

CHAPTER 2

Carnival of Violence: Development of the Pogrom Script

“I am sorry for you, Moishke, but there is nothing to be done,”¹ a Ukrainian man said to his Jewish neighbor around the first week of May 1919, when they were smoking together in the evening, sitting on the same bench. Ataman Grigoriev’s regiments had captured several towns nearby and moved close to Dmitrovka, a small town in the Cherkassy region of Ukraine to the southeast of Kiev, where neighbors were now discussing the inevitable: a pogrom. The Christian neighbor probably felt pity if not sympathy for Moishke, who would be subjected to looting, humiliation, torture, and violence, but at the same time this likely meant a rather lucrative affair for a non-Jew, since he did have a choice in his actions, while his Jewish counterpart’s options were severely limited.² By May 1919, anti-Jewish violence inundated Ukrainian cities and the countryside. As armed forces moved, pogroms and “excesses” happened: Jews were robbed in their homes and on railway stations, Jewish women were raped, and Jewish men were tortured and subsequently killed. Jewish self-defense units could not curb the violence and often became its first victims. By May 1919, both the Jews and the non-Jews knew that whenever armed men entered the town the pogrom would start, and everyone knew what to expect. In other

1 YIVO Archive, Elias Tcherikower Archive 1903–63, Rg 80–89 (Mk 470), file 167, 14222–25.

2 The Jews did not completely lack agency in response to pogrom violence, but the most immediate option was nearly exhausted in the first months of 1919—self-defense units were almost never able to protect the victimized communities for long. While a limited course of action was initially available to the Jewish population, on the eve of the inevitable pogrom in the shtetl it was mostly lacking. For detailed analysis of Jewish agency during genocide, see Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

words, the anti-Jewish violence had become a common practice and unfolded according to an established script. The neighbors who shared a smoke on a warm evening were right in their premonitions about the events of the days and weeks to come: the pogrom lasted for ten days while town changed hands, and every time the ataman's regiment reentered town, the pogrom would start over with the most vigorous brutality: over thirty Jewish women were raped in one night, aged from ten to seventy. The Jewish population of Dmitrovka, reduced from 2,300 to fifty, left the town, and that was the end of this community.

Long before 1919, when over five hundred pogroms swept through Ukraine, "the pogrom phenomenon became a familiar and unexceptional part of Russian life,"³ as John Klier noted in his introductory remarks regarding the pogrom paradigm in Russian history. The waves of pogroms in 1881–82 and in 1903–5 consolidated among the Jewish and non-Jewish population the perception of a pogrom as an outlet for the expression of civil unrest and anti-Jewish sentiment, as the two had been for a long time deeply intertwined in areas of Jewish settlement. The concept of a pogrom was commonly recognized by the Jewish and non-Jewish population as a sequence of actions on behalf of pogrom perpetrators from growing tensions and premonitions preceding the pogrom, through the outbreak of violence, ensuing looting, and infliction of various degrees of harm and humiliation onto a victimized community, followed by cessation of violence through the interference of civil or military power. In other words, a pogrom was understood as an organic whole composed of various elements, or as "an uninhibited script of robbery, sexual assault, beating, and murder, demanding these actions and delighting in them."⁴

During the last decades of the Russian Empire, the pogrom script became a concept that entered the domain of common knowledge not as a symbol but as a protocol to be employed when anti-Jewish violence broke out. Neighbors in Dmitrovka, like most people in Ukraine at the time, did not question the inevitability of the pogrom or its general scenario; the only uncertainty that remained was the extent of the brutality. Since the beginning of the First World War, pogrom violence had reemerged predominantly alongside the front line, and had not ceased until the end of the Civil War and the establishment of the Soviet power in Ukraine, when the last outbreaks of armed resistance and unrest

3 John D. Klier, "The Pogrom Paradigm in Russian History," in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 33.

4 John-Paul Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53, nos. 2–4 (2011): 209–43.

were finally suppressed by the Bolshevik army. During this turbulent period, the nature of the anti-Jewish violence that spread through war and engulfed Ukraine changed dramatically: the pogroms became exceedingly brutal and vicious, and transformed into genocidal violence.

The exponential increase of murderous violence during the pogroms indicated significant alterations to the pogrom script that, while it retained its original outline, transformed to allow for mass murder and gruesome torture. Amid the chaos of the Civil War, the familiar and comprehensible pogrom pattern became free of the restraint of legal and social bonds, and fueled ethnic cleansing. The continuous escalation of violence during the Civil War, the “power vacuum”⁵ in the land, and the escalation of anti-Jewish sentiment released pogrom perpetrators from inhibitions that previously curbed physical violence to a certain extent. The archaic pogrom script in fact proved to be the perfect vehicle of genocidal violence. The demonstrative nature of the pogrom violence, played out like a street theater performance, served the genocidal purpose in two crucial ways. On the one hand, it exacerbated existing violent rituals and accommodated the murder of Jews on an unprecedented scale. And on the other hand, the new pogrom script employed torture, humiliation, and gender violence as a strategy to publicly degrade and destroy Jews.

According to the latest scholarship,⁶ the social death of the victimized community is no less essential to genocidal violence than physical extermination. Publicized violence in its various forms that include but are not limited to mass rape is a strategy to irreparably harm the social status of the victimized community, and thus fulfill the genocidal objective. The transformation of the pogrom script from its customary form into the vehicle of genocide is the focus of this chapter. Through in-depth analysis of the most iconic pogrom scripts, I aim to both establish the continuity of violent rites and determine the specific points of transformation of the script in order to subsequently place gender violence within the existing framework for pogroms.

