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RELATIONS BETWEEN ZIONISTS AND SUPPORTERS
OF JEWISH ASSIMILATION ON THE POLISH LANDS
AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH AND IN THE EARLY
TWENTIETH CENTURIES: AN OUTLINE OF THE ISSUE

The history of Zionism in Poland and its confrontation with the idea of assimilation is a history of a radical change of forces inside the Jewish political firmament. At the end of the nineteenth century, the assimilation of Jews on the Vistula was, on the one hand, a historically grounded phenomenon; however, on the other hand, it turned out to be powerless in the face of the new challenges of reality – including modern, racist anti-Semitism, as well as the contemporary nationalist movements aimed at creating independent nation states (for the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Ukrainians, etc.). At that time, a relatively young political movement came to the fore, gradually displacing the idea of assimilation. Just before the outbreak of the First World War, two political streams (among others) competed among the Jewish community in Poland.¹ Their struggle for influence manifested itself in a sharp polemic, one in which words were not used. In historical works and broadly understood journalism, both sides

¹ In this place, the author is thinking of Zionism and assimilation – the socio-political trends to which this article is devoted. It is well known that at the time in question, other political concepts also held sway among the Polish Jews: socialism, 'folkism', Bundism, religious groups, etc.

pointed out each other's mistakes, impure intentions and the lack of rational foundations for the programme they proclaimed.

In Europe, a polemical current had existed within the Jewish communities from the first half of the nineteenth century; at its centre was the question of whether the Jews were a nation. This was one of the issues that particularly troubled Jewish thinkers (and not only them), and these inquiries intensified after 1848, in connection with the changes brought about during the Spring of Nations.

On the territories of historical Poland, the official conflict between the supporters of assimilation and the supporters of Zionism flared up after the First World Zionist Congress, which took place in Basel on 29–31 August 1897. At that time, the programme of the Zionist movement was adopted, and the World Zionist Organisation was established.² This was tantamount to the proclamation of the modern Jewish national movement. At the end of the nineteenth century, the assimilationists criticised Zionism in harsh terms for its revolutionary nature and utopianism. In the following years, however, the Zionist movement steadily gained new supporters in the country, and the ranks of the assimilationists dwindled. On the eve of the First World War, Zionism was already one of the most important political forces among Polish Jews. The figure of the 'national Jew' was maturing – one who was proud of who he was and what kind of community he came from.

Until this time, the issue of the criticism directed by supporters of assimilation against various Jewish socio-political groups – the Orthodox, the Zionists and the socialists – has been widely discussed in Polish historiography. In this article, the author tries to present the opposite phenomenon – the Zionist critique of the idea of assimilation. The initial turning point has been taken as 1897, and 1914, i.e. the outbreak of the Great War, as the endpoint.

This narrative is based on sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: press, programme materials and brochures, and the whole has been supplemented

² The Basel Programme: 1) The deliberate advocacy of the colonisation of Palestine by Jewish farmers, artisans and manufacturers; 2) organising and unifying all Jewry through appropriate and general means, according to the legislation of a given country; 3) strengthening Jewish well-being and national awareness; 4) taking the preparatory steps to obtaining the government approvals needed to achieve the goal of Zionism. See J. Zineman, *Historia sjonizmu (od czasów najdawniejszych do chwili obecnej)*, Warszawa 1946, p. 129; W. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, New York 2003, p. 106. This specific programme soon came to be described as 'all-Zionist' [*ogólnosjonistyczny*] due to the ideological divisions within the Zionist movement.

with Polish and foreign literature. Polish historiography is characterised by serious shortcomings in research on the history of the Zionist movement in Poland.³ This article is a contribution to research on the relations between the Jewish political camps before the First World War.

