

Push and Pull Factors in US Immigration

The term **pogrom** is derived from the Russian word meaning "to wreak havoc." It was used to describe an organized attack or massacre, often with government support, against any non-Russian ethnic group. By extension, it has come to mean any organized violent attack against an ethnic minority at any time or place, especially against Jews. The term was most often used in connection with the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia of the period 1881 to 1921. There were three waves of such attacks, in 1881–84, 1903–06, and 1917–21. These attacks resulted in increasingly major destruction of property, theft, and murder.

Violence against Jews had been a frequent occurrence in czarist Russia. Often pogroms occurred during times of national and social upheaval, creating widespread anxiety and uncertainty. The violence was often government-sanctioned.

Most Russian Jews were forced to live in urban communities within the Pale of Settlement, subject to many unfavorable decrees by the czars, and easily targeted for attacks. In 1881, when Czar Alexander II was assassinated, a rumor began that Jews had been behind the crime. Pogroms broke out in more than 30 towns in the Ukraine, the most serious in Kiev. Later in the year, on Christmas Day, the Jews of Warsaw (which was within Russia) were attacked. On Easter Sunday the next year Jews were attacked in Balta. The year 1883 brought more pogroms. From 1900 to 1906 there were hundreds of pogroms. In 1903 in Kishinev 45 Jews were killed and hundreds injured. In 1905 in Odessa some 300 were murdered and thousands wounded. The pogroms that followed the Russian Revolution of 1917 were the most severe. Jews were harassed, attacked, and murdered by peasants and soldiers from both the Red Army and the White Army. Between 1917 and 1921 the death toll reached 60,000 lives. The Jews of eastern Europe had suffered through approximately 1,200 pogroms.

As the Russian pogroms continued, thousands of Jews fled Russia for the United States. In immigrant studies, violence such as pogroms are considered "push" factors for immigration, and the Russian pogroms certainly "pushed" many Jews to seek lives elsewhere. From 1880 to 1925, the American Jewish population grew from approximately 300,000 to 4.5 million. In addition, many eastern European Jews began to look toward Palestine as a refuge against the continued pogroms.

Response Question