Anti-Jewish violence was on the rise in Ukraine in 1917 and in the beginning of 1918. The unstable political situation in Ukraine at the time and the

5 Gilley, “Beyond Petliura,” 46.

6 Card, “Genocide and Social Death,” 63–79; Frank Chalk, “Redefining Genocide,” in *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions*, ed. George J. Andreopoulos (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 47–63; Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Damien Short, *Redefining Genocide: Settler Colonialism, Social Death and Ecocide* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2016).

growing civil unrest and deterioration of the economy inevitably instigated the escalation of pogroms. Compared to hundreds of pogroms in 1919, several dozen⁷ pogroms in 1917 appear to be “low grade violence,” although this rate is similar to the pogroms of 1881–83, when over two hundred pogroms occurred in the course of about three years. The pogroms of 1917–18 claimed only a few casualties and targeted primarily Jewish property, and while the Jews were often beaten and humiliated, reports of rape during this period are very rare. The early pogroms resembled the pogroms of 1881–83 in pattern and reflected a commonly recognized script. The early pogroms were alarming and were treated as such by the Ministry of Jewish Affairs; however, the positive bias generated by the fall of the Russian Empire and the new prospect of Jewish politics did not forebode the forthcoming tragedy.

The pogrom that took place in the town of Kanev (Kaniv) can serve as an example of a typical pogrom scenario in 1917–18. Kanev has always been an important port town at the bend of the Dnieper River to the south of Kiev. Jews settled in the area from the early eighteenth century, and by the beginning of the First World War the Jewish community, numbering over two and a half thousand members, constituted about 30 percent of Kanev’s population. Jews constituted 90 percent of Kanev’s entrepreneurs and owned most of the shops in town, as well as hotels, pharmacies, and other businesses, big and small. The Jewish community anticipated the pogrom and endeavored to prevent it by organizing a self-defense unit that survived until the end of the Civil War and had thirty members in 1922,⁸ and by petitioning the Jewish Secretariat in order to procure protection by Ukrainian government forces. On the morning of November 6, 1917, the crowd of locals started to ransack and loot Jewish shops and properties. The town’s militia arrested the most prominent miscreants, but the agitated crowd freed their ringleaders, while members of the police force either left the town or joined in the pogrom.⁹ The pogrom continued for about

7 There are seventy-nine instances of pogroms in 1917–18 accounted for in the Tcherikower archive. This number is inaccurate, as most pogrom statistics are, but it draws a picture of the scope of anti-Jewish violence at the time. YIVO Archive, files 6–26.

8 Miljakova, *Kniga Pogromov*, 538. Self-defense units were organized in many places of Jewish settlement during the Civil War in Ukraine, and in some rare cases the self-defense was organized jointly with the non-Jewish population; however, these units were unable to impact the unfolding violence in any significant way. Destroyed during the first wave of the pogroms in 1919, Jewish self-defense units were often resurrected by the end of the Civil War, when the pogroms began to subside, to protect surviving communities from bandits in times of dire poverty and need.

9 YIVO Archive, file 18, 1078–98.

two weeks, during which outbreaks of plunder and looting devastated Jewish businesses and homes. *Pogromschiki*¹⁰ disarmed the Jewish self-defense unit and the remaining local police. The government troops that arrived in Kanev did not interfere to stop the pogrom. No fatalities among the Jewish community were reported. On November 20, 1917, the prosecutor for the regional court, alerted by the Jewish Secretariat, intervened to establish whether or not any administration remained in Kanev, and if it had any authority.¹¹ Finally, by the end of November more troops arrived and the pogrom stopped. Eight pogrom instigators were arrested, but there is no conclusive evidence that those people were ever prosecuted. This was the first of many pogroms of the Civil War in Kanev, which culminated two years later in August 1919, when platoons of the White Army fought the armed gang of ataman Zelenyi, and the pogrom lasted for weeks, rekindling itself every time the shtetl changed hands.¹²

The key elements of the typical pogrom scenario, as seen in the Kanev pogrom, included active pogrom anticipation; looting and plunder dominating during the pogrom; low levels of physical violence and few Jewish victims, with rare fatalities; and the pogrom being perpetrated jointly by the local population and by the armed troops. In Kanev, the talk of the pogrom among local population started a significant time before the pogrom itself: in the port town the news about pogroms elsewhere circulated among the port workers. Since the economic situation was quickly deteriorating due to ongoing war and the revolutionary situation, the Jewish shops more than ever became a prominent target for the violent crowd, while the Jewish population, concentrated in the town, presented an easy and obvious mark. The local administration was rather weak, and the general uncertainty of the political situation in the former Russian Empire eased inhibitions, since the prospect of retribution was remote. The non-Jewish population was getting ready for the pogrom because pogroms were a commonly occurring event in a time of crisis.

