker 1:

Others talk about being awoken in the middle of the night by shooting. One witness told the Red Cross that 30 to 40 men came into the town square as though summoned by a signal. The bandits were shouting the familiar slogan, "Hurrah, beat the Yids," and began to smash windows and pillage the entire night. There are also multiple witnesses who say that the peasants came in with wheelbarrows and with bags in order to take away loot and take loot to the homes. Kipnis describes the scene the next morning. He says, "The streets look like they did after a fair or before Passover," which is when Jews would traditionally clean out their house and take all of the furniture out of the house in order to clean it out. "Dust and garbage was in front of every door. Papers were thrown about with broken glass." As he wandered through the streets, Kipnis says he saw a fellow by the name of [Sergei 00:32:53], "A well-built goj, an elder from the nearest village, an elder without a single gray hair on his head, a neighbor about his age, and a young man, also a year into his marriage with a beautiful young wife." He says they were all looting the houses.

Speaker 1:

These are, again, young people who he identifies as young intellectuals, people he knew, he'd gone to school with, who are now looting all of the houses, carrying away their contents.

Speaker 1:

The next day, the Jews buried their dead. As night fell, many Jews fled into the countryside to sleep out in the open, in the gardens that surrounded the town. Others found shelter in neighboring houses. On Thursday afternoon, July 17th, the town rabbi, [Ber Borg Tzion 00:33:39] called for a conference with the pogrom ringleaders. He asked Kosenko and the others to come meet with him to negotiate a compromise. When they met that afternoon in the town square, the rabbi began to speak and make entreaties for peace, but according to Melamed, he was quickly shouted down by the masses. The priest, who was also there for this meeting, then gave a speech and spoke against bloodshed, but according to Melamed added that the Jews deserved whatever is coming to them, but nevertheless asked everybody to refrain from violence. They then agreed, in this community assembly that took place in the middle of the square with the rabbi, the priest, it sounds like a joke, with the rabbi, the priest and the warlords, and they agreed to turn over 40,000 rubles in exchange for a commitment to stop the violence.

Speaker 1:

Some descriptions of the assembly, I'll skip through. On Thursday night, many Jews in Slovechna resolved to spend the night together in [Mottel Radner's 00:34:38] house. This is one of the names that the testimonies tell us and that Kipnis also uses. Radner was a leading Jewish activist, and had one of the only two-story houses in town. As Kipnis wrote, "Above Mottel's, in the painted upper houses, lived his child, his daughter-in-law, and Mottel himself lived below. Mottel's place was like a railroad station, not a home. People were always coming and going, both Jews and peasants. They won't let anybody kill Mottel." But as it turned out Radner's place was the worst place to hide. At around three o'clock in the

morning on Friday, Kosenko led a group of bandits armed with axes and rifles into Radner's house, where they massacred 25 people and seriously wounded the rabbi.

Speaker 1:

The violence then stimulated a mass exodus of refugees who headed toward Ovruch. Seeing the roads blocked, many returned and found the home of another wealthy member of the community who also lived in a brick house, Ivan [Ber-Portnoy 00:35:39], where they tried to hide. I'll skip a little bit about this, but there is another massacre than in Portnoy's house where people were hiding. So people seem to be hiding in the houses of the well-established members of the community, who live in what they think are the most secure houses, but the bandits then come in and take their houses as well.

Speaker 1:

Again, this pogrom then also ends about two days later, on Saturday evening, when a detachment of Red Army soldiers arrives in town from Ovruch. The detachment of Red Army soldiers had been warned... I should have shown on a map where these cities are, but they're relatively near each other. They had been warned by refugees who had managed to flee Slovechna and had gone to Ovruch and asked for assistance, and then the Red Army had sent a detachment in to put an end to the violence.

Speaker 1:

As Kipnis recalls, and here I'll quote Kipnis again, "Then, the Red Army detachment sat 12 peasants in a great wagon of hay. Their hands were bound to the rails and all 12 were big, strong, and angry. Nine were local. Only the chiefs were missing. There was no Kosenko, no Marko, and no police chief. Justice was swift," again, quoting Kipnis, "Four handsome, healthy, but somewhat angry young peasant men were stood up next to the jail with blindfolded eyes and shot." According to one report, the detachment from Ovruch killed 20 bandits on the spot and arrested another 10, who they brought with them to Ovruch. Those other 10 were most likely killed as well. Marko himself got away, but Kipnis tells us that later, a few months later, a group of Jews found Marko and shot him on their own, shot him against the wall on their own. So there's a great deal of violence going both ways.

Speaker 1:

One thing that's interesting about the Slovechna pogrom, or another thing, I think the whole thing's interesting, but another thing is interesting about it is 19 months later, in September 1920, a Soviet military tribunal arrested and indicted three individuals on charges of actively participating in the pogrom on the basis of evidence provided by 19 witnesses. So we have the pogrom which is carried out, again, by these local warlords, and immediately a Soviet detachment comes in and they shoot a whole bunch of people on the spot. Then 19 months later, once the Soviet government is actually establishing itself a little bit more permanently in the region, they set up a military tribunal and continue to try perpetrators of the pogroms and continue to investigate.