Theodor Herzl, the chief ideologist of Zionism, wrote about the phenomenon of Jewish assimilation as follows:⁴

Assimilation, by which I understand not only the external adjustment of dress, the exact adoption of customs and language, but also identification with a common thinking and attitude in life. With this understanding, the assimilation of the Jews could only take place anywhere on the basis of a mixed marriage. However, this mixed marriage would have to be adopted by the majority as a necessity. Merely recognising such a marriage as having been permitted by law would be insufficient.⁵

Later in his argument, Herzl made it clear that authentic assimilation would be possible after the Jews had gained an adequate economic strength and social

³ It is worth paying attention to some of the latest publications on Zionism: D. Boniecka-Stępień, *Charakterystyka i rola religii w myśli syjonistycznej. Na podstawie tekstów Achad Ha-Ama i Josefa Chaima Brennera*, Warszawa 2020; P. Kendziorek, *Żydowski ruch spółdzielczy w Polsce w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. Ideologia i praktyka społeczna*, Warszawa 2020.

⁴ For more on the assimilation of Jews in Western Europe, see *Jewish Assimilation in Modern Times*, ed. B. Vago, Westview Press 1981; M.L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867–1914. Assimilation and Identity*, State University of New York Press Albany 1983; *Assimilation and community. The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. J. Frankel, S.J. Zipperstein, Cambridge University Press 1992; D. Hertz, *How Jews Became Germans. The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin*, Yale University Press 2007; A. Morris-Reich, *The Quest for Jewish Assimilation in Modern Social Science*, New York 2008; *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation, and Accommodation. Past Traditions, Current No.s, and Future Prospects*, ed. M. Mor, M. Philip, University Press of America 1992; R. Jakobowicz, *Jews and Gentiles. Anti-Semitism and Jewish Assimilation in German Literary Life in the Early 19th Century*, Lang 1992; T.M. Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold. Conversion and Radical Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, Princeton University Press 2015; P. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History. The Roles and Representation of Women*, University of Washington Press 1995; J.S. Sposato, *The Price of Assimilation. Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition*, Oxford University Press 2006; D.C.G. Lorenz, G. Weinberger, *Insiders and Outsiders. Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, Detroit–Michigan 1994; F. Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux. Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France*, University of Alabama Press 2003; M.R. Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation. A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair*, Oxford University Press 1971; M. Samuels, *Inventing the Israelite. Jewish Fiction in Nineteenth-Century France*, Stanford University Press 2010; A. Elon, *Bez wzajemności. Żydzi–Niemcy 1743–1933*, trans. K. Bratkowska, A. Geller, Warszawa 2012.

⁵ T. Herzl, *Państwo Żydowskie. Próba nowoczesnego rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej*, trans. J. Sużyn, Kraków 2006, p. 52.

position. This transformation was partially successful for a few Jewish aristocratic families (such as the Silbersteins and the Warburgs), who gained great influence and then joined noble Christian families through mixed marriages. Most Jews, however, belonged to the group of townspeople who worked to gain financial independence from the rest of society, so that they would not be perceived as 'parasites' (this was a frequent accusation made by anti-Semites in Germany, France and Hungary, among others). Another burden for assimilation was the constantly expanding Jewish proletariat and the masses in poverty. These groups would have no chance of being assimilated, which would further arouse anti-Semitism and cause further suffering for Jews in European countries.⁶

Herzl, author of *The Jewish State* (*Der Judenstaat*, 1896), showed that the process of assimilation was internally contradictory. Not only did it fail to provide Jews with normal conditions for development but, on the contrary, it actually stimulated new waves of anti-Semitism. Herzl's conviction of the failure of assimilation was confirmed by the Dreyfus case (1894) in France, which Herzl considered to be the country with the highest level of civilisation. The accusation of an assimilated Jew of treason on behalf of Germany, and then his public humiliation, made many observers, including Herzl himself, aware that there was hidden anti-Semitism in France, and that assimilation and unification with the French people were fictions.⁷ His book *The Jewish State* was written under the influence of the events in France, and heralded a turning point in the social life of Europe's Jews.⁸ Assimilation, which had previously been considered in Jewish progressive circles as a remedy for the so-called Jewish question, was to be confronted with intellectual competition: Zionism. From the turn of the twentieth century, the assimilation movement and Zionism found themselves in opposition to each other. At this point, a long and fierce polemic began between the supporters of these opposing concepts.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 52–53. For a more detailed analysis of Herzl's views, see J. Zouplán, "State-forming Zionism" and the Precedent for Leadership – T. Herzl, V. Jabotinsky and D. Ben-Gurion', *Asian and African Studies* 2004, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 28–49.

