

**Jewish Spite: *Złość żydowska...* of Gaudenty Piłkusi--an Eighteenth Century
Encyclopedia of Antisemitism in Poland
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At the threshold of the twenty first century, after six decades of peace in Central and Eastern Europe, new generations have been for some time now slowly becoming aware of the changes that occurred in their cultural territory. One such change, particularly significant in Polish perspective, is the disappearance of that mythical element, blamed by all kinds of populists for all past and present national misfortunes. I mean the stereotypical image of a Jew, present in the contemporary anti-Semitic propaganda as a major force behind any failure or behind the entire process of the system transformation. The stereotype comes in very handy for several reasons, but can prove actually double-edged. It is a convenient tool to absolve both the political class as a whole, and any man in the street, from all their mistakes, omissions, or simple indolence, and redirect the aggression at a mythical "Jew". If, as the "common" knowledge has it, the Polish nation is so splendid in its mass as well as individually, then it must be the Jew, who takes hold of profits he does not deserve and generally causes detriment and conspires against Poles. If not for the Jews, religious and national aliens, with their incomprehensible culture that they cling to so stubbornly, manifesting their distinctiveness, what well-being the Polish nation could enjoy and what riches we would have for everybody to share! Glimpses of such oversimplified if not primitive vision of national history run through utterances of some politicians, but also through casual conversations held in the streets, while shopping, at home, or any other place. The devotees of this stereotype tend to forget that easy absolution of one's sins and faults strengthens social and individual inactivity, demoralizes, and ultimately solidifies fatal inertia, makes any effort seem pointless, any deeper analysis of individual or social failures unnecessary.

Reviving repeatedly the pre-war stereotype of "the Jew" for political purposes, makes the general Polish society look anti-Semitic, with its anti-Semitism allegedly "sucked in with mother's milk", as a representative of the Jewish people put it bluntly. It seems like Hammurabi's ancient rule "an eye for an eye" has been applied again: a stereotype for a stereotype!

I do not intend to fight stereotypes with stereotypes, nor to ignore them altogether, since I think their origins should be located. Some of the harmful ideas must come from mutual intolerance, isolationism, ill will, xenophobia, megalomania and ignorance. No one can eradicate all causes of stereotypic beliefs. It is, however, possible to pinpoint major sources and think about methods of extinguishing them. At present such a major source, which fuels Polish-Jewish misunderstandings, is the state of general education in both societies in so far as their relations are concerned, including their formative historical background and the transformation processes. Specialist knowledge on every period of Jewish presence in Poland is urgently needed.

Some time ago I postulated an analysis of Polish-Jewish relations as a historical and cultural phenomenon in terms of the so-called long-term processes.¹ The suggestion still seems valid to me, yet it should be extended with cognitive rules resulting from the

¹ A.J. Zakrzewski, *Wizerunek Żyda w propagandzie antysemickiej do końca XVIII wieku*, [in:] *Tolerancja. Studia i szkice*, t. II, Częstochowa 1995, p. 191.

principles of micro-historical studies², especially as to issues investigated in a local scale of a minor city, town or village. In such case the list of research questions must be more detailed, not only reconstructing mutual Polish-Jewish relations, but also delving into the workings of both communities, exposing inner tensions, mechanisms, perceptions, the source underpinning of mutual prejudice. Yet, it would also discover points of contact, things in common. And presumably, a new picture of Polish-Jewish relations will emerge, free of oversimplifications resulting from ignorance. It will be easier for a Polish or Jewish man in the street to see the difference between facts and ideological or political manipulation.

