



Source: Odessa, Jews in the Bund and 1905 pogroms

The below image from Odessa (Ukrainian: Odesa) shows members of the Jewish Bund with bodies of their comrades killed during the Russian revolution of 1905.

Many of Russia's pogroms occurred in what is now Ukraine, then home to the majority of Russia's Jewish population. Traditionally, pogroms were thought to be organized or condoned by the authorities. Successive waves of scholarship from the 1960s up to the present day challenged this view, as such sanctions were not found in Russia's archives once they were opened. More widely, an antisemitic policy and culture made such actions possible. Persecution and harassment of Russia's Jewish populations convinced antisemites in the Russian empire of the legitimacy of their violence, and evidence shows some minor and higher officials did have roles in fomenting attacks. Moreover, the government was apparently reluctant or unable to stop the pogroms and punish those responsible – recent research has pointed towards inertia and the under-governed nature of the Russian empire being key in allowing pogroms to spread, rather than a planned and sustained policy from the government.



Members of the Jewish Bund with bodies of their comrades killed in Odessa during the Russian revolution of 1905.

Source: Wikimedia commons



A photograph of the victims of anti-Jewish pogroms in Odessa, October 1905.

The Bund was one of a number of parties and groups in the late Russian empire that celebrated Jewish culture and identity, but, in this case, with an internationalist outlook that emphasized members' class consciousness and working-class identities. Some members of the Bund were sometimes involved in Jewish self-defence groups, which took it upon themselves to organize spontaneously against the repression of the Russian empire's Jews and to fight back. These groups were often full of young men eager to avenge their murdered comrades who had been killed in collisions with government troops or sometimes autonomous forces of anti-Semites acting locally and on their own initiative. The majority of these associations were active in the Pale of Settlement, a region to the South West of the empire mostly covering present-day Ukraine where many of the empire's Jewish populations lived.



Source commentary provided by:

Dr George Gilbert

Lecturer in Modern Russian History, Student Liaison and Communications

Email: G.Gilbert@soton.ac.uk