⁷ For recent studies on the Dreyfus case, see M. Burns, *France and the Dreyfus Affair: A Brief Documentary History*, Plunkett Lake Press 2019; A. Budzanowska, T. Pietrzykowski, *Wokół procesu Dreyfusa. Jednostka, ideologia, polityka*, Kraków 2020.

⁸ While formulating the idea of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl was inspired by the views of Leo Pinsker (1821–1891). See L. Pinsker, *Samowyzwolenie. Apel do Żydów (ze słowem wstępnyim Achad-Haama)*, Warszawa 1931.

This conflict of interest between the supporters of Zionism and assimilation, which began at the end of the nineteenth century in Western Europe, soon also appeared in Poland.⁹ Along with the development of Zionist organisations on the Vistula at the turn of the century, their ideological dispute with the already well-established assimilation movement intensified. The process of assimilation in the Congress Kingdom, West Prussia, Greater Poland and Galicia had many years of development behind it, as it had its roots in the first half of the nineteenth century. Zionism was a young political movement which was only just expanding the ranks of its supporters, and the assimilationist circles were disrespectful towards it.

The general course of action for the supporters of the Jewish national movement in Poland was set by the 1st World Zionist Congress initiated by Theodor Herzl.¹⁰

⁹ On the assimilation of Polish Jews, see S. Didier, *Rola neophitów w czasach Polski*, Warszawa 1934; S. Kowalski, *Żydzi chrzczeni*, Warszawa 1935; A. Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864–1897). Postawy, konflikty, stereotypy*, Warszawa 1989; T. Gąsowski, *Między gettem a światem. Dylematy ideowe Żydów galicyjskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Kraków 1997; A. Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech... Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, Warszawa 2006; ead., *W jednym stali domu. Koncepcje rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w publicystyce polskiej lat 1933–1939*, Warszawa 1998; J. Lichten, 'O asymilacji Żydów w Polsce od wybuchu pierwszej wojny światowej do końca drugiej wojny (1914–1945)', *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris) 1977, no. 42; id., 'Uwagi o asymilacji i akulturacji Żydów w Polsce w latach 1863–1943', *Znak* 1988, no. 5/6; J.J. Lipski, *Dwie ojczyzny – dwa patriotyzmy*, Warszawa 1984; B. Szwarzman-Czarnota, 'Od żydowskich Żydów do polskich Żydów. Wstęp do archeologii rodzinnej', in *Żydowski Polak, polski Żyd. Problem tożsamości w literaturze polsko-żydowskiej*, ed. A. Molisak, Z. Kołodziejska, Warszawa 2011; K. Sierakowska, *Rodzice, dzieci, dziadkowie... Wielkomijska rodzina inteligencka w Polsce 1918–1939*, Warszawa 2003; T.R. Weeks, 'Assimilation, nationalism, modernisation', in *Antisemitism and its opponents in modern Poland*, ed. R. Blobaum, Cornell University Press 2005; id., 'The Best of Both Worlds. Creating the Żyd-Polak', *East European Jewish Affairs* 2004, vol. 34, no. 2; Ł. Kapralska, 'Drogi z getta. Uwagi o procesach asymilacyjnych w społeczności Żydów galicyjskich', in *Ortodoksja. Emancypacja. Asymilacja. Studia z dziejów ludności żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich w okresie rozbiorów*, ed. K. Zieliński, M. Adamczyk-Grabowska, Lublin 2003; H. Kozińska-Witt, 'Żydzi. Polscy? Niemieccy? Szkic o tożsamości narodowej Żydów postępowych w latach sześćdziesiątych i siedemdziesiątych XIX w.', *Teksty Drugie* 1996, no. 6 (42), pp. 71–81; M. Soboń, *Polacy wobec Żydów w Galicji doby autonomicznej w latach 1868–1914*, Kraków 2011; E. Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, New York 1993; M. Wodziński, *Oświecenie żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec chasydyzmu. Dzieje pewnej idei*, Warszawa 2003; A. Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy. Akulturacja Żydów Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku*, Wrocław 2008; ead., 'Asymilacja, czyli bezradność historyka. O krytyce terminu i pojęcia', in *Wokół akulturacji i asymilacji Żydów na ziemiach polskich*, ed. K. Zieliński, Lublin 2010; M. Bułat, 'Teatr żydowski w świetle "Izraelity" w latach 1883–1905', *Pamiętnik Teatralny* 1992, no. 1–4, pp. 77–126; M. Szugiero, 'Emancypantka – Żydówka idealna? Dyskusja integracjonistów warszawskich w latach 1880–1896', in *Narody i polityka. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Jerzemu Tomaszewskiemu*, ed. A. Grabski, A. Markowski, Warszawa 2010. There is considerable literature on the subject of assimilation and acculturation of Polish Jews, both in Poland and abroad. The literature mentioned above is the basis for the topic under discussion.

