

ish political parties in Poland



Edz. archiwalny 16L

# Jewish Political Parties in Poland.

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WARSAW.  
1919.

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WARSAW.  
1919.

22.082

### **Orthodox Party.**

The greatest part of the Polish Jews belong to the Orthodox party. This party has many institutions, the most important of which, the „Orthodox Union” (Agendas Hoorthodoxim) numbers 17000 members. This Union was founded by two German rabbis Dr. Kohn of Anzbach and Dr. Karlebach of Cologne in 1916. At present they organise the „Rabbis Union”. The party publishes a paper in the Jewish dialect — „The Jewish Word” (Das Jüdische Wort), which has a big circulation.

The Orthodox, although they possess no political program, have a great influence in Jewish-Polish questions and intercourse, and their wish is to establish good relations between Jews and Poles. They are loyal to the new Polish government.

The Orthodox are often in harsh opposition to the Nationalists and Zionists. The Jewish question is to them only a religious one. They consider Palestine to be the Holy Land, and support the Jewish colonisation there, but the founding of a Jewish State in Palestine is from their point of view quite wrong in its very purpose. The idea of an immediate regeneration is contrary to the Jewish Orthodox belief that the Jews will be regenerated through a Messiah.

They consider the Jewish community only as a religious unit having no political attributes, in contrast to the opinion of the Jewish Nationalists and Zionists. The Orthodox are conservatives „par excellence” and are found to be in constant opposition to every new movement.

During the elections they have often formed blocks with the Assimilators, both parties united on one hand by their hatred of the Nationalists, and on the other by both their having the same way of looking on the Jewish-Polish question.

### **The Assimilators.**

The social work of the Assimilators began in the sixties of the XIX century, when after the reforms of Wielopolski there grew a patriotic Polish movement among the Jews. The Warsaw Jewish press-organ was at the time the magazine „Dawn”

printed in Polish. Later on in 1866 S. Peltyn started another one, the „Israelita“, which with short interruptions appeared for 48 years.

The Assimilators were for a long time among the Jews the only cultured element, which took a leading part in all social and cultural work both in Jewish and Polish organisations.

All the bigger Jewish communities were under their sole influence. The Warsaw Synagogue presented a fertile ground for a strong propaganda of Polish assimilatory patriotism, spread by the gifted Jewish preachers Cylkow and Kramsztyk.

In all Polish-Jewish questions the Assimilators were for a long time the only representatives of the Polish Jews. But at the end of the eighties there took root in the Kingdom of Poland, the Sionistic and Nationalistic ideas, imported from Russia and from the very beginning their supporters endeavoured to abolish the influence of the principles of Assimilation. The Assimilators considered and consider up to this day the propaganda of Polish culture their most important mission.

They proceeded by founding new schools and introducing a secret propaganda into the already existing ones. This work however met with great difficulties from the Russian government, which wanted to prevent all Assimilation in the Kingdom. It was one of the reasons why the Assimilation idea did not have a larger and deeper influence on the Jewish society.

In spite of all this, the prevailing number of professional Jews now exercising their divers callings in Poland are adepts of these first pioneers of Assimilation.

The Assimilators founded schools, artisan-work-shops; they organized a „Society for Favouring Trade and Agriculture“ wishing therewith to draw the Jews towards productive work. They think „Jewishness“ to be only a matter of religion and strongly oppose making it a question of nationality.

They often formed voting blocks at elections with the Orthodox party, as in spite of great differences that separate them, both parties profess the same pacific program as to their tactics in Jewish-Polish questions, and try to avoid misunderstandings between the two nations.

The Assimilators have no political program at all. They belong to different Polish political parties, but all are united on the same platform as to the question of Polish citizenship: they consider themselves Poles and wish to reconcile legal Jewish interests to the Polish national ones. They consider the Jewish question in Poland an internal one in opposition to the Nationalists who demand an international settlement of it. The Assimilators reject such a solution of the question in many of their declarations.

Lately Assimilators and Neo-Assimilators joined forces in the newly founded „Society for Social Work among Jews in Poland“ which acknowledges the new Government and is ready to support the actual State building in Poland.