The premonition of the pogrom became an essential stage of the violence, during which the Jewish population was emotionally terrorized by fear and apprehension of violence to come. The dynamic of polarizing collective emotions laid a foundation for intergroup conflicts and intergroup violence through emotion-focused rituals, as leading scholars of emotions argue.¹³

10 Pogrom perpetrators (Russian).

11 Cherikover, *Anışemişizm*, 49.

12 YIVO Archive, file 208, 18509–12; see also Miljakova, *Kniga Pogromov*, 408.

13 Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, eds., *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

In other words, the period of augmented violent narrative that preceded physical conflict served to heighten such emotions as fear, disgust, and hate, which further separated attackers-to-be and their prospective victims, in order to bring them together in a powerful clash.¹⁴

Within the highly ritualized environment of the pogrom, the period of the victims anticipating violence, and “pogrom talk” by the offenders that initiated the public dehumanization of future victims, became an integral part of pogrom script. During this period, the crowd of the soon-to-be pogrom perpetrators fed the impulse that later propelled the pogrom itself. The transition from threats to acts of violence occurred through the ritual of anti-Jewish rumors, accusations, and slogans that were disseminated and repeated over and over. Smith writes that “[t]hose threats were not mere markers of identity or cultural codes in the precise sense of the term. Rather they were speech acts uttered in the context of violent ritual.”¹⁵ The shouted speech and the circulating rumors altered the physical state of the offenders and the victims, causing agitation and thrill among the offenders, and fear and apprehension among the Jews. This emotional arousal caused by outcries like “Beat the Jews” or “Jews are traitors” augmented the separation between Jews and non-Jews and promoted rapid consolidation of the aggressive crowd, united by the common enemy.

What was considered by contemporary Jewish leaders and scholars to be pogrom agitation by certain ringleaders was, as most scholars agree,¹⁶ rarely masterminded, but represented mostly grassroots processes of talk and gossip in public spaces that exacerbated antisemitic sentiment and emphasized popular accusations against Jews. The most popular accusation laid against Jews that permeates the history of the pogroms in Ukraine during the Civil War was the already mentioned Judeo-Bolshevik canard, based, among other loose arguments in favor of it, on the common belief that majority of the Bolsheviks were Jewish, and therefore acted in the Jewish interest. The alleged Jewish alliance with Bolsheviks was evidenced in popular opinion by the fact that Bolsheviks denounced pogroms and persecuted pogrom instigators in furtherance of the principles of internationalism. It is important to mention that the Bolsheviks often branded Jews “capitalists” and punished them by expropriation of property and forced labor.

14 Sara Ahmed, “Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 2 (2004): 25–42.

15 Smith, *The Continuities of German History*, 132.

16 Christopher Gilley, “Beyond Petliura,” 45–61.

Labeling Jews as Bolsheviks while the Red Army was fighting on the territory of Ukraine justified both the persecution of Jews by various authorities and the anti-Jewish violence by belligerents of all sorts, and ignited pogrom activity. In the aftermath of the infamous Proskurov pogrom in February 1919 that took lives of almost two thousand Jews, ataman Semesenko, who justified the massacre as a punitive expedition against Bolsheviks, explained the mass killing of the peaceful Jewish population thus: "I can't take the blame [for the murder of the innocent Jewish population] when even the Jewish elderly, women and children are all Bolsheviks."¹⁷

There is no information on what exactly triggered the pogrom in Kanev on November 6, but the Jewish community and the local population all over Ukraine could as a rule accurately foretell a pogrom on market day or a religious holiday, when the combination of Jewish vulnerability, antisemitic sentiment, and the joint enthusiasm of the non-Jewish crowd became particularly potent. Pogroms on market days and on religious holidays happened in many towns all over Ukraine in 1917–18, among them Borodyantsy, Zhabokrych, Zhivotov, Kamenka, Kupel, Lyakhovtsy, Rakitino, Skvira (Skvyra), and many others. Most of requests to the Jewish Secretary/Ministry for armed protection came from the Jewish communities ahead of scheduled market days. The letter from the Transcarpathian town of Lyakhovtsy on the farthest western border of Ukraine that was received on January 10, 1918 appealed for urgent protection: the market was scheduled for January 15, and the local hoodlums and the partially disarmed soldiers of the army regiment that was stationed in town acted as if a pogrom was a foregone conclusion.¹⁸

Another factor that commonly precipitated pogroms was the presence of armed troops in the area, whether it was divisions of the Russian army moving to and from the fronts of the First World War, regiments of the new Ukrainian army that was being hastily formed by the Ukrainian government, or any other armed forces. Idle and often undersupplied soldiers were the major perpetrators of the pogroms in 1917–18. Jewish properties and businesses were an obvious, easy, and highly visible lucrative target. Soldiers also sought to retaliate against Jews, branded as traitors responsible for the losses at war, and through pogrom violence vent their frustration with the revolutionary chaos and war that engulfed Ukraine. Even the mere presence of armed men created a tense atmosphere of impending disturbance and contributed to the buildup

17 YIVO Archive, file 659, 56263.

18 *Ibid.*, file 18, 1128.

of energy that propelled anti-Jewish violence, which usually started with sporadic extortion and plunder. The towns of Western Ukraine, particularly in or near Galicia, hosted the most armed detachments not currently engaged at the front. At the end of November 1917, two regiments were quartered in the Miropol (Miropil) shtetl¹⁹ close to the front line; the soldiers first simply stopped paying for the goods in Jewish shops, but shortly afterward the isolated incidents accumulated into a pogrom. In Rashkov,²⁰ the Cossack regiment that passed through the town at the end of December 1917 shot two Jews to scare the rest of Jewish population and looted Jewish property, joined by the local peasants.

The local *militia* (police) and law enforcement were very poorly organized. More often than not, the units dispatched to stop the violence themselves joined in the pogroms with enthusiasm. It became a ubiquitous phenomenon due to weak control on the part of the Ukrainian government. A representative example is the pogrom in Gogolev, a small village adjacent to the larger community of Brovary, less than thirty miles to the east of Kiev, where in March 1918 a cavalry detachment of 120 soldiers entered the town, looted Jewish property, and publicly tortured and humiliated Jews.²¹ During the day, soldiers thrashed the Jews with the whips, and two Jewish men were murdered in front of their families; and at night soldiers would raid Jewish houses, demanding money and vodka.