¹⁰ The main organisers of the congress were the journalist Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the journalist Nathan Birnbaum (1864–1937) and the writer Max Simon Nordau (1849–1923).

In many speeches, made to 197 delegates from Zionist circles from Europe, the United States and Palestine (then under Turkish rule), he presented the most important issues for the Zionist movement. In addition to the issues of international relations and the related emigration of Jews to *Eretz Yisroel*, the cooperation among numerous Jewish organisations in various European countries, and the contemporary anti-Semitism which was the Jews' main problem, he also raised the issue of assimilation.

In one of his speeches in Basel, Herzl spoke of the assimilation movement among European Jews:

There must have been a note of sincere truth in our words, since we have often won sympathy even among those who had previously behaved indifferently or unkindly towards the Jews. Every honest national cause which does not conceal itself under a foreign mask, has the right to respect and tolerance on the part of other peoples, as long as it does not threaten them with anything. Let us not forget, even in the anti-Semitism which casts a pall over our times, that a nobler era preceded us, in which all the civilised nations granted us equal rights. The intentions were undoubtedly good, even though the results were insufficient. Was that our fault or that of others? There was probably blame on both sides, or rather one should blame the circumstances that arose in the old days and which neither the law nor regulations could remove. The laws were friendlier to us than the customs. And we lived to see a returning tide, an enormous surge of grief among the peoples who had just admitted us into their good graces. But from emancipation, which after all cannot be undone, and from anti-Semitism, the existence of which no one denies, we have drawn a new, important conclusion for ourselves. Emancipation could not have been aimed at stopping us from being Jews, for when we wanted to mingle with others, we were pushed away. Rather, the goal of emancipation was that we should prepare our own shelter for our liberated nation. We couldn't have done that earlier, so we will do it now, if we desire it with all our strength.¹¹

¹¹ T. Herzl, *Mowy ze zjazdów bazylejskich. Mowa inauguracyjna na drugim Kongresie Syonistów w Bazylei*, trans. 'H.J.', Warszawa 1900, pp. 11–12. For Herzl and the First World Zionist Congress in Basel, see L.J. Epstein, *The Dream of Zion. The Story of the First Zionist Congress*, New York–London 2016; A. Shapira, *History of Israel*, trans. A.D. Kamińska, Warszawa 2018. For older publications on the Basel congress see H. Haumann, *The First Zionist Congress in 1897. Causes, Significance, Topicality*, Karger 1997; M. Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War*, Cambridge University Press 1993.

From Herzl's words it is clear what the assimilation of Jews in Christian societies was, and why it failed. First of all, in the context of the attitude of Christians towards Jews, the 'customs' shaped over the centuries were stronger than 'laws' introduced over the previous few years such as political and social equality. For Herzl, assimilation was something insincere, a form of 'hiding', and the Christian majority was convinced of the deception and illusion inherent in the essence of assimilation.