### The Committee of Independent Polish Jews.

This Committee is the latest Jewish political formation in Poland. It sprang up at the time preceding the elections to the reformed Jewish community. The committee has no special political program, but sharply attacks Assimilation as a principle; still it does not acknowledge the Jewish Nationalistic movement. On the whole it can be placed closer to the Nationalists, because of its similar relation towards the Assimilators. In many proclamations the „Independents” accuse the Assimilators of indifference for Jewish traditions, frequent apostasies, general lack of solidarity regarding the Jewish community, weak defense of Jewish rights etc.

The „Independents” loudly proclaim their sympathy and solidarity with the Jews of all countries.

In their election-bill they proclaim their cultural and educational desiderata, e. g. the support of free religious schools, judaistic courses and teachers' seminaries.

This Jewish group has no notable influence in the country.

### The Zionists.

The Statute of the Sionistic Organisation in the Kingdom of Poland was officially sanctioned by the German authorities in April 1917. „The Central Committee of the Sionistic Organisation” in Warsaw is the directing centre of this party. The committee is composed of 25 persons: seven members from Warsaw, and 18 from provincial towns. Nine commissions belong to the committee: 1) for Palestine affairs, 2) general culture, 3) school and education matters, 4) political matters, 5) economical and philanthropic affairs, 6) a commission for organization, 7) the National fund Commission: 8) general commission for propaganda and 9) the press-commission.

One of the chief sionistic institutions is the „School Wardship”. Eighteen grammar schools, work-shops, boarding schools and dinner-rooms, with more than 1800 children, are under its protection. Grammar schools in Ciechanow, Mlawa, Sochaczew, Grodzisk, Pruszków and Skierniewice profit by the support of the Wardship. Three public-schools (gymnasiums) are founded in Czenstochova, Mlawa and Lovicz. There exist about 200 sionistic Unions in the Kingdom of Poland, sporting and scouting ones included.

The Zionists have several intellectual societies and social clubs, where the representatives of various sionistic movements meet: for instance the Warsaw Club, known by the name of „Merkaz” (political centre).

The sionistic movement arose in Poland towards the end of the XIX century, but it became powerful and began to lead a great propaganda only at the time of the war. It is in constant intercourse with the international Sionistic Organizations, which also grew in power at the time of the war.

After many meetings and congresses at the beginning of 1917 the Sionists started a loud and wide-spread propaganda of their ideas. So in July 1917 they organized a „plebiscitus“ among Polish Jews in order to know their relation towards „the historical ideal of a legally warranted State, — in the land of Israel — Palestine“. They got 280.000 signatures. But this cannot be taken as a measure of Sionistic influence, because there are very many Jews, who wish for a Jewish regeneration in Palestine, but do not belong to the Sionists. On the contrary, the number of „shekels“, checks or receipts for the Palestine Fund shows the real growth of sionistic influence. The National Fund of Polish Sionists amounts to 59,400 marks, and three parts of that sum were collected last year. The Sionists' editions are the Hebrew magazine „Hacefira“ and a dialect magazine „Das Jüdische Volk“ (The Jewish People).

In former years the only scope of the Sionists was for Jewish regeneration in Palestine. But the idea of State regeneration in general was on the first plan. If it could not take place in Palestine, it could be perhaps done on some other territory. That is why the Sionists are sometimes called „Territorialists“.

In the last two years the Sionists have strongly held up a new up to date program (Gegenwärtsprogram), which is based on the principle of selfdetermination of National Minorities. According to this principle, the Jews in Poland should have special rights as a distinct national group independently of a Jewish State in Palestine, which would form the Jewish National Centre.

For the present, the Sionists, as well as other Jewish Nationalistic groups, believe the Jewish community to be a beginning of the growth of Jewish selfgovernment in Poland. That is why they deem it necessary that the community be changed from a purely religious into a distinctly political group.

The official Sionism, contrary to opinions of other Sionistic groups, considers the Hebrew tongue to be the national language of the Jews.

