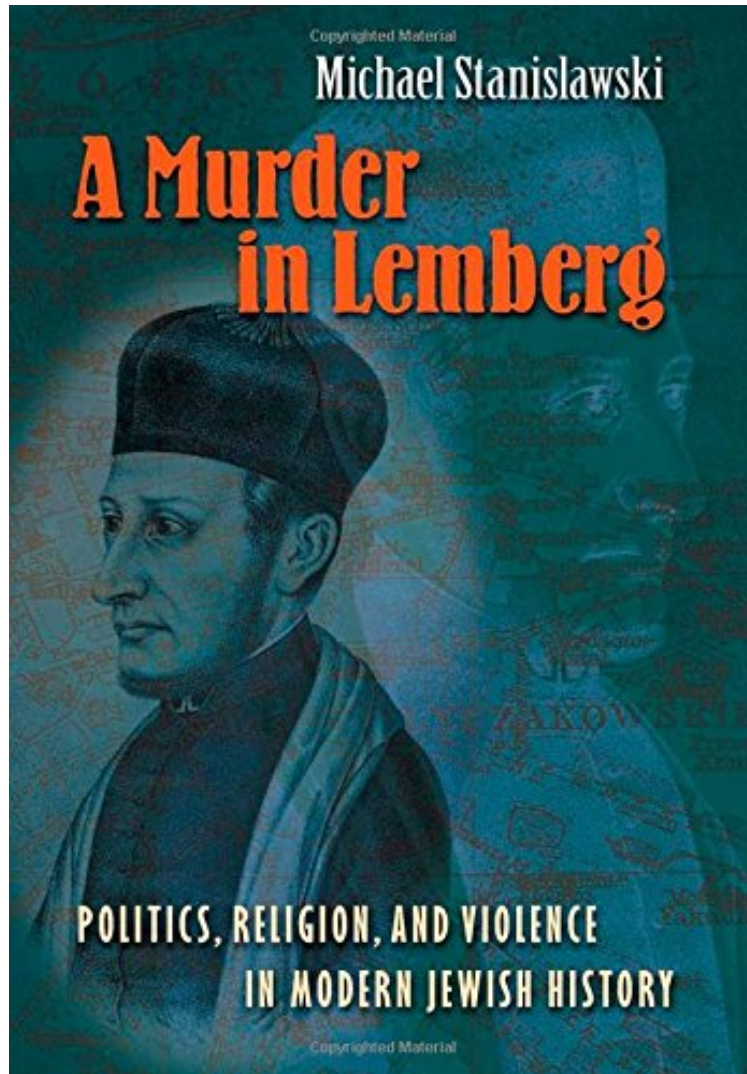


(Ebook pdf) A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History

A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History

Michael Stanislawski

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Michael Stanislawski : A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Beyond the Murder of a Rabbi: Insights Into the Jewry of Austrian-Ruled Poland (Galicia) By Jan Peczkis The author, Michael F. Stanislawski, is Professor of History at Columbia University. The stated inspiration for his research was the assassination of Yitshak (Yitzhak) Rabin on November 4,

1995 and the ensuing question, "How could a Jew kill another Jew for political and religious reasons?" (p. 1). Stanislawski then examined the September 1848 arsenic murder, of reformist Rabbi Abraham Kohn, by Orthodox Jew Abraham Ber Pilpel--the culprit "virtually certain". (p. 112). The most notable part of this book, apart from the analysis of early forms of "reformed Judaism" (not only in Germany!), is its information on the Jews of Galicia. Interestingly, Rabbi Kohn characterized not only medieval Jews, but also Poland's Jews, as "Oriental" ones renowned for their backwardness and fanaticism. (p. 49, 51). [This is ironic, because the Endeks, and authors such as Feliks Koneczny, have frequently been attacked for holding similar views about Jews as an "Oriental" culture, moreover one that does not fit into Poland's Latin culture.] There were some modern-thinking Jews, such as Rabbi Dov-Berish Meisels, and the Lemberg (Lwow, Lviv) maskil Meir Mintz, who were sympathetic to the Polish cause, in part, because the pro-German orientation of most local Jews was driving the Polish nationalist movement in an anti-Jewish direction. (pp. 66, 68). Rabbi Abraham Kohn also appeared to be supportive of the Polish cause. (p. 69). However, as the following paragraphs make obvious, pro-Polish Jews were the exception. Stanislawski elaborates on the usually strong pro-German orientation of the erstwhile-Polish Jews of Galicia, and implicitly rejects the exculpation that this was a defense against Polish anti-Semitism. He comments, (quote) The fight for Polish national freedom was led by Polish nobles both in situ and in emigration--especially in Paris--but also was attracting to its cause the Polish middle class, including the non-noble intelligentsia. But not (at least as yet) the "progressive Jews" in Galicia--as opposed to those in Congress Poland or indeed in independent Cracow--who had little or no sympathy for the Polish nationalist cause, and were deeply committed to the German language and German culture. This was so both for pragmatic reasons--they were subjects of a German-speaking state that encouraged the Germanization of the entire population of the empire, a process easier to adapt to for native Yiddish speakers than for other groups--but also out of an ideological, and even spiritual commitment. In line with the Romanticism described in the previous chapter, many modernist Jews deeply identified with German culture as the most advanced bearer of modernity and progress in Europe, if not the world. (unquote). (p. 31). In addition, consistent with the premise that Jews did not usually form strong bonds with the nation in which they lived, they had ephemeral loyalties. The author generalizes that, "The vast majority of the Jews adhered to the traditional principle of loyalty to whatever regime was in power." (p. 67). During the Insurrection of 1846 in Krakow (and the infamous jacquerie), Galicia's Jews openly sided with the Austrian occupiers of Poland. Stanislawski notes that, (quote) The leaders of the Jewish community of Lemberg, for example, volunteered to raise a Jewish brigade to support Austrian control of the city [Krakow] and of Galicia, but the authorities declined this request... (unquote). (p. 57). The aloofness or hostility to the Polish cause was the rule among Jews, (quote) However, as we have seen, the Jews en masse demonstrated anew their loyalty to the Austrian state during the 1846 Polish rebellion. (unquote). (p. 68).