1. The groundwork of anti-Semitic literature in Poland

Scholarly studies of Jewish history in Poland have been pursued for a long time now and their output is considerable. They run along several, hardly overlapping, lines. The first to be intellectually concerned with Jews as a social group, were religious authors, set on contrasting Jewish religion with Christianity. Instead of underscoring common theological roots and similarities, their aim was to highlight Jewish collective responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ and Jewish negative characteristics in general. These points have been brought up ever since. As we believe, such perspective was a kind of facade covering up economic motivation, less consciously apprehended at the time, and visible ethnic and cultural differences. Official Catholic soteriology was totally exclusive, analogically to other Christian or non-Christian creeds, certainly not encouraging tolerance. The Middle Ages did not know the notion of tolerance, and even in later epochs it was usually applied to fellow believers. The change of attitude towards Jews would not be any easier for their isolated life, whose remoteness was also religion-dictated. It does not imply that any Christian in Poland was hostile towards his Jewish neighbor, nor any Jew longed for the restitution of Jewish kingdom in the Promised Land. Thus Jews settling in Polish lands from the earliest times through the eighteenth century, were perceived as an economically indispensable replenishment of a population decimated by frequent wars, invasions, or epidemics.³ In the sixteenth century, all former privileges amounted to the special legal status of Polish Jews which was unprecedented in European countries. A significant manifestation of that status was the Council of Four Lands, Jewish parliamentary body, whose jurisdiction was recognized and used for the purpose of collecting taxes.⁴ What was characteristic in the Reformation period was the absence of the Jewish problem in religious literature. The situation would change during the reform of the Catholic Church in radically altered political, social, and economic circumstances. A new trend emerged in secular literature with increasingly evident Jewish motif.

Before mid-seventeenth century Jews were tolerated in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as if the competitive aspect of their presence in the economy went

² For the advantages of micro-historical methodology illustrated with the results of applying it see T. Srogosz, *Miedzy biologiczną egzystencją człowieka w dziejach a historią nauki*, Częstochowa 2003, p. 16 ff.

³ S. Ettinger, *Sejm Czterech Ziemi*, [in:] *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej. Materiały z konferencji „Autonomia Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej”*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1991, pp. 35–36.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 37 ff. Comp. also: J. Goldberg, *Żydowski Sejm Czterech Ziemi w społecznym i politycznym ustroju dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, [w:] *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 44–58.

unnoticed. The deterioration of feudal economy based on serfdom and the ensuing impoverishment of both the gentry and peasantry made people aware of the fact that a considerable part of possible profits was taken over by Jews. It could not have been otherwise in the class society, in which the gentry could enjoy full political and economic rights, while the peasants had none and could not, with the third estate being inadequate or practically non-existent, undertake other tasks that involved possessing basic civil freedom. It were the Jews who filled the gap taking to crafts, trade, administration of gentry or landowners' properties. The life and fortunes of many Jewish agents (so-called *faktors*) could serve as a typical example of success exciting neighborly envy.

From the seventeenth century Jews as a social group were mulled over by political authors with gentry background, who formulated early charges against the Jewish nation, usually of economic nature, but also reiterating some expressions of religious antagonism or even hatred aimed at expelling Jewish community out of Poland. Meanwhile this community had already taken deep roots in the Polish soil, and being attached by many ties to the gentry, obtained such formal status that gave it higher standing over the peasants. Several centuries of relatively peaceful existence and material welfare resulted in the growth of the Jewish populace, whose number, exceeding any other European country, amounted to 300,000.⁵ The main area of Jewish settlement were the eastern borderlands, included in the Polish Crown, where Jews interacted not only with Christian neighbors, but also with non-Christians, including the influences of Middle-East Judaism. Some conversions from Christianity to Judaism were also recorded.⁶

In our search for the origins of anti-Jewish attitudes in the Polish Commonwealth we have most often focused on religious distinction and some legal and economic advantages of this group. We tend to underestimate the reasons essentially inherent in Judaism as such, compelling Jewish settlers in Poland to keep distance and live an isolated life. The considerable autonomy Jews obtained heightened this isolationism. Their different speech, dress, and conduct with generally incomprehensible religious rites and practices, usually held in detached rooms, to which no Christians were allowed, stimulated most preposterous conjectures. Suspicious antipathy towards cultural and religious others was enhanced by religious fervor inspired by the Counter Reformation movement in the Church, including opposition against Judaizers⁷, but also by the behavior and actions of non-Catholics with regard to the political interests the state during, e.g., the Swedish invasion. Anti-Jewish suspicions flourished also with the common growth of superstitions and widespread belief in magic, typical for these times.

Up to the mid-eighteenth century religious practices of Polish Jews did not attract much interest. It was only with the ferment of ideas that begun in the Jewish society in the seventeenth century⁸, growing popularity of Hasidism⁹, emergence of various Jewish sects with the expansion of the Frankist movement raising false hopes for massive conversion of Jews to Christianity, all these phenomena made for the need to know more about the Jewish culture. It seemed most natural that the clergy were most predisposed to

⁵ S. Ettinger, op.cit., p. 35.