The pogroms of 1917–18 were a starting point of genocidal violence rather than the true precursor of the pogrom waves of 1919. The death toll of the pogroms was low, and there were no rapes reported, although some reports hint at instances of gender violence. About a year of pogroms during 1917–18 was followed by a break in continuity in the anti-Jewish violence. Indeed, from the establishment of the German protectorate headed nominally by Hetman Skoropadsky until the Directory took over late in 1918, the outbreaks of civil unrest were suppressed by the military power. According to Tcherikower, who analyzed several pogroms that took place during that time, Ukrainian peasants, forced to provide for German and Austrian armies, rioted against economic policies rather than against Jews, but attacked urban centers, where Jews constituted the majority.²² The situation changed dramatically when the Alliance troops retreated, and the Ukrainian National Army advanced towards Kiev.

19 Ibid., file 19, 1164–64a.

20 Ibid., file 19, 1203–14.

21 Ibid., file 18, 1001–13.

22 Cherikover, *Antisemitizm*, 178–79.

“PETLIURA’S POGROMS”²³

In February 1919 many Ukrainian army detachments moved through the busy railway junction of Mironovka (Mironivka) about sixty five miles south of Kiev, on the line that connected the port towns of Southern Dnieper with the Western Ukrainian provinces. The village of Rossava (Rosava) lay to the north of the station. In the beginning of 1919, it had a population of five thousand, of which one thousand was Jewish. Two hundred and ten Jewish families were engaged in crafts and trade that served the local peasant community and the station. It is not clear if there had been any pogroms there in 1917–18, although neighboring shtetls and towns, Kanev among them, suffered from violent outbreaks. However, since the Directory came to power in Kiev and the German protectorate was over, the pogroms became a regular occurrence in Rossava, as every passing detachment and regiment of the Ukrainian army engaged in plunder and beatings of the Jews. The Jewish community lost track of how many regiments and under whose command passed through the station from February through July, but the scenario of the events, once the next group of armed men disembarked from the train, initially followed the same pattern. At first, the soldiers arrived from the station to pick up some items in Jewish shops without paying, then, under the guise of searching for Bolsheviks, they rummaged through Jewish homes and beat Jews. By February 1919, this became normal behavior, and the Jewish community came to regard it as such. Then, the Ukrainian regiments retreated and the Red Army detachments arrived. The Bolsheviks didn’t rob Jews; but shortly after the Reds retreated, the Ukrainian army moved in once again. The public beatings of Jews and the plundering became more ferocious and unrestrained, while all the Jews were branded as traitors and Bolsheviks. Several other regiments moved through Rossava one after another, and almost every time a pogrom erupted. The desperate Jewish community sent its emissaries to the neighboring town of Boguslav (Bohuslav) in search of any power that was in control to seek protection, but to no avail. The pogroms in Rossava continued and the pogrom brutality soared, breaking the understood forms and norms, and creating a vicious cycle of violence.

Inspector of the Committee for Relief to Victims of Pogroms (EVOBSCHESCOM) I. S. Braude, who later interviewed Rossava’s remaining Jews,²⁴ reported that the brutal treatment at the hands of a regiment of

23 This is the way the pogroms of the first half of 1919 were commonly described by contemporaries and early researchers.

24 YIVO Archive, file 183, 15832–960.

Petliura's army that encamped at the station in late spring escalated very quickly and lasted for several weeks. Torture of Jews became exceedingly violent and humiliating, and was carried out in public. Soldiers would beat Jews and lash them with whips and rods, while making them run around the square naked. Braude recorded among others one gruesome episode, when pogrom perpetrators intently watched a Jewish man and his father-in-law eat dirt for over ten minutes, while his wife was made to witness this humiliation. Then, soldiers proceeded to rape the woman on the spot in front of her husband and father.²⁵ This horrifying episode is exemplary and illustrative of what was inflicted on Jews all over Ukraine, and of what the pogroms had turned into. The "carnival of violence" that was staged and played out, "in a deeply sinister sense of the word 'play,'" as William Hagen pointed in his landmark study of the Lvov pogrom,²⁶ transformed the pogrom into a communal act. Ritualized scripts as performed by the pogrom perpetrators carried a specific message and meaning that ultimately degraded and dehumanized the victims, paving the road to genocidal violence.

CARNIVAL OF VIOLENCE: RITUALS OF DEHUMANIZATION

This dramatically staged performance of violence focused on symbolic acts that stripped victims of their dignity and social standing. Flogging with rods was widely practiced as a penalty in the Russian army and civil courts. Performing this punishment instantly positioned Jewish men as inferiors to their assailants. This metaphor of military subordination was stretched even further, as the Jews were forced to run around the square used as the *plats*, or military training ground. Rossava Jews were forced to engage in soldier routines under the command of pogrom perpetrators, who thus asserted their power over their "subordinates."

In January 1919 at the railway station of Romodan, near shtetl Lubny in the Poltava province, to the east of Kiev, the UNA soldiers forced Jewish men to undress and run naked in the snow; in order to exacerbate the gruesome entertainment, the victims were also ordered to sing, while the soldiers shot at them randomly.²⁷ To the west of Kiev in the shtetl Peschanka, in the Podolie province, an armed gang of unknown allegiance in blue uniforms entered the town and started the pogrom: Jewish men were forced to dance naked in the

25 Ibid., file 183, 15848.

26 Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Ethnic Violence," 203.