Speaker 1:

Here we have an indictment that lists the people that they've arrested. It's taken on the basis of the testimony of 19 individuals who named some of the perpetrators. The Soviet military investigation concludes that both defendants, there's two defendants that they have, a third defendant actually they capture and then he escapes, but two of the defendants had engaged in a pogrom out of motivations of national hatred towards the Jewish population, as it says in the indictments, and they're indicted for the murder of [Jocheved Radner 00:38:44], [Ethel Dorfman 00:38:46], [Niesl Geichmanthis 00:38:47], [Hersh

Mantel 00:38:47], [Mottel Dorman 00:38:48], [Chaya Radner 00:38:48], and the daughter [Kayla Fehner 00:38:50]. So they actually named the people who these two peasants are alleged to have killed. The two are then handed over to the [Villenian 00:38:57] gubernatorial revolutionary tribunal. On March 31st, 1921, these people are still working through the trial and a revolutionary tribunal hears the case against them and sentences them to execution by shooting, these two people to execution by shooting.

Speaker 1:

I think it's noteworthy that this revolutionary tribunal is chaired by a fellow with the last name of Feldman, and the secretary of the tribunal is a fellow with the last name of Radner. So two very identifiable Jewish names. Now it seems, from the peasants' perspective, that now the Jews have assumed power, now the Jews have moved in, and the Jews are killing the Ukrainians. They're massacring young peasants, in their late teens, early 20s, and they're killing them for having participated in the pogroms two years earlier. This tribunal, though, is then... Yeah, I'll just leave it at that. They're then killed. Again, they don't get Marko Lukhtans, but Marko Lukhtans is killed in an act of vigilante justice by individual Jews who just take it upon themselves to massacre him.

Speaker 1:

I want to say, moving away from the Slovechna pogrom, that survivor testimonies speak of the perpetrators in familiar and even intimate terms. They are classmates, customers, clients and neighbors. And in their hundreds if not thousands of testimonies that I've read, we get the sense of real anger that it's people who they trusted who came and stole from them and who killed their family members. It's often their caretakers of the apartment. It's the masons who helped them build their house. It's their maids who led the soldiers in that killed them. So there's this violation of trust that comes in it. In the case of the Slovechna pogrom, these are intimate, literally intimate neighbors who they grew up together with, they've known their whole lives, who are now perpetrating it.

Speaker 1:

The perpetrators were also predominantly young. "In my opinion," wrote one witness, "the most active participants in the pogrom were young peasants. The elders were indifferent to the situation." There's even one instance in the Slovechna pogrom, there's a woman who gives testimony and says that she was running out of town, and she was running through the fields past Kosenko's house, and Kosenko's mother was sitting outside the house and offered to hide this woman who was running, and said, "You'd better hide before my son gets you," and tried to help her find hiding. So it's also a generational thing, where the older generation that's used to coexistence and used to living together, knows how to live together, and there's a younger generation of these brash 19-year-olds who have spent the last five years in an incredibly brutal civil war and world war, who from the age of 14 on had witnessed war, many of them had been militarized and had been sent to fight in various brigades and stuff. So these are completely militarized young folk. The elders are trying to protect the Jews in many cases. I've got a few other instances of that.

Speaker 1:

Again, several of the most egregious offenders were arrested and executed by the Bolsheviks the following year. I also want to point out another slide, if this is the right one. Yeah, the violence is also carried out with cold weapons, with swords and axes and pitchforks. Here we actually have a hospital report on some of the injured. They're injured with saber wounds, with saber wounds to their head, are among the injuries. We have lots of these reports of people coming into the hospitals. These aren't mass

killings like war. They're very intimate, again, intimate killings at close range. Some of them had revolvers, rifles, and pistols, but much of the killing was done with the implements of the countryside, with scythes, with sabers, and pitchforks.

Speaker 1:

I just wanted to show you this. This is one of the testimonies. This is a Yiddish-language testimony. Some of them are in Russian. But this is what the testimonies that I've been reading look like. Some of them were typed as well. I know that Irina has looked at these as well in the [EVO 00:43:19] archives, and there's other copies of them. But this is just what they look like.

Speaker 1:

Again, several of the most egregious offenders were arrested and executed by the Bolsheviks in 1920, 1921. Their supporters indubitably noted the prominence of Jews among the tribunal officials. The revolutionary tribunal that sentenced the perpetrators to death was chaired by a comrade with the obviously Jewish name of Feldman and recorded by a secretary named Radner. In some cases, these people were then excused by another court, by a superior court, and the courts that excused them, at least in the case of some of the perpetrators or alleged perpetrators in the Slovechna pogrom, the courts that excuse them had very Slavic names. You can see this tit for tat, and in fact the accusation was often that they were members of the Black Hundreds. Not so much in Slovechna, in Ovruch, which was to the north, but in the pogroms that I've looked at in the south, the Bolshevik courts, again, of people with predominantly Jewish names, who are staffing the tribunals and carrying out the courts, are accusing these people of being Black Hundreds, which they're not technically Black Hundreds, Black Hundreds were the Antisemitic Union of the Russian People, but nevertheless, it's a term that has meaning to them as a crime.

Speaker 1:

This realization did little to quell the pre-existing association between Jews and Bolsheviks, and allowed for justice to be interpreted through an ethnic lens. Traumatic memories of the violence, degradation, and swift justice of this period would leave an imprint on the impressionable youth who participated in the pogrom.

Speaker 1:

I think since I've now talked for about 45 minutes. I will leave it at that and I'm happy to talk about the post-history of this and what happens in the interim, which is the part of the book that I'm working on right now, in the question period. So, thanks.

Speaker 2:

Thank you.