⁶ Z. Pietrzyk, *Judaizanci w Polsce w 2 połowie XVI w.*, [in:] *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 144–153.

⁷ Ibidem, p.145.

⁸ J. Doktor, „Frankizm jako odpowiedź na kryzys osiemnastowiecznego żydostwa polskiego”, *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 1991, nr 2 (158), p. 15 ff.

⁹ Ch. Shmeruk, *Chasydyzm i kahal*, [in:] *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 59–65.

acquire such knowledge, in particular those of them, who took part in theological debates with the Frankists and by virtue of such participation alone should be better acquainted with the theological intricacies of Judaism.

In the mid-eighteenth century two authors showed deeper interest in Jewish issues, and these were Stanislaw Kleczewski¹⁰ and Gaudenty Pikulski¹¹, both directly engaged in the famous disputations of the Frankists with the Talmudists in Lvov in 1757, and in 1759¹².

The disputations held in Hebrew must have made the observers realize the importance of having some command of Hebrew, and, besides, the need to explain to the public the essence of the argument, which rose hopes for attracting a sizeable group of Jews to Christianity. The latter issue, with the rising social turmoil in the Eastern borderlands of Poland and with the growth of Jewish population, had not only religious but also political aspect. Its outcome could have been to the advantage of both the authorities and the society. Hence, despite its religious origin, the initiative of Kamieniec Bishop Mikolaj Dembowski turned out to be *raison d'état*, when King August II in 1758 granted the Frankists the general rights and thus a legal protection against their fierce opponents, traditional Jews.

The religious dispute within Judaism revealed general Polish ignorance with regard to Jewish neighbors, who, abiding by the commandment to preserve their cultural identity, had not only achieved broad autonomy, but also became a social enclave, closed to any outside influence. Self-imposed isolation of Jewish community played a significant role in the development of accusations, slanders, fantastic speculations. Some Jewish converts might have enhanced anti-Jewish hostility and suspicion, allegedly corroborating some Talmud-based anti-Christian practices.¹³ Anti-Semitic propaganda used them as the key evidence, whose verification was out of question, referring them to medieval beliefs and ideas, which had followed early Jewish refugees from Western Europe.

2. The Author and his work

Gaudenty Pikulski was not the first nor the last to produce anti-Semitic writings in Poland. Still, his position was to some extent unique due to his involvement in the efforts of Kamieniec Bishop Mikolaj Dembowski to receive about 1,000 Jewish families, as promised by Jakub Frank, into the Catholic church.

On the eve of the enlightenment breakthrough in Poland (in the mid-eighteenth century) Polish literature seemed encyclopedia-inclined. Regardless of their background, many authors tried to compile and record in literary form the knowledge which the gentry culture had previously amassed. To mention just a few examples, Joachim Benedykt

¹⁰ S. Kleczewski, *Dysertacja albo Mowa o Pismach Żydowskich i Talmudzie podczas walnej dysputy contra talmudystów z talmudystami... publico ore miana*, Lwów 1759.

¹¹ G. Pikulski, *Złość żydowska przeciwko Bogu i bliźniemu, prawdzie i sumnieniu, na objaśnienie przeklętych Talmudystów, na dowód ich zaślepienia i religii dalekiej od prawa boskiego przez Mojżesza danego na dwie części opisana [...]*, Lwów 1758.

¹² Two public disputations were held between the followers of Jakub Frank and the defenders of Judaism nicknamed „Talmudists”.

¹³ Comp. the widely commented case of Serafinowicz, Brest rabbi in early 17th c., who supposedly disclosed secret Jewish practices described in Talmud, in: G. Pikulski, *Złość żydowska...*, pp. 349–353.