At their last Congress (Dec. 28 — 31, 1917) several resolutions were carried by the Sionists with regard to the Palestine question and local Jewish needs. We quote some of these resolutions in order to give an idea of the present program of the Sionists:

„The III Sionistic Congress in Poland supports the declarations of Nationalistic groups who demand an international acknowledgement of the right of the Jewish people to form their Natio-

nal and Political centre in Palestine. Further it demands the freedom of selfgovernment and selfdetermination for Jews in every country, where they form a big part of the population. ;

### **The School Question.**

1. Hebrew being the only language considered by the Zionists as common to all Jews in general, the teaching in the schools of the Zionistic School Board is done in Hebrew; the Jewish dialect being used only as an auxiliary and dropped as soon as the Hebrew has been mastered by the pupils.

2. The selfgovernment of the schools is the foundation of social and political freedom and as such is the first condition to a free national development.

3. The Polish Zionists Congress demands that all school matters should be settled by freely elected representatives of the Jewish population, no state interests being harmed by such an arrangement. This resolution is intended to be at the same time a most energetic protest against the existing restrictions of the freedom of the Jewish schools.

### **The religious and neophyte questions.**

We consider the Hebrew religion as an indivisible part of the moral life of the Jewish People. We demand an official profession of the Hebrew faith of every Jew, or at least an official proof of his not belonging to any other religion.

### **General political questions.**

1. The III Congress points out that the Bâle Zionistic program does not interfere with the sphere of rights and duties of Jews as citizens of the countries in which they live.

2. The Congress shares the general program of the whole Jewish people as to its national wants and rights; it demands the definite setting in the affirmative of the question „Palestine for the Jews“ at the moment when international matters will be regulated.

### **Polish Political questions.**

1. The Congress protests energetically against the proceedings of Polish Judges, who uphold the old Russian laws restricting the rights of the Jews.

2. The Congress protests against the special fees payed by Jews in hospitals, although they have to pay the hospital-tax, as well as others citizens.

3. The Congress lays it upon the newly elected Central Committee to bring before the new Polish Governement a petition demanding the abolishment of all these restrictions.

### **Jewish internal matters.**

In order to unite various national Jewish parties, a National-Political Club is to be organized, which club is to be considered as the nucleus of a future Jewish representation.

The Central Sionistic Committee is to remain faithful to Sionistic principles in its future action.

2. There is to be created a special political commission to serve as link between the C. C. and the National Club.

3. The Central Committee is to take upon itself the initiative of organizing a general Jewish Congress in the Kingdom of Poland.

4. Previously the C. C. is to call meetings of Jewish councillors, members of the Town Councils and local elective Boards and prepare a program of the future Congress."

### **The Sionistic Democratic Union.**

The Sion. Democr. Union is the opposition group of the official Sionism. The adherents of the S. D. U. find that the Centr. Sion. Org. is not democratic enough in its institutions and general organisations. This group, which was organized last year, held several meetings of its own. They published a sketch of their program (accepted June the 23 th 1917), where they proclaim their purposes: „The introducing of democratic principles into all Sionistic organisations; energetic colonising-work in Palestine, and a democratic regeneration of Jews living there; the coordination of all nationalistic parties in their political work; the nationalisation and democratisation of the administration of Jewish communities, which are the basis of future authonomy; the calling in. of general congresses which should form the basis for a constant, exterritorial, legal Jewish representation; an energetic struggle for citizen and political rights for Jews in all countries in general, but especially in Palestine."

The program demands a democratic School Board to manage schools and general education. The funds for education are to be taken from State and Communal taxes.

In November 1917 the organisation of the „Independant School Union" and the „Union of Popular Education" was started.

## Poale - Sion.

Poale-Sion means—the Workers of Zion. The full name of the party is: „The Universal Socialist Workmen's Union Poale-Sion.“ In Poland this party is known under the name of Social Democratic Jewish Workmen's party, Poale-Sion.“

The Poale-Sion does not belong to the official Zionism, it is in strong opposition to the Central Committee of Sionistic Organisations and considers the C. C. a „bourgeois“ and reactionary institution. The group operates only in the sphere of Jewish workmen, and their influence is steadily growing. The centres of their action are the „Workmen's Homes“ with tea-shops and reading-rooms, where small meetings and evening lectures are held. The „Workmen's Homes“ have about 1500 members. There are branches of this institution in Lodz, Siedlce, Bendzin, Wloclawek and Lovich, altogether about 6—7 thousand members.

