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*Impact of the elections to the Russian State Duma in 1912
on the Polish-Jewish relations in the Kingdom of Poland¹*

ABSTRACT

The period between the 1905 Revolution and the outbreak of World War I was the time of deepening controversies between the interests of the Great Powers, the formation of the political and military alliances, and the preparations for a military conflict. In the Kingdom of Poland, the territory of which – as many expected – was to become one of the main battlegrounds in the upcoming war, the growing tension in the international relations was clearly felt. This tension influenced the internal situation, in which such events as the elections to the State Duma (the Russian Parliament), the issue of self-government or the emergence of the new Chełm gubernya (Province) electrified the population. The presence of a fairly large number of Jews, and the Jewish issue raised by some political forces were the other factors shaping up the social and political relations in the Kingdom; the factors, which - a few years before the war - gained the unprecedented momentum. Although the worsening of the Polish-Jewish relations could have been observed earlier, the elections to the State Duma in 1912, in which – due to the Jewish votes – the candidate of the National Democracy (the so-called endeks), Roman Dmowski lost his battle for a seat in the Parliament, became a turning point in the history of the Polish Jews.

Key words: Polish-Jewish relations, State Duma, elections, anti-Semitism, boycott.

The period between the 1905 Revolution and the outbreak of World War I was the time of deepening controversies between the interests of the Great Powers, the

¹ The article is based on sub-chapter of my book (2005) *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin.

formation of the political and military alliances, and the preparations for a military conflict. In the Kingdom of Poland, the territory of which – as many expected – was to become one of the main battlegrounds in the upcoming war, the growing tension in the international relations was clearly felt. This tension influenced the internal situation, in which such events as the elections to the State Duma (the Russian Parliament), the issue of self-government or the emergence of the new Chełm Province electrified the population. The presence of a fairly large number of Jews, and the Jewish issue raised by some political forces were the other factors shaping up the social and political relations in the Kingdom; the factors, which – a few years before the war – gained the unprecedented momentum.

In fact, the social and the economic structure of the Jewish community in Poland with the advantage of the Jews in trade, resulting from historical development and the political realities of the country, created favourable conditions for conflicts with the Polish population; however, the elections to the State Duma in 1912, in which – due to the Jewish votes – the candidate of the National Democracy, Roman Dmowski lost his battle for a seat in the Parliament, became a turning point in the history of the Polish Jews.

In this article it had been assumed that the elections to the 4th Duma lost by the *endeks* (National Democrats) were only a pretext to extend the boycott action, which turned out to be a comfortable tool of a political struggle and of an expansion of the influences in the Polish society by that party. The main aim of this article is an answer to the question: What was the impact of elections on the Polish-Jewish relations? The detailed questions, which I am going to answer, are: what were the Polish-Jewish relations during the State Duma elections conditioned by the situation and what were the mechanisms of the administrative authorities' pressures exerted on the attitudes and behaviours of the Poles and the Jews?

* * *

Up till 1912, all the positions and concepts on the Polish-Jewish “front” had been occupied and – more or less – defined. As Jerzy Jedlicki wrote [1999: 123], the missing element was a signal. The signal materialised in the form of the proclamation of the elections to the Fourth State Duma. Those elections became an extremely important, successive landmark in the history of the Polish Jews and added to a more political character of the mutual relations. It was vivid, first of all, in Warsaw but also – although to a lesser extent – in other cities.

Let us remember that in the previous elections in October 1907, only 19 thousand of the Warsaw Jews took part (it was the only city in the Kingdom of Poland that could designate its deputies to the Duma). In effect, the Jews of the ‘Russian Poland’ were not represented in the Parliament and only two representatives of the Jewish population were elected in all the Empire. The successive years, brought – inter alia –

the dogmatic use of the *numerus clauses* principle in schools, which was yet another obstacle in practising some professions, the replacement of the word “a Jew” by the expression “a person of the Jewish origin” introduced by the edict of August 1909 (the move was criticised and evoked the anxiety of the assimilated circles), and the rise of the chauvinistic mood in the Polish society. The Jews in the Kingdom fearfully registered the counteraction of the Right against the proposal to put forward a motion in the Duma of liquidating the zone of the settlement (PALE) in 1911. The hot heated discussions were also evoked by the issue of the Bill on Self-Government [Jedlicki 1999: 111; Wróbel 1991: 33].