Chmielowski published *Nowe Ateny*¹⁴, Szymon Majchrowicz¹⁵ wrote a historiosophical work¹⁶, while Ambrozy Nieszporkowic compiled information on the famous Virgin Mary icon of the Jasna Gora monastery and its perception in the then society. The work of Gaudenty Pikulski fits in the category, even though its title seems slightly misleading for inexperienced readers. The author meant his work to endorse the case Jakub Frank and his sect, and stated his intentions in the full title, very elaborate in the typical Baroque manner. It implies that its criticism is not aimed at all the Jews, but just at the “Talmudists”, who opposed the reform of Judaism as postulated by Frank. In his preface (*Przedmowa*) Pikulski named three goals that motivated his work: 1. to expose Jewish faults in their faith, in order to refine one’s own Christian attitude; 2. to provide landlords and nobles with arguments to bring up while talking to their Jewish subjects in order to persuade them to convert to Christian faith and follow Sabbatai Tsvi and the Frankists; 3. to stir up distrust towards Jewish agents (*faktors*), according to Pikulski, secret enemies, “who get more protection than God’s servants, whose word is worth more in courts of law than Christian peasants”.¹⁷

Consistent with the then canons of learning, the study had to be profusely annotated with references to literature, whose authority defied any doubts.¹⁸ The books is divided in two parts; the first, consisting of nineteen chapters, takes the readers into the world of the Bible as contrasted with the Talmud; second part (eighteen chapter supplemented with the letter of Pope Benedict XIV concerning Jewish freedom in the Christian world) describes the customs and religious practices of Orthodox Jews, including their alleged secret rites. And the latter, as the author was absolutely convinced, were directed against Christianity in general and against individual Christians. And this was what he meant by the title “Jewish spite”.

The main point of the book is easily readable from the titles of chapters. It is to prove that Jews by their commentaries to the Old Testament deliberately distorted its message as regards the coming of Messiah in order to reject Jesus Christ. Consequently they persisted in clinging to the “old covenant” and waiting for the Messiah to come, incurring unexpected plagues on Jews. In his analysis of the High Priests’ actions Pikulski underscored their ill will, aversion to recognize Messiah in Jesus Christ, and keeping Jewish masses in ignorance and submission. Thus we have here another

¹⁴ J.B. Chmielowski, *Nowe Ateny albo Akademia wszelakiej scjencji pełna, na różne tytuły, jak classes podzielona: mądrym dla memorialu, idiotom dla nauki, politykom dla praktyki, melankolikom dla rozrywki erygowana*, t. 1–4, Lwów 1754–1756. First printed ed. 1745–1746, see *Bibliografia literatury polskiej "Nowy Korbut"*, t. 2 *Piśmiennictwo staropolskie*, Warszawa MCMLXIV (1964), pp. 80–81.

¹⁵ Sz. Majchrowicz, *Trwała szczęśliwość królestw, albo ich smutny upadek, wolnym narodom przed oczy stawiona na utrzymanie nieoszacowanej szczęśliwości swojej*, cz. 1–4, Lwów 1764.

¹⁶ A. Nieszporkowic, *Odrobiny z stołu królewskiego, Królowy Nieba i Ziemia... historie łaskami i cudami obrazu częstochowskiego...*, Jasna Góra 1759.

¹⁷ G. Pikulski, op.cit., *Przedmowa Auktora do Czytelnika*, s. 2–3 nlb.

¹⁸ G. Pikulski, op. cit., „te i tym podobne były dla mnie pobudki dla których przy różnych przeszkołach starałem się publicznie odkryć sekretne Talmutystów przeklętych złości, które opisałem, częścią z oryginałów rabinów nawróconych do wiary świętej katolickiej, częścią z różnych autorów i historyków. Ponieważ zaś przeciwko Żydom pisałem, opuściłem różne dowody doktorów kościoła katolickiego, bo by im nie wierzyli. Najwięcej wziąłem sobie za świadectwo Pismo Święte, rabinów uczonych i Józefa historyka, rodem Żydowina”. *Przedmowa Auktora do Czytelnika*, s. 3 nlb.

conspiracy theory, supposedly accounting for the actions of rabbis, who opposed any attempt to bring Judaism closer to Christianity.

3. The origins of eighteenth century anti-Semitism

Pikulski began his lecture on the history of Jewish religion with the explanation of the term “Talmud”, viewing it as the principal cause of Jewish refusal to recognize Messiah in Jesus Christ and generally of Jewish anti-Christinity.