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Ideas that need more work
 By Werner Cohn
 There are at least three good books buried in this rather cursory little booklet, trying to get out, but not quite succeeding: 1) A thoughtful analysis of how and why the Reform Rabbi Abraham Kohn died in Lviv (then Lemberg) in 1848. Stanislawski does furnish details that he found in archives, and he advances the theory (not totally convincing) that the man charged but acquitted of the murder, Abraham Pilpel, was in fact the murderer. But these details do not add up to a coherent explanation of just how and why Pilpel, presumably together with Orthodox Jewish co-conspirators, would conceive and carry out a deed so alien to the methods traditionally used in internal Jewish disputes. 2) A religious history of the Jews of Lviv-Lemberg. Some elements of this history are of course familiar, in particular the disputes between Hasidim and the traditional Orthodox. But Rabbi Kohn was a Reform Jew, and the appearance of Reform Judaism so far east of Germany requires fuller and more careful explanation than given to us here. 3) The use of assassination in internal Jewish disputes, which Stanislawski says interests him so much, needs much more, and much more careful analysis. It appears that in addition to the (questionable) case of Rabbi Kohn, there were only two other cases that come easily to mind: that of Prime Minister Rabin in 1995, and that of the Labor Zionist leader Haim Arlosoroff in 1933, presumably at the hand of right-wing Zionists. Now if, as Stanislawski maintains, these cases are very rare, this rarity needs to be established, say through a careful comparative analysis of other groups similarly located. In Lemberg, that would involve the Poles, the Germans, and the Ruthenians. Is assassination more common in the internal affairs of these groups? If not, perhaps the Jews are not as unique here as Stanislawski suggests. Moreover (and this goes back to book #1, above), if assassination is indeed generally considered unacceptable by all factions of Jews (except perhaps the clearly mentally imbalanced), Stanislawski has much explaining to do if he insists, as he does, that the murderers in the Rabbi Kohn case were organized by part of the local Jewish leadership. In short, this is a stimulating outline for a number of books. Let's hope that the author will get to work on at least some of them.

How could a Jew kill a Jew for religious and political reasons? Many people asked this question after an Orthodox Jew assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Itshak Rabin in 1995. But historian Michael Stanislawski couldn't forget it, and he decided to find out everything he could about an obscure and much earlier event that was uncannily similar to Rabin's murder: the 1848 killing--by an Orthodox Jew--of the Reform rabbi of Lemberg (now Lviv, Ukraine). Eventually, Stanislawski concluded that this was the first murder of a Jewish leader by a Jew since antiquity, a prelude to

twentieth-century assassinations of Jews by Jews, and a turning point in Jewish history. Based on records unavailable for decades, *A Murder in Lemberg* is the first book about this fascinating case. On September 6, 1848, Abraham Ber Pilpel entered the kitchen of Rabbi Abraham Kohn and his family and poured arsenic in the soup that was being prepared for their dinner. Within hours, the rabbi and his infant daughter were dead. Was Kohn's murder part of a conservative Jewish backlash to Jewish reform and liberalization in a year of European revolution? Or was he killed simply because he threatened taxes that enriched Lemberg's Orthodox leaders? Vividly recreating the dramatic story of the murder, the trial that followed, and the political and religious fallout of both, Stanislawski tries to answer these questions and others. In the process, he reveals the surprising diversity of Jewish life in mid-nineteenth-century eastern Europe. Far from being uniformly Orthodox, as is often assumed, there was a struggle between Orthodox and Reform Jews that was so intense that it might have led to murder.