The Bill on Self-Government was particularly important for the MPs from the Polish Circle, who perceived it as a means of exerting a real influence upon the internal politics and who claimed that the Bill would result in a significant improvement of the situation of the towns and would guarantee the Poles the role of the hosts of the country [Achmatowicz 2003: 24–25]. The project, which was a certain *novum* in the Russian legislation, using so far the religious categories, introduced the division into the national curia: the Russians, the Jews and “the others”. The Russians were clearly favoured: they had the right to elect their deputies, if their election committee would consist of only 5 persons. The most aggrieved group were the Jews: they could obtain 20% of the mandates, if in a given settlement they would constitute over 50% of the population; if less – they could obtain only up to 10% of the mandates [Jedlicki: 111–112; Wierzchowski 1966: 197].

The Jews demanded a representation in the self-government proportional to their numbers, the Polish side was afraid that at the high property census, after the abolishment of a separate Jewish curia, the Jews would obtain the majority of the mandates in the city councils. Initially, two camps were formed in the Polish Circle in the Duma, concerning the project: the National Democrats supported the limitations of the Jews and the Realists and the Progressives opposed them, being of the opinion that “breaking the principle of the equal rights by the Poles would be the removal of the only foundation of the political defence in the confrontation with the Russian state and the Duma”. They feared that the system of the national curia would “ignite nationalisms” and would hinder the assimilation of Jews [Wierzchowski 1966: 198–199]. Some of the MPs held the view that it was inadvisable to fall into disfavour of the Russian Left opposing the idea of the curia, which would be voted through nonetheless in the Duma. Władysław Grabski postulated to bring into the Polish curia the baptised Jews and held negotiations in this respect with the Jewish deputies in Russia; also Polish assimilators, Samuel Diksztajn and Antoni Natanson, came from Warsaw to St. Petersburg to exert pressure upon the Jewish deputies to support the position of the Circle. However, the number of those who – on the Polish side – opted for or believed in the success of the assimilation decreased and the position of National camp gained the majority. There were no significant objections as far as the forming of the Russian curia was concerned since the Russians – due to their small numbers – could not play an essential role in the local authorities [Zieliński 2005: 66].

As has already been mentioned before, the position of the National Democracy was connected with a new political line formulated by Dmowski, in which anti-Semitism was to play an important role: “to gain the support of the Polish bourgeoisie and to document the loyalty to the government by cutting off any links with the liberal Russia” [Wierzchowski 1966: 198–199]. The price for supporting the solutions of the self-government issues according to the postulates of the Polish Circle was a consent of the Duma and the Council of State to examine first the project of separating the Chełm Province. These calculations proved futile since after the separation of the Chełm Province had been examined and when the interest of the Russian public in the Polish matters weakened, the Third Duma adopted the Act on the City Councils in the version less favourable for the Poles when compared to the government project [Achmatowicz 2003: 25]. The project of the Bill on Self-Government and the discussions that accompanied its development and adoption, put the Polish Circle dominated by the *endeks* in an awkward position. Theodore R. Weeks [1999: 255] writes:

Since the Polish Circle supported the restrictions against the Jews, the Poles became totally isolated, attacked by the Left (the Cadets and the Socialists) for chauvinism, and by the Right and the Nationalists as hypocrites, who demanded the equal rights only for the Poles. The feeling of a total isolation caused by that episode, and particularly cutting off the ties with the Cadets, had to result in that sharp tone, which was characteristic of the Polish-Jewish relations in those years.