Talmud then “is a Hebrew word meaning the same as *explanation* or something similar. Thus Talmudists are nothing else but Jews keeping the Bible according to the explanations of older rabbis and ancient doctors, Pharisees and scholars in Law, or held to be such”¹⁹. Pikulski distinguished the Talmud in such understanding to the Scripture, which he considers inspired, whereas “This explanation was never from the Holy Spirit, but anybody as he understood could add to the Bible various fables, and talmuds are by Jews written in various times, some named from the author and some from the title of the talmud book.”²⁰ To make his thesis sound more plausible Pikulski repeated that “these talmuds are so well guarded and withheld that not every Jew is allowed to read them or keep them at home, as is the case with Macchiavelli and other forbidden books with us.”²¹ The author sanctioned the use of the Talmud, which had been written before Jesus Christ was born. Pikulski argued that the then Talmud, authorized by the Sanhedrin, consisting of 72 archpriests, was free of errors, because the text was worked out in the heat of clashing opinions.²² Nevertheless, said Pikulski, when Jews were dispersed, in the Diaspora, every rabbi was writing “his own” Talmud, “to what good?”²³. And it were these “other Talmuds against loving your neighbor, to kill Christian children, to blaspheme against Our Lord Christ, etc., are produced by particular rabbis after the death of Our Lord”²⁴, that came from the hatred of Christianity.

As I have mentioned, false information on Jewish culture resulted from the ignorance and ill will of the authors. This is exactly the present case. Pikulski brought into play an “our Lyran”²⁵, who used to be a Jewish scholar, and upon becoming Catholic explained the entire Bible true to the letter and correct history, with information on many matters that Moses could have not mentioned for brevity”!²⁶. The irony of it is that a Catholic priest of Franciscan order would admit some deficiency of the God-inspired Scripture, and persuade his readers that Lyran completed the statement of Moses!

There are numerous illustrations of the similar lack of knowledge on the history of Israel, internal regulation of Jewish community, including the organization of religious cult. It is evidently easy for us now to point out all misinterpretations and falsehoods in his descriptions, but it would be beyond the point to censure an eighteenth century Christian monk for his ignorance of Israel. Significantly dangerous, however, is the

¹⁹ G. Pikulski, op.cit., chapt. I, p. 1.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 1.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 2.

²² Ibidem, p. 7.

²³ Ibidem, p. 8.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 9.

²⁵ Lyran (Liran), or Nikolaus v. Lira (1270–1349), Franciscan, theologian, follower of Duns Scott, author of numerous theological works concerning Old and New Testaments, as well as Talmud, Zohar, and Kabbalah; see: *Lexikon Theologie und Kirche*, Freiburg 1935, k. 580–581.

²⁶ G. Pikulski, op.cit., p. 3.

“confusion of knowledge” in his text. The author, motivated by his principal aim, was not able, nor was willing to assess critically the information, which seemed purely speculative or even contrary to common sense. The state of mind of Polish encyclopedists on the eve of the enlightenment breakthrough was characterized by their refusal to apply the rules of critical analysis to the material they compiled. The authority of previously published books remained in full force, and the only ideal to be pursued seemed a maximum compilation of all information on a given subject. Besides, the aim of this publication – to widen the schism in the Jewish community – together with the conspiracy theory on rabbis’ activities, did not, for obvious reasons, assist critical evaluation.

Jewish liberties were a problem in the internal affairs of mid-eighteenth century Poland. According to Pikulski, Jews had too many, to the indignation of the pope himself. To prove his point Pikulski quoted a summary of the letter addressed by Pope Benedict XIV to Polish archbishops and bishops²⁷ in 1751. “He communicates in this letter that every Polish city and town the number of Jews is greater than Christians’, and at public houses and inns Jews have more exempted subjects etc., due to the fact that Jewish servants cannot keep solemn holidays without work nor the rites of Catholic faith. Thus this freedom comes to that we Poles are more enslaved to Jews than they are to us. Let us just consider whether there is any Jewish slavery; they have free trades, even of wines, which is contrary to Polish constitution, they have free printing without any revision of clerical superiority, Catholics are in their service, etc., what slavery is it then? They celebrate their festivals and shabbases with public clamor and damned ceremonies during which they blaspheme the name of the Savior and curse us.”²⁸ Pikulski emphasized two elements of the situation: first, the Jewish overpopulation in cities and towns, the other, full freedom of religious practices. Another major issue in the Pope’s letter involves economic and legal aspects. We read: “We have learnt from the complaints of respectable inhabitants of the Polish Kingdom that Jews have multiplied to such huge number in Poland, as to some places, cities, and towns (visible from their ruins how they were once walled up and full of Christian citizens, known from the registers) are now ruined and so overcrowded by Jews, that few Christians have stayed there. And thus some parishes in this Kingdom for the decrease of parishioners and proceeds are almost to be deserted by their priests. Moreover, any profitable trades and businesses, such as liquors, or even wines, are to Jews allowed; public leases in commission given, inns and taverns let, fields and villages chartered to them, with the power over Christian peasants so that with inhuman force and order they are made to labor, journey, and do serfdom, but also punished more severely, even with lashing. Hence the unfortunate peasants, being under the Jewish rule, have to obey the Jew as subject their landlord. Although Jews are not allowed to punish the subject themselves, and this matter rests with a Christian administrator, but he has to obey the Jew for fear of losing his administration and fulfill the tyrannical orders.