Let us now see what Max Nordau, another precursor of political Zionism and a friend of Theodor Herzl, thought about assimilation. At the First World Zionist Congress he said:

I am forced to utter the painful words: The peoples who endowed the Jews with emancipation have deluded themselves as to their own feelings. In order to be able to effectively develop activity, there should have been an emancipation from emotions before it was renounced by the legislator. However, this was not the case. Indeed, quite the opposite. [...] The emancipation of the Jews is not a consequence of the awareness that a certain tribe has been treated in a grievously guilty manner, that a terrible harm has been done them, and that the time has come to repent for a thousand years of lawlessness; it is merely the result of the geometrically straightforward thinking of the French rationalists of the eighteenth century. [...] The rest of Europe followed the example of France, again not under the pressure of emotion, but because the civilised peoples felt a sort of moral necessity to assimilate the gains of the great revolution. [...] In this way, the Jews in Western Europe were emancipated not from an internal motivation, but as an imitation of the political fashion of the time; not because the peoples decided in their souls to extend a brotherly hand to the Jews, but because their spiritual guides professed a certain ideal of European civilisation which, among other things, required that the emancipation of Jews should be included in the legal code.¹²

From Nordau's argument it can be concluded that emancipation, which was in itself flawed, could not do the Jews any good in the future. Today, from a historical

¹² M. Nordau, *Mowy ze zjazdów syonistycznych w Bazylei*, Warszawa 1900, pp. 7–9.

perspective, we can see (as the nineteenth-century Zionists also noticed) that such false emancipation also gave rise to the movement of the ‘Jewish Enlightenment’, the *Haskalah*, whose luminaries had initiated the assimilation of Polish Jews in the first half of the nineteenth century. This process was particularly visible in the Warsaw community.¹³

When speaking of ‘emancipation’ in the context of the nineteenth century, Nordau probably also meant assimilation:

About 20 years ago, anti-Semitism once again spurted from the depths of the people’s soul in the West, and revealed to the astonished Jew his real position, which he had lost sight of. He could still vote in the election of the people’s representatives, while he was expelled from Christian associations and meetings, either gently or harshly. He still had the right to move from place to place, but at every step he encountered the sign: ‘No entry to Jews.’ He has always had the opportunity to fulfil all his civic duties, but he has been ruthlessly denied the rights that go beyond the limits of universal voting, those nobler rights, earned by his talent and abilities.

This is the situation of the emancipated Jew in Western Europe today. He has rid himself of his tribal qualities, but he has not, as they say to him, acquired the qualities of the other nations. He avoids his fellow tribesmen, because anti-Semitism has made him ashamed of them; meanwhile his fellows reject him as soon as he tries to get closer to them! He has lost the homeland of the ghetto, and the country of his birth does not want to be his homeland. So he has no ground under his feet and no bond with any community he could join as a desirable, eligible member. As for his fellow Christians, neither his essence nor his activities can count on justice, let alone kindness, and he has lost all communication with his fellow Jews; he feels that the world hates him and sees no place where he might find a livelier feeling when he seeks it and longs for it.¹⁴

¹³ Of the older, classic works, see H. Nussbaum, *Szkice historyczne z życia Żydów w Warszawie od pierwszych śladów pobytu ich w tem mieście do chwili obecnej*, Warszawa 1881. Of the more recent works, the following deserve special attention: Wodziński, *Oświecenie żydowskie* and Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy*. The topic of the *Haskalah* and the assimilation of Warsaw Jews also appeared in the collective work *Warsaw. The Jewish Metropolis. Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*, ed. G. Dynner, F. Guesnet, Leiden–Boston 2015.

¹⁴ Nordau, *Mowy ze zjazdów syjonistycznych*, pp. 12–13.