Finally, after the long debates, “the most fervent National Democrat” in the Circle, Wiktor Jaroński, announced in a special declaration that in principle he supported the division into the curia, and the limitations of the Jews. Jaroński’s proclamation preceded by the rejected motions of Frydman and Nisselowicz on the introduction of the proportionate election status during the self-government voting evoked the hot applause of the Right in the Duma [Zieliński 2005: 67]. Henryk Walecki (Maksymilian Henryk Horwitz), then one of the leading activists of the Polish Socialist Party-Left (PPS-Lewica) wrote about the politics of the National Democracy at the beginning of 1912 in the periodical “Światło” (The Light) in this way [Walecki 1967: 365]:

The National Democrats are fully aware that only in this way they can maintain the position of an association that ‘rules’ in the Kingdom; that only by inspiring the anti-Jewish row they will be able to hide the class character of their anti-population politics, and the bankruptcy of their conciliatory policy towards the government. “Had the [Jewish curia] been not adopted – reports the main organ of the National Democrats “Głos Warszawski” (The Warsaw Voice), all the efforts would have to be undertaken to block the Bill on Self-Government. The self-government without curia would have been the indescribable calamity for the country”. In fact, the true and democratic self-government would have been a calamity for the National Democrats. The Circle knew very well why, with such pressure and such solemnity, it supported the limitation of the Jews in the curia; the National Democrats’ organ knew very well, why it made out of the Jewish curia the focus point of the whole issue. It was not understood by those

organs of our press which – accepting the general tactics of the Circle aimed at supporting the government project in its entirety – criticised the Circle for Jaroński's declaration, preferring to “wash their hands” and put the responsibility for the limitations of the Jews upon the government. The Circle consciously took that responsibility upon itself. The National Democrats are not afraid of the war with Jews, on the contrary, they want that war. They understand that without the war, no political party can live, and while they do not want an external war and do not know how to conduct it, they prefer to create the war-like atmosphere at home. The National Democracy knows that in the atmosphere of the Polish-Jewish war, the most popular among the census voters will be the nationalistic associations and in this way it secures for itself a long-time hegemony among the fractions of the Polish bourgeoisie.²

Walecki properly recognised the intentions of the National Democrats – they widened their influence in the country really fast, and one has to admit that the ground was in this case well prepared. Beginning with the 90s of the 19th century, the number of publications directed against Jews was constantly growing [Golczewski 1989: 88–97]. On the one hand, “the credit” went to the National Democracy, on the other hand, it resulted from the disenchantment of “the epigones of positivism with the symptoms of the Jewish national movement in its various forms”. The progress of Zionism was received by the Liberals as a challenge to the ideas and the programme of assimilation; Zionism was a threat to the assimilators – their ultimate goal was Polonisation leading to the social and cultural progress, hence any separatist movement referring to the concept of nationality and in nationality seeking the Jewish identity “had to be a move backward, the return to the ghetto” [Jedlicki 2003: 177–178]. After the stormy years of the revolution:

A Jew became a personification of “an internal enemy”, conspiring in order to deprive the Poles of the fruits of the long-awaited autonomy and to turn the Kingdom into a *Judeo-Polonia*. This myth captured the imagination of a significant part of the Polish intelligentsia. Gaining by the subjects of the Tsar in the Kingdom the right to gatherings, associations, trade unions, a greater freedom of the press and education and the – limited by the census – rights to the elections to the Duma opened the area of a rivalry which had not existed before. All the manifestations of the Jewish aspirations – as the development of the press in Yiddish or founding political parties – evoked suspicion of the hidden wish to limit the Polish rights. The National Democracy skilfully fuelled this feeling of uncertainty pointing to the Jews as the main obstacle in the process of the political emancipation of the Poles.

In the Kingdom, the attacks at the Jews from Russia and Lithuania – *Litvaks* – intensified; even the aversion of the Fraction to the Social-Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) thrived on the then “fashionable” issue of the *Litvaks*, and reverberated with the anti-Semitic slogans and suggestions. That attitude cast a negative light at the relations between Pilsudski and the Bund (General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia). The aversion of various Polish groups to the *Litvaks*, although these exiles and escapees had no reasons to nurture warm

² Article of 2 January 1912; Walecki signed as H. Orwicz.

feelings towards the Tsarist authorities, heightening the anti-Semitic moods in the Polish society, affected also the local Jews [Jedlicki 2003: 180].