Beside the public charter of inns, fields, and other leases, which the Jews hold to the detriment of Christian people, other misdemeanors are in Poland, which can do even a greater damage and destruction than the above. It seems the worst to us, that in some estates there are Jewish commissioners sharing the living quarters with Christians and

²⁷ The Polish version of the letter is quoted extensively in the supplement to part two of his work, pp. 460–471.

²⁸ G. Pikulski, *Złość żydowska*, p. 10–11.

having them in their power; in towns and inns not only do Jews live with Christians, but they dare to keep Christians of both sexes at home. And as Jews for the most part are in the trade engaged, when they receive large sums of money they lend to the poor Christians at grossly usurious rates to the latter exhaustion. Although they do themselves borrow from Christians at big commission to their kahal and synagogue. It is for anybody to judge that they do this in order not only to use the money from Christians borrowed to trades and various goods and pay back the provision and have some profit themselves, but also to have all their debtors to protect them and their synagogue.²⁹

This extensive quotation from the papal letter provides an excellent perspective on the scale of the social problem that the Jewish minority constituted in mid-eighteenth century Poland. It illustrates the essential contradictions in the legal system, and in the social and economic structure, contradictions to which no effective solution could not, or would not be found. Recommended curbing of contacts with Jews, prohibiting them from running the nobility's business dealings could not be enacted as long as the law granted political rights to the nobility alone, conserving the feudal system based on serfdom, and lacking strong middle class. The discrimination of Jews seemed the only solution, but the economy of the Commonwealth would have collapsed without Jewish business activity. Hence the chance (seemingly offered by Jakub Frank) to include a large segment of Jewish society into the economic and legal system of Poland could have meant saving the benefits of the cooperation with the Jewish element without such acute moral discomfort. It is no wonder, in the circumstances, that Pikulski attacked the Orthodox Jewry, who, on the other side, were right in fearing the decline of faith and cultural identity induced by the Sabbataist and Frankist sects.

Pikulski's book is both polemical and didactic. One of its functions was to persuade Christian society to approve this group of Jews, whose religious beliefs seemed acceptable and promised to unite them with Christianity, or at least bring them closer to it. Pikulski wanted also to provide arguments to be used in eventual debates with Jews. His book includes information of varying degree of credibility, in many cases plain libel and anti-Semitic calumnies. And yet an overall impression is that of a certain sum total of the knowledge on Jewish community and its religious culture. On the occasion of discussing the origins of the Talmud Pikulski outlined the history of Jewish people before the destruction of Jerusalem Temple, described the main Jewish sects, the functioning of priesthood in Judaism, listed the charges against the archpriests, who were, in his opinion, guilty of distorting and misinterpreting (in the anti-Christian spirit) the Holy Scripture. The crucial accusation, in line with the dominant outlook, is that of the deicide. The logical consequence of this crime were all the misfortunes that the chosen nation was being punished with. Pikulski made a detailed inventory of all the plagues befalling all twelve Tribes of Israel.³⁰ The mind of the author, who listed all these afflictions with solemn gravity, seems a pitiable sight, equally pathetic is his absolute trust in the wisdom of his literary predecessors.³¹ Writing down all this nonsense he never tried to confront it with real life, which stands in dire opposition to these slanders. Bigotry and hatred made him conclude: "moved to other peoples this Holy Spirit, who had used to inspire their

²⁹ Ibidem, pp. 463–465.

