
Polish-Jewish relations in the twentieth century have been arousing great interest among historians and specialists in other fields for a long time, the focal point most often being the complex times of German and Soviet occupation of Poland and the post-war period. A large number of research and popular papers have been published on the above issues, and new works, interpretations and theses attempting to explain known and described events and processes in joint Polish-Jewish relations are still appearing.

The centuries of Jewish presence in Poland were characterized by remarkable dynamics and a multitude of phenomena ranging from unrestricted freedom of cultural development, the preservation of religious traditions, to problems of resentment and anti-Semitism. Barriers created by the differences in language, religious beliefs, customs and culture, were strengthened by stereotypes and prejudices on both sides. Contemporary Polish-Jewish relations have been shaped through the prism of the Holocaust carried out by the Germans on the occupied Polish territory, but also the pogrom in Kielce in 1946 and the events of March 1968. Discussions about providing assistance to Jews during German occupation, Polish indifference, denunciation and other reprehensible attitudes have been omnipresent in public debate not only among specialists in the field. Attempts to describe and investigate the difficult past are hardly devoid of catchy, yet unauthorized or simply false theses. It is worth emphasizing that expanding research areas and the continuous verification of accumulated knowledge are natural processes. In fact, this is the only way through which the truth about the mutual relations between Poles and Jews ought to be approached, as it ensures going beyond a stereotypical handling of the subject.

Being aware of the above, the Kielce Sub-branch of the Institute of National Remembrance and the Institute of History at the Jan Kochanowski University is organizing a scientific conference on “Polish-Jewish relations in the 20th century. Research-controversy-perspectives. Colloquium IV: New research challenges.” As part of the conference, the participants will be able to hear six papers tackling the problems of the events
Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki

"Decision to discontinue the investigation into the Kielce pogrom" of 21 October 2004 and the current state of research on the events of 4 July 1946 in Kielce.

July 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of the tragic anti-Jewish incidents in Kielce. This mass crime against the Jewish population was caused by a false rumor about Jews kidnapping and murdering a child. It was also ignited by the anti-Semitic sentiment of part of the Polish society (including the stereotype equalizing Jews with communists), as well as the incomprehensible, unbelievable passivity and inefficiency of those who commanded the law enforcement and military forces, which can be considered as both consent and provocation. According to the investigation carried out by the Institute of National Remembrance, the anti-Jewish incidents (involving civilians, militiamen, Security Service officers and soldiers from various military units) led to the deaths of 37 Jews and 3 Poles, 35 Jews were injured. After the pogrom the communist authorities launched an aggressive propaganda campaign against the anti-communist underground, the Polish Peasant Party, the Catholic Church and the Polish authorities in exile. The question which is still open for discussion is whether the course and dynamics of the anti-Jewish incidents in Kielce were caused by a series of provocative actions or were the result of spontaneous actions of a crowd or individual groups of people.

Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki will question the assumption adopted by many researchers that all the basic facts about the causes and course of the tragic events of 4 July 1946 in Kielce have been determined. New evidence concerning the security in the city, the role of particular officers and military groups, the course of events at the Kielce-Herby station, the functioning of the Ludwików Steelworks (including unclear connections with the military administration) in the period preceding the incident and the lack of an appropriate profile of the participants of the pogrom, undermine the current state of research on the course of events during the pogrom in Kielce. Therefore, many statements contained in the "Decision to discontinue the investigation into the Kielce pogrom conducted by the District
Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Cracow of 21 October 2004" is no longer valid. The problem of the unexplored research possibilities (including conducting targeted archival queries) during the investigation will be addressed.