27 YIVO Archive, file 182, 15823–31.

square, while soldiers shot at them.²⁸ There are many more similar incidences of pogrom perpetrators forcing their victims to engage in an activity that was either inappropriate for them, like military exercise, or out of place, like dancing. This gruesome “circus” activity entertained the offenders, but also humiliated and degraded the victims even further, as pogrom perpetrators ordered Jewish men to undress and perform naked. Forced nakedness that was observed by the pogrom perpetrators as well as the Jewish and non-Jewish population amounts to acute torture and humiliation. While the sexual aspect of violence will be addressed later in greater detail in the context of the mass rape of Jewish women, it should be noted that forced male nakedness has always been (and continues to be) a powerful tool of torture and punishment.²⁹ Publicly stripped of their clothing, their Jewishness emphasized by the exposing of their circumcised genitalia, men were robbed of their dignity and reduced to an unclothed, uncivilized, animal-like state. This carnivalesque, visceral ritual was played out to hurt victims’ emotions before inflicting physical harm on them.

The sinister circus of torture described above, when the Rossava Jews were forced to eat soil, aimed to destroy all aspects of a victim’s social standing and exclude him or her from the world of the living. The soil or dirt is clearly an “un-food,” the opposite of human nourishment, and at the same time it symbolizes death: filling the mouth with soil invokes the imagery of burial. Subjecting two generations of the same family, a father-in-law and his son-in-law, to the same torture aimed to destroy the hierarchy of the traditional family, and attempted to ruin the respect of children for their parents, and of youth for seniors in general, symbolically undermining the basis of traditional society.

The humiliation was augmented through females witnessing the torture, which not only further undermined the family and social structure, but targeted the gender structure, by undermining masculinity and the dignity of men in front of the women. Rape of women in front of their kin endeavored to achieve a similar result. And while mass rape of Jewish women will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, it is crucial to place it within the context of the pogrom script as it developed. In fact, Braude, who recorded the

28 Ibid., file 177, 15377–84.

29 Philip G. Zimbardo, *Lucifer Effect* (Indianapolis: Wiley Online Library, 2007), 141, 402. See also Andrés Zarankin and Melisa Salerno, “The Engineering of Genocide: An Archaeology of Dictatorship in Argentina,” in *Archaeologies of Internment* (New York: Springer, 2011), 207–27; Kathy Phillips, “Mass Nakedness in the Imaginary of the Nazis,” *War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 27 (June 2015): 1–19.

atrocious episode, stopped short of narrating the rape. He writes that soldiers “attempted” to rape the wife in front of her husband, although most probably the soldiers succeeded in their attempt. However, he writes, “for obvious reasons” (the formula most commonly employed), cases of rape are not discussed openly, although a lot of Jewish women were raped during the pogrom, and only “the sadly lowered eyes of the Jewish women betrayed the horrible secret.”³⁰

The reports of the pogroms in Rossava that continued on and off in the first half of 1919, as the troops passed through the busy station, contained many more gruesome examples of the humiliating torture exercised by the perpetrators: the soldiers ordered Jews to make footcloths for them out of tefillin (prayer shawls), an elderly matriarch was beaten into bloody pulp in front of her family, perpetrators murdered children in front of their parents, and parents in front of their children, etc. There were no limits to the brutality and the perverse creativity of the violent rituals, all of which aimed to demonstratively undermine the position of Jews in society, to destroy social and communal structures and hierarchies, and to exclude Jews from the world of humans.

The Rossava pogrom, emblematic of the ongoing violence, claimed a lot of Jewish lives, and the bodies of sadistically beaten and murdered Jews, scattered alongside the road, lay there while the Jews were forbidden to bury their dead for a while. By contrast, in Peschanka, the Jews were forced to bury their dead on Sabbath, which is prohibited in Judaism, while bandits randomly shot at them. The bandits engaged in this macabre entertainment while stationed in the town—in between fights with Bolsheviks. After one of the retreats and counteroffensives, the fighters claimed that the Jews fired at them from their windows in support of Bolsheviks, and proceeded to murder most of the Jewish population in retaliation.³¹ The narrator of an account of these events, a Jewish doctor named Flek, who was forcibly conscripted into the UNA to treat the wounded, was horrified to hear that soldiers of his regiment told the story of this pogrom with great satisfaction.

It is evident that the violent discourse of the pogroms and death threats readily resulted in the murderous spree. The death toll of the pogroms in the first half of 1919 surged tremendously compared to the casualties of 1917–18. The number of Jews murdered during “Petliura’s pogroms” could be estimated in tens of thousands without exaggeration. The death toll of each individual pogrom differs, depending on multiple factors: what regiment or gang engaged

30 YIVO Archive, file 183, 15848.

31 Miljakova, *Kniga Pogromov*, 273–74.

in violence, how much time the offenders stayed in town, if the offenders were retreating at the moment or attacking, etc. The transition from the “traditional” violence to the slaughter of the Jews required transitional social rituals to ease the transformation. The exceedingly violent circus of torture, rape, and humiliation not only transformed the Jews into unworthy victims, stripped of humanity, but also relieved pogrom perpetrators from moral restraints. The nature of those inhibitions and restraints and how they were broken made the pogroms gyrate out of control into intimate genocide, defined by the complicated relations of the various groups of offenders with the Jews. The concept of “intimate” genocide juxtaposes the close personal involvement of the assailant and the victim to the previously common understanding of genocide as a killing machine.³² Deep personal involvement with the victims is very characteristic of the later genocides of the twentieth century,³³ as well as of pogroms during the Holocaust.