³⁰ The entire chapter XIX is devoted to them, in: op.cit., pp. 344–348.

³¹ In this case G. Pikulski referred to the authority of Franciszek Roliat, a Christian author (despite his claim to protect objectivity by not using Christian sources), whose information was used by Gabriel of St. Vincent, the author *Consilia varia*. see: *Złość żydowska*, p. 344.

prophets...”³² What resulted from the conviction that they were guilty of the deicide and abandoned by God, was the feeling of license in one’s dealings with the Jews, or even of pride at harassing them. Admittedly, pogroms and killing Jews were forbidden in the papal letter with reference to the words of St. Bernard of Clairveaux, who wrote: “Jews should not be mistreated nor killed, nor kept apart”.³³ Abbot Pierre of Cluny spoke in a similar tone. Some less drastic, though also effective, measures were recommended, including: “to punish them for their misdeeds by confiscating the goods they robbed the Christians of, or by usury accumulated, and allot the sum to the needs of the holy faith...”³⁴ Referring to his predecessors, the pope advised to introduce a prohibitive fine on Christians who would hire themselves out to Jews, whereas treating Jews as servants is highly recommended; to ban appointing Jews to any public offices or posts, to ban hiring Jewish administrators in the church estates; and, ultimately, to admit the expulsion of Jews.³⁵

In part two of his book Pikulski set out to present “Jewish spite, which they manifest especially during their holidays against God and Catholic faith.”³⁶ The text was based, the author claimed, on a manuscript of “Serafinowicz, former Brest Litovsk rabbi, scholar expert in the Scripture and Jewish Talmuds”³⁷. Mental instability of Serafinowicz, evident from his profile included in the beginning of part two, did not dissuade Pikulski from quoting his preposterous writing with undue solemnity.

This part of the book is as obviously anti-Semitic as part one. It invites readers into the world of Jewish culture, so different from the Polish one, but its message is to convince the reader that all the rituals and customs “they celebrate not so much to praise God as to blaspheme Him and thy neighbor.”³⁸ Jewish festivals and religious ceremonies were used as a pretext to recall all the nonsense and calumnies on Jewish culture and religion. Pikulski scrupulously named all the holidays month by month, reminded their origin and attributed to them false, plainly criminal intentions. In his interpretation Jewish religious festivals and ceremonies were meant to malign and denigrate Christian beliefs, the person of Jesus Christ in particular, and to harm Christians in general. Thus accepting at face value anything that had ever been written on Jews, guided instead by more than enough of ill will, did G. Pikulski compile in his work all rubbish and absurdities about Jews that had ever been made up, from antiquity through his own times and repeated them earnestly, persuaded that he equipped his contemporaries with indisputable arguments to endorse the Frankists against the Orthodox.

Conclusions

The book of Gaudenty Pikulski was written in a specific social and political situation in the Polish Commonwealth of the mid-eighteenth century. The major and significant aspects of this situation were:

³² Ibidem, p. 348.

³³ Ibidem, p. 465.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 466–467.

³⁵ Ibidem, p.466–472.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 349.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 349.

³⁸ Ibidem, p.359.

- deterioration of the economic condition of the gentry resulting from the inefficiency of the feudal serfdom system;
- growth of the number of Jews in Poland and their increasing domination in some fields of economy characteristic of the early phase of modern capitalist system (money profits).

The upper-class public was not yet ready to see the urgent need to introduce necessary, radical social and economic reforms in order to liquidate feudal structures and improve the situation of the gentry itself. The only accepted half-measure was to get hold of financial resources by exiling Jews from Poland. The offer of Jakub Frank, which involved about 1,000 Jewish families to be christened, was perceived as a solution of the Jewish problem and of the basic dilemma.

The work of Gaudenty Pikulski was aimed at:

1. arouse sympathy of the entire gentry class towards the sectarian actions of Jakub Frank;
2. discredit Orthodox Jews, who did not approve theological interpretations of the Frankists.

These aims were not achieved. Pikulski's text proved to be a compilation of lies and calumnies, which solidified the negative image of Jewish community in Poland. Thus the book became a kind of "encyclopedia of anti-Semitism", reiterating unfounded allegations against Jews, known in Europe from the Middle Ages through the present times.