The Polish Poale-Sion is in close contact with the same organisation abroad and with the agencies of the socialistic „International.“ The party has its own checks for the Palestine Workmen's Fund. The political pass-word of this group is a Socialistic State in Palestine. Their „actual“ program includes full rights for the Jewish National Minority in Poland.

The last (5-th) Congress of this party carried several resolutions; we quote the most characteristic ones:

### On matters concerning Jewish communities.

The communities ought to have a democratic and laic character, being the basis of authonomic and cultural life of the Jewish People.

### The School Question.

The Poale-Sion program energetically demands a laic school, with the Jewish Dialect as principal language. The schools are to be supported by the State, or by the authonomical municipal organisations. As to the relation to other parties, the Poale-Sion lays a great stress upon the fact, that it can form blocks only with the „Bund“ or the „Sionists-Socialists.“

### The „Sionists-Socialists.“

The Sionists -Socialists are a small group with very little influence, especially at the time of the war.

This group considers the reconstruction of the Jewish State possible, not only in Palestine, but on every other territory. That was the reason why, at the time, they made popular the idea of conquering Uganda, and afterwards designed Angola as the seat of the new Jewish State. On account of all that they are named „territorialists.“ Their idea lost its actuality during the war, the hope of the final getting of Palestine for the Jews becoming a certainty.

### **The „Mizrachi“ called also „Easterners.“**

The Mizrahi are a group of Orthodoxes who have joined Zionism. It was formed at Vilna in 1902. At their Congress in July 1917, 40 deputies were present, representing 7000 members. The following resolution was carried:

a) every Mizrahi must be a member of a Zionistic Union in spite of the difference of opinion in religious matters with the Zionists.

b) working with other Zionists the Mizrahi remain an independent organisation, working out its own spiritual program. The Mizrahi consider old Jewish national and religious traditions as the most important factor for the future regeneration of the Jewish People and the reconquest of the Holy Land.

c) The Thora is to be taken as basis in all educational matters. Children must be taught a godly way of life and real love for Sion.

d) The Mizrahi give their support only to rabbis who preach the Thora and uphold Jewish traditions.

The organ of the party is the magazine „Hamizrach;“ they have their own colonising fund „Mizrachi Colonial Fund“ and their own „shekels“ checks for the National Fund.

### **The Popular Jewish Party.**

This party was formed at the time of elections to the Town Council in Warsaw, July 1916 and was at first grouped round the newspaper „Moment.“ It did not wish to join the Polish-Jewish block, which had 15 Jews on the list. The Popular group formed its own list, out of which 4 members were elected. This group differs from other parties by its ruthless methods of action. They are at drawn knives with the Assimilators and the Orthodoxes, because of the latter's meek policy in relation to the Poles. They consider the Dialect as the only Jewish language, a language which ought to find full rights in Poland. The party

operates chiefly among the small „bourgeois“ middle-class-society and that is why it is opposed to socialism. In their magazine „das Volk“ (№ 32 oct. 1917) they published their „General Principles“ and the „Jewish National Political demands.“

The Jewish Popular Party stands on the platform of a free, independent and democratic Poland, whose state-organisation is to be settled by the Constituent Assembly, elected by general, equal, direct, secret and proportional vote. All citizens, who are of age, men as well as women, are to take part in the elections. The Popular Jewish Party demands full rights for all citizens regardless of sex, religion and nationality. All differences of classes and nationalities are to be abolished.

The J. P. Party demands religious freedom, freedom of speech, press and meetings, freedom of unions and associations, inviolability of person and home. The J. Popular Party demands particular guarantees for national minorities in Poland. The J. P. P demands obligatory and free elementary schools with teaching in the child's maternal tongue. All the State, communal and private schools are open to children of all citizens without any class or other privileges.

The J. P. P. demands the annihilation of handicraft-corporation privileges, all rights for all trades, the organisation of cheap-credit and active state support of productive cooperative-societies.

The J. P. P. demands of the State the broadest protection of the Working classes in all matters.

### **Jewish National and Political demands.**

1. Considering the Jews in Poland to be an independent popular group, the J. Popular Party demands for them not only full rights, but also special rights of a national minority. Being such a minority the Jews ought to have their Jewish National Council, which should have complete freedom of governing the Jewish People.