In the collection of the Command of the Gendarmerie of the Warsaw Province we can find the articles from the occasionally published brochure *Walka o szkołę polską* (The Struggle for the Polish School), in which the authors alarmed that the number of students attending Polish high schools rapidly plummeted, while the percentage of the Poles in the Russian government gymnasia increased. These schools had been so far attended mostly by the Russians and the Jews. Moreover, there were complaints that - more and more often - the indigenous Poles were becoming the pillar of the Russian school system, so far supported mainly by the government and the Jews. It was a matter of not only the government gymnasia, the entrance to which was anyhow not easy for the Jewish youth but also a matter of the private gymnasia with “the Russian rights”, in which Russian was the lecture language and which were successfully established both in large cities and smaller towns. It is interesting that in April 1912, in the articles and proclamations mentioned above and signed by the Society of the National Education, there were calls to boycott – socially and economically – the Polish parents who sent their children to the government schools and private schools lecturing in Russian. It was suggested to use the social boycott “as widely as possible”, and the economic boycott less frequently, but always until the defined goal had been reached, i.e. until parents had not removed their children from such schools.³

Before the oncoming elections to the successive Duma, both Polish and Jewish public opinion was shocked by the loud Bejlis’ trial. A Jew from Kiev, Menachem Bejlis, allegedly murdered a several-years-old boy, Andriusza Juszczyński, whose blood was to be used to produce a *matzah*. In fact, the boy was murdered by his mother’s lover. The man innocently accused, partly due to a pressure of the world public opinion, was acquitted. Soon afterwards, one of the Catholic Church hierarchy expressed his opinion in “The Przegląd Codzienny” (The Everyday Review) that Jews should have been satisfied with the sentence. “What else could they need?! Bejlis was acquitted, the ritual murder denounced. One could expect such an outcome from the very beginning of the trial”.⁴

The sentence did not mean the end of the case, however. Bejlis and his family were put under pressure and threatened by the xenophobic Kiev elements, and the man left Russia and moved to Palestine. However, in June 1914 some liberal lawyers were brought to court for criticising the investigators in that trial [Shapiro 1975: 413]. The anti-Jewish hysteria awakened by a part of the press left some people with the permanent scars and hurt feeling, and the others with the false beliefs. Let us recall,

³ Gosudarstviennyi Archiv Rossiiskoi Fiederacii, Moscow (later: GARF) Fond 217: Warshavskoie Gubernskoie Gandarmskoie Upravleniye (later: F. 217), op. 1 d. 282, pp. 34–35, 38; GARF F. 217, op. 1 d. 759, p. 475. The Society also criticised the educational policy of the National Democracy.

⁴ Quotes of “Przegląd Codzienny” 1913, no. 301, and “Riecz” 1913, no. 264 [Zieliński 2005: 70].

after Feliks Kandel [2002: 806], some examples of that hysteria from the Polish lands; In Białystok, after the court's verdict acquitting Bejlis had been announced, the Jewish cemetery was devastated; in the vicinity of Ostrołęka, the corpse of a Jewish merchant, Rabinowicz was discovered with forty stab wounds, and the guard who discovered the body suggested in his report that it might have been a ritual murder (he was not disturbed by the fact that the victim was a Jew and not a Christian). Another example, outside Poland, but proving that hysteria reached various walks of life: the editor of the periodical "Cerkiew" (The Russian Orthodox Church) published by the believers of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Old Order wondered why there had been so far no accident of a child belonging to that group being kidnapped by Jews. He was surprised since "it is commonly known that the blood of our faithful is clearer since it is not poisoned with vodka and tobacco..." [Kandel 2002: 806]. In April 1914, a deputy from Łódź, Majer Bomasz spoke in the Duma in St. Petersburg:

The man was arrested for three years [the voice from among the audience: it would have been too little to hang him!]... It all is a senseless, deceitful rubbish. Dear Sirs, everyone who investigated that case knows perfectly well that it was a lie, that it was a fable for small children and the old men who had their brains washed. [...] For three years, a hatred among the people had been propagated, for three consecutive years the hostility and hatred had been ignited, and that brought the desired effects. It reached the level when the whole population is ready for pogroms. Wherever a child gets lost, and his mother does not find him soon, one can immediately hear the shouts: the Jews have killed the kid!⁵