The deadliest pogrom of the period that was masterminded and carried out as a military operation, while breaking the pattern, sheds light on how deeply the victims and the perpetrators were involved. Proskurov, in the Podolia region of western Ukraine,³⁴ was one of the five largest towns in the area and home to a flourishing Jewish community. The well-documented pogrom³⁵ occurred on February 15, 1919, when Ukrainian army troops under the command of ataman Semesenko entered the Jewish neighborhood and methodically massacred the Jews with bayonets. Up to sixteen hundred Jews were killed in one day. Ataman Semesenko later defended and justified the slaughter as a punitive expedition against an enemy—the Bolsheviks. There was in fact an attempt at a Bolshevik uprising before the pogrom, but it was minor and unsuccessful. The retaliation against the Jews of Proskurov, who were summarily branded Bolsheviks, was beyond disproportionate. The Proskurov pogrom’s atrocities astonished and frightened even Petliura’s government.³⁶

The Proskurov massacre was presented by Semesenko almost as a holy crusade against Judeo-Bolshevism, and the legitimacy of such punishment

32 Kopstein and Wittenberg, “Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms.”

33 Madeline Hron, “Intimate Enemy: Images and Voices of the Rwandan Genocide,” *African Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 2–3 (2008).

34 Proskurov was renamed in 1954 as Khmelnytskyi, in official commemoration of the union between Russia and Ukraine. Bogdan Khmelnytsky, who led the rebellion against the Polish king in 1654, was also responsible for a series of deadly anti-Jewish pogroms in the area.

35 YIVO Archive, files 180–81; also see Cherikover, *Di Ukrainer Pogromen*.

36 Semesenko was temporarily imprisoned, and, according to some sources, executed.

was validated by complete and intentional disengagement from any personal engagement with the victims. No plunder, torture, or rape, which would turn the punishment into a pogrom, were allowed. This distinction between “pure” massacre and “dirty” pogrom, taken to the extreme, demonstrated the opposite: the personal aspect of the pogrom was recognized by the assailants. The soldiers who participated in the pogrom truly believed that sparing Jews of emotional and material involvement justified their actions.³⁷

In Balta, a large town to the south of Proskurov, the pogrom also started in early February 1919, and lasted on and off through the spring of 1919. The death toll by March was approximately around one hundred, but many people were wounded, over 120 women were raped, and many houses burned down. In the midst of the ongoing violence, a group of Ukrainian soldiers and officers came to the magistrate and requested an officially signed document stating that during the pogrom they exclusively murdered Jews as Bolsheviks, but didn’t participate in pillage.³⁸ Tcherikower, who described this episode in his notes, adds that in the neighboring town of Ananiev in late February 1919 Ukrainian soldiers, who murdered forty-four Jews during the pogrom, did not allow the dead to be buried until the rabbi wrote and signed a document that declared all the murdered Jews Bolsheviks. Only after the document was procured were the soldiers allowed to bury “Judeo-Bolsheviks.”³⁹

“DENIKIN’S POGROMS”⁴⁰

The pogroms of the second half of 1919, perpetrated by Denikin (White Army) regiments, although generally similar to the pogroms committed by Petliura’s soldiers and various gangs, were not as numerous, but were more violent, brutal, and murderous than the pogroms of the previous six months. The White Army was much smaller than the Ukrainian National Army, but was very well trained and organized. Denikin’s army consisted primarily of Russian army officers of all ranks and Cossack regiments. Unlike the Ukrainian army or the assorted gangs, Denikin’s army had a very clear goal and direction: the Whites fought against the Reds and advanced toward Moscow. Ukraine, its people, and its politics were of no concern to the officers and Cossacks, who treated it as a resource base.

37 YIVO Archive, file 659, 56260–64.

38 Ibid., file 659, 56269–70.

39 Ibid.

40 The common way by which pogrom contemporaries and early researchers defined the pogroms of the second half of 1919 perpetrated by White Army regiments.

The majority of White officers shared antisemitic views, and also branded Jews as Bolsheviks and blamed them for their loss of influence, property, and the fall of the Russian Empire in general. The Cossacks, who fought Bolsheviks to protect their militarized communities and privileges, traditionally shared the antisemitic sentiment. The opportunity to enrich themselves through the looting of Jewish property was another incentive for Cossacks to join the Volunteer Army.

The first detachments of Whites arrived at Rossava in August 1919 during the advance toward Kiev. The pogrom broke out immediately after the Cossacks entered the town. The Jewish community that had already suffered continuous pogroms by Petliura's soldiers could not believe that the Whites had started the pogrom, and for some time believed them to be impostors, not the real Cossacks.⁴¹ In the eyes of the Jews, the Volunteer Army represented the authority of the tsar and the government of the Russian Empire, so why would they commit atrocities like the gangs and the Ukrainian army did? Disillusioned by the Ukrainian Revolution and abused by the Ukrainian army and various gangs, the Jews of Ukraine hoped for the restoration of the "real power," which had in the past offered protection and some order along with discrimination.