2. Every Jew, who, by public act, has not denied to be a Jew, is considered a member of the Jewish Commonwealth.

3. The Jewish dialect is to be considered the official Jewish language, and as such has full rights in legal and official matters. In the communities where there are more than 25% Jews, the dialect is to be commonly used as the State language — in courts for instance.

4. The teaching in elementary schools is to be done in dialect; where most parents wish their children to be taught in another language, private schools may be opened.

5. To the religious freedom belongs the right of observing the Sabbath and other Holidays.

To satisfy all the needs of Jewish People special funds are to be assigned by the State and the Communities and these sums are to be handed over to the Jewish Popular Council.

The competence of the Popular Council is described in the program as follows:

### **The Jewish Popular Council.**

1. The Jewish Popular Council is the official representation of the Jews in Poland.

2. Under the competence of the Popular Council there fall: a) Grammar and other schools, b) professional training, c) organisation of all kinds of cooperative societies, d) of cheap credit, e) the support of every kind of Jewish cultural work and, f) the care about measures to be taken for the general hygiene and physical welfare of the masses.

3. The Popular Council has the right to lay special taxes upon Jewish citizens in order to increase the Fund or cover special expenses.

### **The Jewish Kahal.**

1. The Kahal is the local autonomous unit which includes all Jews of the community. Before the law it has all the rights of a legal body.

2. The Kahal is governed by an elective Council.

3. Several Kahals select the District Council.

4. Kahals with more than 25 thousand members depend directly from the Jewish Popular Council.

### **The Jewish National Unity.**

The Polish Jews are an organic part of the Jewish People, living over the whole world, and are in close contact with it, by means of their Popular Council which takes part in all international meetings, congresses etc.

### **The „Bund“.**

The first Jewish Socialistic Workmen's Clubs and Circles were formed at the end of the eighties at Vilna, Bialystok, Kowno, Homel, Dwinsk. In 1895—1900 the movement spread far into the Kingdom, having its centre in Warsaw and Lodz.



On December the 25-th 1897 the first meeting of the Jewish Socialists was held, where the „Universal Jewish Workmen's Union“ under the name of „Bund“, (Union) was founded. Soon afterwards was formed a committee to represent the Bund abroad. The committee has, since, published various kind of papers, pamphlets and other party literature in order to make their ideas popular.

The organs of the Central Committee of the „Bund“ were the following ones: the illegal Paper „the Workmen's Voice“, which edited about 40 numbers, „Freedom's Bell“ in Lodz and „the Warsaw Workman“ in Warsaw. In the years 1906—07 legal papers were published, namely, „Der Wäcker“, „Die Zeit“ and die „Volkszeitung“.

At present the official organ of the „Bund“ is a dialect magazine „Die Lebensfragen“ formerly redacted by Medem, now by Kastelański.

The Bund during the 20 years of its existence has stood on the platform of class-struggle. It organised professional unions, strikes and manifestations.

The members of the „Bund“ took an active part in the revolutionary movement in Russia and Poland in the years 1905 and 1906. Now they lead an energetic propaganda amidst the proletarian Jews. The „Bund“ is in opposition to all the other Jewish parties, accusing them to be either „clerical-conservative“ or „bourgeois“ parties. It strictly adheres to class ideology, and in spite of its officially acknowledging nationalistic ideals, it does not care about the general interests of the Jewish people as a body. It is against all varieties of Sionism. The adherents of the Bund lead against the latter a fierce propaganda, taxing it of being a clerical party. They also lead a broad propaganda of Free Thought with the aim of secularising Jewish organisations, chiefly schools, and abolishing the influence of rabbis and cadics.

The Bund was the first to demand autonomy on the most democratic basis.

It considers the Jewish Dialect to be the only Jewish language.

### **The No Party Nationalists.**

Besides the above mentioned groups and parties there exist several nationalistic groups with no special political program. Leading a nationalistic propaganda they unite with different parties against the Assimilationists and support the international Sionistic movement.

„The Hajnt“, the first dialect magazine in Warsaw with S. Jackan as chief redactor, and several people grouped round the Polish magazine „the Jewish Voice“ are the representatives of these no party groups.









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