In his other speech delivered a week later, Bomasz, turning to the Members of the Parliament said that they did not know anything about the Jewish religion. Yet the Bejlis' case fulfilled its aim: it managed "to brainwash some people and to strengthen their belief that all that is bad comes from the Jews". "The Jews are blood suckers – continued Bomasz – The Jews are a sly nation which has to be fought with and destroyed..." His words were accompanied by the shouts from the audience "Yes, that is absolutely true".⁶

Probably due to the Bejlis case, some other motions were put forward in the Duma, which struck at the Jewish population, its religion and customs. One of them was a project to change the rules concerning the ritual slaughter. Not getting too much into the details, let us only mention that the drafters motivated the necessity of the changes by, among others, the claims that due to the kosher slaughter "the Jews get good meat while the Christians get the meat from the crippled and sick cattle". The

⁵ GARF Fond 9458: Archiv tshlena Gosudarstviennoi Dumy. Bomasz Majer Chaimowicz (later: F. 9458) op. 1 d. 1, p. 39.

⁶ Bomasz also criticised Father Justyn Pranajtis and the opinions of yet another expert, Hipolit Lutoslawski. In the same speech, while talking about the situation of the Jewish craftsmen, petty traders and workers, he argued that "the Jewish wealth is the same kind of a fairy-tale as the ritual murder, which Bejlis was accused of". Ibid., p. 40-42, 43-50.

project submitted at the end of November 1913 was signed by 66 members of the Duma, and by many Poles among them.⁷

The Polish press, not necessarily anti-Semitic, published detailed reports and commentaries from the trial in Kiev, generally unfriendly towards the defendant, and in Warsaw, even during the German occupation, the Jews walking the streets of the city were called “the bejlises”.⁸

The Bejlis’ trial evoke a great commotion among the Polish Evangelists. As Krzysztof Lewalski wrote in “Zwiastun Ewangeliczny” (The Evangelic Herald) the belief in the ritual murder was condemned and so was the instigation to hatred. The belief in that superstition was to be an expression of backwardness and stupidity. Such voices were rare, however. Apart from the Bejlis’ case, many groups continued to discuss, the famous *Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion*, first published in 1903 in a St. Petersburg periodical “Russkoje Znamia” (The Russian Flag), an anti-Jewish pamphlet inspired and fabricated by the Tsarist secret police *okhrana* [Zieliński 2005: 71].

It was the atmosphere that accompanied in October 1912 the selection of the electors and deputies to the Duma. In the beginning, the Jews wondered whether to participate in the elections since – taking into consideration the results of the previous elections – it seemed that it would not be possible to secure electing any of the Jewish members of the Parliament. The elections were at the same time preceded – *inter alia* – by attacks at the assimilation which, according to Dmowski, “produced trashy Poles” [Zieliński 2005: 71–72]. This discouraged many of its representatives to engage in the election campaign which, because of the high property census, could be important. However, even those, not only assimilators, who were not disheartened, claimed that in spite of the attitude of the Jews, the anti-Semitic slogans would be raised, nonetheless, by some groups. The participation in the elections – it was said – was to be for the Jews an excellent opportunity for introducing the civil education and getting experience in the political life, which would bring profits in the future.

In autumn of 1912, the Jews in Warsaw had at their disposal a larger part of the votes, and moreover, contrary to the Polish voters, the votes of whose were split mostly between Roman Dmowski and Jan Kucharzewski, they managed, in spite of all the controversies which divided them, to avoid splits [Corrsin 1996: 45]. Truly, the introduced property census created the situation where among 83 electors eligible to elect one deputy to the Duma, there were as many as 46 Jews. This advantage itself ignited “the ferocious witch-hunt of a large part of the Polish press” and it seemed, that there were no chances to elect a Jewish MP in Warsaw, although there were plans to put forward a candidacy of a banker and an assimilator, Antoni Natanson [Wierzchowski 1966: 41].

⁷ GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 2, p. 2.