It can be concluded that Nordau's assessment of the situation of emancipated and assimilated Jews in Western European countries was accurate. As a journalist and writer, he had observed social life in Germany, France and England for many years. His insightful knowledge of relations among the communities allowed him to conclude that assimilation – preceded by emancipation – had failed. The only way to solve the 'Jewish question' was through a large-scale social and political movement – Zionism. The failure of the concept of assimilation was also evidenced by its ineffectiveness against anti-Semitism, which had not arisen as a problem arising from economic relations, but had continued uninterrupted in the cultural layer of Europe.¹⁵

Although he had been referring to the situation of the Western European diaspora, Nordau was in fact also referring to the issues of Eastern Europe and the Polish lands that are of particular interest to us in this article. The Jews who lived in Congress Poland or Galicia, and had at some point in their lives decided to be baptised, were still 'misfits', like the *marranos* in fifteenth-century Spain. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the emancipated Jews, despite completely adopting the customs of Polish Christians, were still 'foreign' to the majority of society; they functioned as the 'new Marranos.'¹⁶ The beginning of the changes was marked by the Basel Zionist Congress under Theodor Herzl.

¹⁵ Max Nordau wrote about assimilated/emancipated Jews: "This is the moral misery of the Jews, much more severe than the bodily one, because it haunts people who are more differentiated, proud and subtly sensitive. An emancipated Jew is unstable, insecure in his relations with his neighbours, fearful when dealing with strangers, distrustful of the hidden feelings of even his friends. He uses all his strength to suppress and exterminate, or at least laboriously hide, the individual features of his being, because he is afraid that this being may become known as Jewish, and he never wants to show himself as he really is, to be himself, in both every thought and feeling, as well as in the tone of the voice, the squint, and the arrangement of his fingers. Internally he becomes distorted, externally – unnatural, and in this way always comical, and for people with superior aesthetic demands – disgusting, like everything which is false". Nordau, *Mowy ze zjazdów syonistycznych*, p. 13.

¹⁶ Polish nationalist, conservative and clerical spheres quickly adopted the categories of 'ethnic Pole' and 'Catholic' as indicators of Polishness and being a member of the national community. A different position was adopted by the Polish socialists, for whom the factors of ethnicity and religion were not the main determinant of belonging to the 'Polish community'. Jerzy Holzer wrote about the Polish nationalist movement before 1914: "The movement declared the need to prepare society for the fight against the partitioning powers, but it lacked clarity as to the nature of this struggle. The Polish nation was called to oppose not only the partitioning powers, but also all its ethnically alien neighbours" (J. Holzer, *Mozaika polityczna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1974, p. 30). See also G. Krzywiec, *Polska bez Żydów. Studia z dziejów idei, wyobrażeń i praktyk antysemitycznych na ziemiach polskich początku XX wieku (1905–1914)*, Warszawa 2017.

Among the 197 delegates who attended the 1st World Zionist Congress in Basel, a large group were Zionists from centres located in the Polish lands.¹⁷ This group of political and social activists was important because they were to constitute one of the significant ‘transmission belts’ for Polish Zionism. According to the post-congress reports, the Polish territory was represented by 34 envoys. These were (according to the original list): Zygmunt Bychowski,¹⁸ doctor of medicine (Warsaw); J. Berger (Pińsk, today in Belarus); Zygmunt Bromberg¹⁹ (Tarnów); Emil Blumenfeld,²⁰ PhD and attorney-at-law (Jarosław); Israel Jasinowski,²¹ attorney-at-law (Warsaw); Adolf Korkis²² (Lwów, today Lviv in Ukraine); Józef Lourie, doctor of medicine (Warsaw); Grzegorz Lourie (Pińsk); Salomon Lourie (Pińsk); Aron Markus²³ (Cracow); M. Moses (Katowice); Noach Finkelstein²⁴ (Brześć Litewski, today Brest-Litovsk in Belarus); Jozua Farbstein²⁵ (Warsaw); B. Fernhof²⁶

¹⁷ Here I am referring to the historical lands belonging to Poland at the end of the 18th century, which were to be incorporated into the Second Polish Republic in the future.

¹⁸ Zygmunt Bychowski (Szneur Załmen) (1865–1934), doctor, neurologist, juror of the city of Warsaw (1923–34), Jewish social activist and Zionist.