During the previous waves of pogroms, the vertical relationship between Russian Jewry and the Tsarist government known as the "royal alliance" was broken, because the Jews could not entrust their protection to the authorities, who were "increasingly unable, or unwilling, to tame popular antisemitism," as Elissa Bemporad has convincingly proven⁴² in her latest research. The Jews had previously experienced the Tsarist government not preventing pogroms and siding with the perpetrators more than with their victims, but it was Tsarist troops that usually interfered in the end to stop pogroms. And while the Jews did not expect a lot of protection from the Russian tsars, they had had significant practice through the ages in dealing with them. While it is doubtful that the Jews greeted White Army troops as liberators, they probably viewed them as the lesser evil.

The false expectations of the Jews determined their actions during the pogrom: almost always when the Whites were expected, the Jews formed a delegation to greet the incoming troops and present them with a gift of money in hopes that the Jewish community would be spared a pogrom. White officers

41 YIVO Archive, file 209, 18769.

42 Quote from the unpublished manuscript of the book by Bemporad, *Legacy of Blood*, with author's permission.

did accept the money or even demanded more, but never did they prevent the pogrom or stop it. In Borispol (Boryspil), a town immediately to the southeast of Kiev, the Jews organized a delegation once they heard that the Whites were approaching. They collected some money and the traditional offering of bread and salt and went out of town to greet the command. At the same time as the officers of the avant-garde mocked and humiliated the delegation and refused to parley, the pogrom had already started.⁴³ Groups of officers and soldiers brutally raped Jewish women, while others knocked on Jewish doors demanding money and girls, and killed Jews in the streets. When the self-appointed commandant Colonel Karpov finally received a delegation of Jewish representatives weeks later in November 1919, Jews begged him to stop the pogroms. The commandant replied, “You have been suffering for only two weeks, but you have been torturing us already for over a year. Get out!”⁴⁴ The colonel implied that all the Jews were Bolsheviks by definition, and thus retaliation in a form of a pogrom was due.

There are numerous examples of how Jews attempted to employ the traditional, archaic scenario to deal with the Whites. In the tiny agricultural colony of Kalnibolot in southern Ukraine, the richest and well-respected Jews of the community also greeted the Denikin troops at the end of August 1919 with the traditional bread and salt. White officers in response hit members of the delegation over the heads with their sabers.⁴⁵ In Kagarlyk (Kaharlyk), another shtetl immediately north of Rossava, a crowd of Jews similarly awaited the White regiment to greet them with bread and salt. The greeting ceremony turned into a plundering and looting spree. Three Jewish men were killed on that day, August 16, 1919; one of them was murdered as he tried to protect his wife from rape. The pogrom continued for several weeks, becoming “chronic,” and did not stop until most of the Jewish population left town, according to the report of the Kagarlyk refugees.⁴⁶ The traditional script did not prevent or stop pogroms, but nevertheless it was been repeated over and over, since no alternative existed and Jews themselves were not accustomed to any other behavior. The White officers also acknowledged the traditional scenario and awaited the arrival of Jewish emissaries with the “tribute.”

Pogroms perpetrated by Whites were all very much alike, following very pronounced scripts and unfolding according to a more or less uniform scenario.

43 YIVO Archive, file 206, 18288–300.

44 Ibid., file 206, 18294 reverse.

45 Ibid., file 208, 18500–504.

46 Ibid., file, 208, 18488–96.

Rossava Jews had barely recovered from Petliura's army pogroms in February and March, when Denikin's army avant-garde entered the town on August 13, 1919. The Cossacks of General Shkuro's squadron immediately went looking for Jewish homes and shops, and started the pillage, particularly looking for jewelry and money. Plunder and looting became, as a rule, the major activities of the first day of the pogrom, when the Jewish population had not yet had a chance to hide or re-hide their possessions, while *pogromschiki* rushed to get the best spoils. Cossacks divided into groups and spread all over the Jewish quarter ransacking homes. They broke into the only remaining shop that served the needs of the impoverished Jews of Rossava, and robbed it bare in a matter of minutes. Cossacks meticulously searched for any valuables, even inside pillows and mattresses, forcing Jews with threats and beatings to reveal any caches they had made. The loot was loaded onto a carriage and hauled to the railway station. In the evening, the local population joined the Cossacks, following in their footsteps, and took whatever they could remove from the barren Jewish flats. The shtetl looked dead and deserted, as Jews tried to hide from the raging Cossacks, but the quiet was disrupted in the middle of the night as Cossacks detonated the strongbox in the office of the savings bank. Jews, driven out of their hideouts by the explosion, tried to return, but the pogrom was ferociously rekindled, as Cossacks finished the plunder and began the "entertainment."

The carnival of violence, complete with scenes of torture, rape, and murder, played out on the second day of the pogrom as "celebratory street theater."⁴⁷ Pogrom perpetrators purposefully drove Jews into the streets and hunted down their victims. The streets of the Jewish quarter in Rossava turned into a public performance arena, where acts of torture took place in front of an audience of pogrom perpetrators, the local population, and frightened Jews. The ritualized violence reiterated the previous pogroms, but often in a more grotesque and horrifying form. The elderly couple Yudko Gurshevoy, aged seventy-five, and his wife Brukha, mad with fear, were stripped naked and forced to run through the streets as hunted animals, cheered by the Cossacks.⁴⁸ *Pogromschiki* bayoneted their victims, careful not to kill them, but to leave the wounded to suffer and bleed to death in agony that lasted sometimes for several days. Elderly parents were left to die, while their families were not allowed to help them. Children were mortally wounded in front of their parents. *Pogromschiki* made sure that all the apothecaries were wrecked, and there were no medical assistance; the only

47 Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Ethnic Violence," 217.