⁸ YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York: Herman Bernstein Papers 713 Box 9, f. 299 (pp. 1–9).

When on 15 October, 11 representatives of the National Democracy, 22 progressive Democrats from the National Concentration (Koncentracja Narodowa), two representatives of the SDKPiL, one representative of the Socialist Union (Zjednoczenie Socjalistyczne) established by the Bund and the PPS-Left, and 46 Jews of various fractions and groups entered the competition, the latter ones, trying to avoid the election of the leader of the National Democracy known of his anti-Semitic declarations, supported Eugeniusz Jagiełło from the PPS-Left. Dmowski lost the elections, Jagiełło was elected, and the “fury” of the National Democrats – that is probably a good word – was so much stronger since it seemed that the representatives of the Socialist Union had not even the slightest chance to be elected. The Left was even slightly embarrassed by the support it gained from the Jews, and what was worse – from “the Jewish bourgeoisie” [Corrsin 1996: 45–46]. Jagiełło himself did not enter the Polish Circle in the Duma but became a member of the parliamentary fraction of the Social-Democratic Workers’ Party of Russia (SDPRR). His decision was opposed by, among others, the Bolshevik MPs, claiming that Jagiełło had been elected by the Jewish bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks from the SDPRR did not want to break the united stand with the the SDKPiL although in its organ “Pravda” (The Truth) it was underlined that it was better to have Jagiełło in the Duma from the PPS-Left than Dmowski or Kucharzewski. Jagiełło became a member of the Menshevik Group in the Social-Democratic fraction having an advisory vote in the internal matters of the SDPRR Party and a decisive vote in the remaining matters [Zieliński 2005: 72–73].

It is worthwhile noting that – although it was not possible to create an election block of the socialist parties – during the elections to the Duma, the Bund moved closer to the SDKPiL and, first of all, to the PPS-Left. However, the events of 1912, led generally to the worsening of the Polish-Jewish relations, the alliance of the Bund and the PPS, the support of a part of the Polish socialists for the autonomous, national postulates of the Jewish workers, the condemnation of anti-Semitism, and cutting off from the later boycott proved that the understanding between the Poles and the Jews was possible. According to some researchers, it was a lightly optimistic accent during the growing ethnic disputes [Zimmerman 2004: 271–272]. Moreover, the common campaigns of those two parties, i.e. the Bund and the Left were – as far as the social insurance was concerned - to bring some social gains for the workers of different nations. During a meeting of the Bund, the SDKPiL and the PPS-Left, which took place in Warsaw at the turn of February and March 1914, among the matters discussed was the idea to establish the all-workers health-insurance fund, the workers’ self-government in Warsaw, and to deepen the cooperation of the trade unions.

In spite of their advantage, the Jews almost up to the election day tried to reach a compromise with the National Concentration which put forward a candidature of Kucharzewski. In the *Appeal to the Jewish Voters*, a few days before the elections, one could read:

The Jewish population of Warsaw began the election campaign neither with the words of hatred, nor with the intention to evoke disputes [...]. To remove the misunderstanding which might have been caused by the advantage of the Jewish electors, the Jewish citizens manifested, from the very beginning, their desire to act in accordance with the Polish general public. "The Warsaw mandate should be given to a Pole (a Christian), a supporter of the equal rights for the Jews in the Kingdom and the Empire".⁹

Then, there were the same critical remarks about Kucharzewski, who proclaimed the necessity of an "economic crusade" against Jews, and about the policies of the National Concentration, which could be summarised as "all or nothing". *The Appeal* ... ended with the words that "only the uncompromising position of the Concentration may paralyse our good will and force us to elect the candidate of our own, and on our own responsibility".¹⁰

It is true that, as was a common opinion, Kucharzewski, the main rival of Dmowski, recommended during his campaign to fight "the Jews' dynamism" in various fields of economy. "The Poles, defending their economic status should be vigilant!" he said, yet he added that in the competition with Jews one should use only "honest and cultural means". After the elections when it turned out that he did not manage to persuade the Jewish electorate to vote for him, somehow in a gesture of revenge for electing Jagiełło, he changed his opinion. Kucharzewski thought the plans of the assimilators to be utopian but renounced the "Jewish row" and some of the Polish and Jewish commentators thought that – in spite of all that – it was advisable to support Kucharzewski [Zieliński 2005: 74].