From Publishers Weekly: Murder, intrigue, media spotlight, community in-fighting, police coverup, judicial malfeasance. O.J. Simpson? Jon-Benet Ramsey? No, it's the poisoning of Rabbi Abraham Kohn and his family by a fellow Jew, Abraham Ber Pilpel, in 1848, in the Ukrainian city of Lemberg (now Lviv). Stanislawski, professor of Jewish history at Columbia, uncovers a forgotten story as his fascinating book details the events surrounding the murder of the reformist (but not Reform) Rabbi Kohn and his four-year-old daughter (four other family members survived) after Pilpel sneaked into their kitchen and poured arsenic in the family's soup. While the twists and turns of the case make a compelling narrative, Stanislawski has a far more important story to tell. The assassination of Kohn was the result of roiling religious and political tensions between Lemberg's Orthodox community, which remained loyal to the Hapsburg empire, and Rabbi Kohn, allied with those demanding independence as revolution spread across Europe in 1848. While there is too much on Lemberg Jews' communal affairs for most readers, Stanislawski tells his story with a sharp eye for detail and plot, with the historical context and analysis that students of Jewish history will appreciate. (Feb.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Stanislawski tells his story with a sharp eye for detail and plot, with the historical context and analysis that students of Jewish history will appreciate."--Publishers Weekly

"Beyond the sheer literary pleasure of his captivating narrative and the inherent novelty of a Galitsianer Jewish murder mystery, the author adds important insights into the complex, now vanished, world that was Jewish Galicia. . . . Michael Stanislawski has written not only an important historical morality tale about the dangers of religious extremism, but also a cautionary tale about the unforeseeable perils unleashed when governments try to force modernity, or, for that matter democracy, on a deeply traditional religious society."--Allan Nadler, *Forward*

"Stanislawski . . . could not have written this slim, fascinating book without having immersed himself in the municipal archives of Lviv, previously known as Lemberg."--Sheldon Kirshner, *Canadian Jewish News*

"A well-paced and dramatic re-examination of the Kohn murder, *Murder in Lemberg* is, more importantly, a rich and vivid picture of the diverse mid-19th century Jewish life in Eastern Europe, when change was unsettling traditional communities."--*Jewish Book World*

"In a charming and fascinating book that he has just published--*A Murder in Lemberg*--Stanislawski says he truly believes that this is not only a fascinating story in and of itself, but also one with abiding importance to all those interested in the modern history and the culture of the Jews, with all of its grandeur and successes, as well as its abundance of tragedy and violence...including internal violence, ultimately stretching from the assassination of Rabbi Abraham Kohn in 1848 to that of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995."--Tom Segev, *Haaretz*

"In this concise account, Michael Stanislawski expertly uses the crime to show that ideological changes roiling the Jewish world at the time were just as fundamental as those operating on the wider scene, and that these movements acted and reacted to each other in dangerous and unpredictable ways.... Stanislawski explains a very complex religious and political situation with commendable brevity and clarity."--Ralph Amelan, *The Jerusalem Report*

"[T]he account is a highly stimulating read."--Francois Guesnet, *Slavic*

"[This] book is well worth reading. For specialists, it provides a little-known incident with a strong argument. For those less familiar with the history of East European Jewry, this short book may serve as an easy and interesting introduction wrapped in a murder mystery. One way or the other, Stanislawski's study is a stimulating work and deserves broad readership."--Theodore R. Weeks, *American Historical*

"*A Murder in Lemberg* is a comparatively short tome, yet, for the most part, it packs a powerful punch. And it is a testament to Stanislawski's skill that what might initially appear to be a parochial, if somewhat shocking, event, relevant only to its own time and place, is rendered of broader and potent meaning. . . . [T]his is a first-rate microstudy that deserves attention beyond the academy."--Sam Johnson, *H-Net*

From the Back Cover: "Michael Stanislawski's *Murder in Lemberg* is an extraordinarily interesting jewel of a book. It is a good read and an exciting story. More important, this in-depth account of an 1848 murder case and its legal aftermath allows Stanislawski to get at the heart of many important issues in nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish history, especially the pace and extent of modernization and religious reform, the reaction against reform, and the relationship of Jews to government. It is a tour de force of analysis and insight."--Marsha Rozenblit, University of Maryland

"This well-written book uses the case of the murder of the reform rabbi of Lemberg in 1848 as a prism through which to analyze the evolving character of the Jewish community in Austrian Galicia and their relationship with the authorities and the other ethnic-religious groups there. It is somewhat reminiscent of Jan Gross's *Neighbors* and Helmut Walser

Smith's *The Butcher's Tale* in that it provides the general context of the murder in a succinct and informative manner and delves into its intricate details and subsequent investigation. This makes for interesting reading and a fresh look at a region and period that are not well covered."--Omer Bartov, Brown University