48 YIVO Archive, file 209, 18770.

remaining non-Jewish medical practitioner was strictly prohibited to provide any help to the Jews on pain of death. The Vinokur family was murdered in front of their four little children. While the husband died immediately, his wife Masya slowly bled to death over the next day on the threshold of her home. Armed Cossacks rode through the streets whooping and shouting, forcing Jews to flee in panic. The Jews were not allowed to attend to the wounded or care for the dead, and bodies remained lying in the streets, preserving the macabre scene for greater effect. The local population refused refuge to surviving Jews, who desperately tried to hide at the riverbank in sedges. The howls and wails of the raped women became the constant accompaniment of the pogrom. The mass rape of Jewish women continued on the second and the third day.⁴⁹

On the third day the Cossacks hunted the Jews who hid by the riverbank and in the ravines, shooting up the underbrush. The local population meanwhile ransacked Jewish homes for any movable objects, including furniture. After the Cossacks succeeded in shooting and bayoneting the Jews they had discovered, the regiment withdrew. Rossava was left by the Whites in the hands of the local gang leader and former member of Petliura's army Demian Lazarenko, who together with his friends continued to rob and abuse Jews through the night. In the morning on the fourth day of the pogrom, some Jews attempted to sneak back to their houses to collect and bury the dead. Apparently, the Cossacks, who had not left but were camped at the station, galloped back into town and massacred whomever they could find. After that, the pogrom became an ongoing affair, as Cossacks continued their daily raids while the local gang terrorized the shtetl. On August 27, two weeks after the Volunteer Army regiments entered Rossava, the remaining thousand Jews, starving and almost naked, among them many wounded, raped, and beaten, left Rossava and walked toward the nearby shtetl of Boguslav seeking refuge.⁵⁰

The pogrom that devastated the Rossava shtetl is emblematic of the pogroms by the hands of the Whites. On the one hand, the pogrom employs the same components as Petliura's: plunder, murder, and demonstrative punishment of the Jews. On the other, the Denikin army pogroms strike us as more violent, more structured, and ultimately more deadly. Peter Kenez analyzed and reconstructed the typical pogrom by the Volunteer Army, and attributed its "success in murdering as many Jews as all other armies put together" to three

49 See more on the Rossava pogrom and mass rape in Chapter 3.

50 YIVO Archive, file 209, 18776.

factors: the pogroms were well organized, carried out as a military operation, and strongly ideologically motivated.⁵¹

The concept of an organized pogrom appears to be problematic in the context of the latest scholarship of pogrom violence and current research. There is no data that proves that pogroms were in fact masterminded or premeditated; rather, the pogroms were considered by Whites, as well as Ukrainians before them, to be the normal—and thus the proper—way to punish Jews, to visit on them due wrath and indignation. Genocidal violence against Jews that was strongly backed by the convictions of the White movement and traditionally supported by the Cossacks was never curbed, and unfolded through pogrom scripts that did not require any organization or planning, unlike a military operation.

Detailed analysis of numerous pogroms suggests that the “efficiency” of the pogroms of the second half of 1919 stemmed primarily from the fact that Denikin’s army had better structure and training, and overall was more homogeneous than any of Petliura’s troops or bands. Petliura’s pogroms were pogroms of local thugs, of poorly trained peasants, very often former neighbors. The Denikin army pogroms were carried out by highly trained soldiers and officers, who had no regard for Jews, for the local population, or for Ukraine in general.

During the Civil War, the pogroms engulfed Ukraine and created a “pogrom universe” defined by genocidal violence. Inside this microcosm, framed by the free reign of violence, the brutal mass rape, and the torture and humiliation, all inhibitions became obsolete. The phenomenon of the pogrom in Ukraine in these years developed its own internal mechanics, an endless cycle of violence that spun out of control. Ritualized pogrom scripts appealed to visceral impulses and emotions and, when performed over and over, required escalation of violence to maintain the excitement and awe of the exhibition of gruesome public punishment. The previously committed violence caused even more violence.

Shtetl Kazatin (Koziatyn), home to approximately three thousand Jews, was an important railway junction to the west of Kiev. Through 1919, the Jews of Kazatin suffered from pogroms perpetrated by various regiments and platoons of different armies that traveled through this railway hub, as the shtetl changed hands constantly. In September 1919, the passing Denikin army regiment publicly hanged three Jews and left the bodies on the gallows for three

51 Kenez, “Pogroms and White Ideology,” 302.

days. “But for the Jews such execution already was a trifle, of course,”⁵² told one Goldfainag, the teacher of the Jewish secondary school in Kazatin. He proceeded to say that all ended well and that the Jews there were lucky, because that regiment stayed for only three days. This evidence demonstrates that the concept of normality was totally betrayed and ruined by endless cycles of pogroms, because the public execution of *only* three Jews became considered a lucky escape. Ever growing violence continuously adjusted the moral scale of both assailants and their victims. Indeed, the dam of inhibitions broke and destroyed the Jewish Ukrainian community as it was.

Not murder or plunder but publicly performed acts of violence became central to the intimate genocide that unraveled on the territory of Ukraine⁵³ during the Civil War. Pogrom perpetrators clearly distinguished between robbing and murdering Jews, and punishing Jews. Mass rape of Jewish women became the most characteristic trait of the pogroms in 1919. The scope and brutality of gendered violence during pogroms was unprecedented, and the mass rape of Jewish women became in many ways focus of genocidal violence during Civil War.

52 YIVO Archive, file 208, 18497.

53 And Belarus. See the Introduction to the current publication.