Another newly elected deputy to the Duma from the Kingdom was, thanks to the votes of Jews and Germans, "the progressive physician" from Łódź, a member of the Society of Regulating the Jewish Emigration, Dr Majer Bomasz. That candidate of the Jewish Election Committee became in the Parliament a member of the Cadets' Fraction. Among the participants of the election campaign in Łódź there were also the SDKPiL, the Bund and the PPS-Lewica. These parties planned to create a common election block but the plans were not realised because of the opposition of the Social Democrats. The socialist won, however, in the elections of plenipotentiaries in the Łódź workers' curia (1 October 1912), and one of the seven mandates to the City Electorate Council went to Jakub Oberman from the Bund.

It is worthwhile saying a few words about Bomasz, particularly since he is a sort of a forgotten figure in the Polish-Jewish historiography. He was born in 1861 in a wealthy Jewish family in Lithuania and after finishing the Kaunas high school, he began medical studies at the Moscow University. For a few years (1885–1887) he had worked in Moscow clinics and then moved to the Grodno Province. He settled in Łódź in 1892, and stayed there until the elections to the Duma in 1912. He fought

⁹ Quote of "Gazeta Warszawska" 1912, No 123 [Zieliński 2005: 73].

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

in the Russian-Japanese war and participated in the Seventh All-Russia Congress of Zionism. Since his election, Bomasz had continued to keep in touch with the Jewish Community in Łódź, he initiated raising a few parliamentary questions to the Duma concerning both the boycott, and the legal situation of the Jews in Russia and in the Kingdom, presenting a huge historical knowledge and the knowledge of the Russian legislation (he spoke, *inter alia*, about the ban on purchasing the arable lands, the necessity of abolishing the zone of settlements and the percentage limits at schools and professional associations).¹¹ The MP from Łódź was also one of the protesters when the deputies from the Polish Circle tried, in vain, to revoke Jagiełło's mandate referring to the procedural issues. They based their objections on the fact that the Warsaw City Council shortened the period of the registration of voters and not all those eligible to vote could have participated in the elections. Most probably, it would have not altered the election results but it created a pretext for the members of the Circle to raise the issue. Bomasz, after the military operation had already been going on, in cooperation with N. M. Frydman, and not without the problems created by his colleagues from his parliamentary fraction, tried to intervene in the case of the treatment of the Jewish population by the military authorities and was active in helping the victims of the war.¹²

One of the first longer speeches delivered by the doctor concerned the Warsaw elections and was broadly reported in the Polish press. Bomasz, referring to the decision of the Jewish voters in Warsaw about supporting Jagiełło, was said to say, *inter alia*, that the Jews did not give in to the pressure, although some of the Poles threatening them with pogroms, thought they would. The reaction to these comments appeared in the "Rozwój" (The Progress), a periodical issued by the National Democracy where on 20 March 1913 a lengthy article was published under the title *The Villainous Insinuations of the Deputy Bomasz*:

Had those words been spoken by an uneducated person, had it been the statement of a stupid man who "was first "killed' and then they tried to drown him", the whole affair might have been treated as an evidence of his limited mental capabilities. When the statement comes, however, from a physician who takes responsibility for his deeds, there can be no justification. We only wish to ask that insinuator: when were Jews threatened with pogroms and annihilation? Please, prove it, show us the evidence. We do not want to appeal to Bomasz to retract such accusations since he is too mediocre a creature, too foul a man with whom the Polish nation should have nothing to do. It is worthy only to ask: how many people of that kind can be found among the Jews?¹³

The same, but even a more vulgar tone can be traced in an article in "Gazeta Poranna 2 Grosze" (The Morning Paper for 2 Pennies):

¹¹ GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 1, p. 35-37; GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 11, p. 10-11; GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 22, k. 9; GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 25, p. 2.

¹² The activity of Bomasz in the Duma see also: GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 11, lb.; GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 25.

¹³ GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 132.

Well, the Jewish community “needed to elect its own deputy from the city of Łódź, “a specialist in a secret ailments, a certain Dr Bomasz”. The MP, with a broad knowledge of human organs, turned out to be less skilful as far as “mouth cavity” goes and his speech did not satisfy even those who elected him.¹⁴

In turn, a journalist from “Nowy Kurier Łódzki” (The New Łódź Courier) wrote:

The Poles never threatened the Jews with pogroms since the Polish nation has never disgraced itself with such abominable deeds. We are sorry that we have to reveal the true nature of a deputy from Łódź but it is our duty to defend ourselves against the unjust accusations and insinuations of Dr Bomasz.¹⁵

Although in the shorthand notes on Bomasz’ address there are no direct statements on the threat of pogroms and annihilation, one may come to such conclusions while carefully reading them, and the arguments and examples recalled by the MP have not been thoroughly checked. For example, Bomasz described a situation that occurred in one of the villages where a fanatical anti-Semites set a house of a Jewish family afire with nine people inside it. In a suggestive manner he described when a twelve-year-old girl who managed to escape the fire, with tears in her eyes begged the watching peasants for a rescue but none of them responded. Only one of them said with a smile that “there is no need to rescue the Jews” (at that moment the Polish deputies reacted with saying that the accusation was not supported by any evidence).¹⁶

The physician from Łódź probably overemphasised his statement although the arguments and the way he used them were nothing extraordinary in the Duma; the similar techniques were practised by the sympathisers of the death squadrons (the black hundreds) accusing Jews of ritual murders, believing in the revelations manifested in the *Protocols of the Wise Men...* or the supporters of the “policy of the boycotts”.

Contrary to the situation in Warsaw, it was difficult to notice the symptoms of the pre-election fever in the provincial towns. For example, there were problems with appointing candidates in the Płock Province, and in the Piotrków Province; except for Łódź, the Jews did not put forward any candidates, and they did not vote for any list. There was also no single Jew on the lists of the preliminary candidates in the Lublin Province.

¹⁴ Quote of “Gazeta Poranna 2 Grosze” 1913, no. 80 [Zieliński 2005: 76]. The above words were a reference to Bomasz as a physician. He specialised in gynaecology and venereology.

¹⁵ GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 132.

¹⁶ GARF F. 9458, op. 1 d. 1, pp. 30–31. Feliks Kandel writes in his book about the cases of setting the Jewish houses in the villages afire as one of the elements or results of the post-election hysteria. He does not refer to the concrete examples, there is no information about it in other sources and it seems that these are too far-reaching conclusions [2002: 751].

* * *

In the Provinces of the Kingdom of Poland the mandates were secured by the Poles, and among them six deputies to the 3rd Duma. The newly elected MPs represented the same political fractions as their predecessors. In the particular Provinces these were: elected again – Jaroński (Radom), Nakonieczny (Lublin), Parczewski (Kalisz), Świeżyński (Kielce), Dymśza (Siedlce), Harusewicz (Łowicz); newly elected – Kiniorski who replaced Grabski (Warsaw), Gościcki who replaced Wąsowicz (Płock), Łempicki who replaced Żukowski (Piotrków). In the western Provinces those elected were: Święcicki and Father Maciejewski elected again in Vilna, Raczkowski who replaced Zawisza in Kaunas and Puttkamer who replaced Wańkiewicz in the Vilna Province. In the Warsaw Province, as a representative of the Russian population, Aleksejew was elected again, and in the Chełm Region, the electorate voted for Budiłowicz famous for his anti-Polish pamphlets. Bishop Eulogiusz who planned to candidate withdrew on the order of the Synod [Wierzchowski: 239-240]. It seemed that since in “the Polish representation” in the Duma, in spite of the defeat in Warsaw, the seats would be taken mostly either by the same people or the deputies who shared the views of the stepping down MPs of the 3rd Duma, there was no reason for alarm. Yet, those were the elections in Warsaw that decided about the later events or rather – became an excellent pretext for the National Democracy to undertake the activities against Jews.

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BIOGRAPHY

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