¹⁹ This was most likely Zygmunt Bromberg-Bytkowski (1866–1923). Bromberg was a poet, playwright, essayist, art critic, literary historian, and above all a Zionist.

²⁰ Emil Blumenfeld (dates unknown), in 1902–06, 1906–12, and 1912–18 he was a lay judge of the municipal council of Jarosław. During his second term of office, he was the chairman of the law committee and the gas committee.

²¹ Real name Izrael (Izydor) Jasinowski (1840 or 1842–1917), a Warsaw lawyer, one of the pioneers of Zionism in Poland. For more information see [http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Jasinowski_Izrael_\(Izydor\)](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Jasinowski_Izrael_(Izydor)), accessed 30 October 2016.

²² Real name Adolf Abraham Korkis (1865 or 1869–1922), a Zionist activist, studied law at the University of Lwów. He quickly became one of the leading Zionist ideologues in Galicia. Co-founder and publisher of *Przyszłość* [The Future], the first Zionist periodical in Polish, (1892–1895), he was also an editor of the magazine *Wschód* [East]. For more information see [http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Korkis_Abraham_\(Adolf\)](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Korkis_Abraham_(Adolf)), accessed 30 October 2016.

²³ Aron Markus (1843–1916), a Hasidic scholar, writer and journalist, he became a supporter of Zionism. Raised in Hamburg, he settled in Cracow in the Podgórze district. In the years 1898–1909, he published the weekly *Krakauer Jüdische Zeitung*, in which he tried to reconcile political Zionism with the concepts for the colonisation of Palestine promoted by A.A. Sala from Tarnów. For more, see [http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Markus_\(Marcus\)_Aron](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Markus_(Marcus)_Aron), accessed 30 October 2016.

²⁴ Noe (Noach) Finkelsztajn (1871–1946), journalist, publisher, Zionist activist. In the years 1906–14 he published the weekly *Jidishes Vochtblat*. For more, see [http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Finkelstein_\(Finkelsztajn\)_Noe_\(Noach\)](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Finkelstein_(Finkelsztajn)_Noe_(Noach)), accessed 30 October 2016.

²⁵ Joshua (Szyja) Heszal Farbstein (Farbsztejn) (1870–1948), Zionist politician, one of the main activists of the *Mizrachi* party (*Organizacja Syjonistów Ortodoksów Mizrachi*, Mizrachi Orthodox Zionist Organisation). In the years 1916–18 he was the chairman of the Zionist Organisation in Poland, a juror on Warsaw City Council (1916–26), and a member of the Polish parliament (1919–27). For more, see [http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Farbstein_\(Farbsztejn\)_Jozua_\(Szyja\)_Heszal](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Farbstein_(Farbsztejn)_Jozua_(Szyja)_Heszal), accessed 30 October 2016.

²⁶ The Polish Judaic dictionary (*Polski słownik judaistyczny*) says that a certain Izaak Fernhof, a writer and publisher in Hebrew, lived and worked in Eastern Galicia. He worked as a teacher in Buczacz, Złoczów

(Monasterzyska; today Ukraine, until 1939 Tarnopol province, Buczacz powiat); J.L. Goldberg (Vilnius); Alexander Hausmann²⁷ (Lwów); Leon Horodisch (Brześć Litewski); Beniamin Spira (Cracow); Nachum Sokołów²⁸ (Warsaw); Beniamin Safrin²⁹ (Monasterzyska, today Ukraine); Edward Schwager³⁰ (Tarnów); Salomon Schiller³¹ (Lwów); Abraham Salz³² (Tarnów); Adolf Stand³³ (Lwów); Fr. Marie Sokołów (Warsaw);

and Stanisławów. However, there is no record of his Zionist activities. Perhaps it was another person from his family, or he himself undertaking activities have so far not been recorded (http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Fernhof_Izaak, accessed 30 October 2016).

²⁷ Alexander Hausmann (dates unknown), one of the leaders of the Zionist organisation in Lwów before 1918. During the Polish-Ukrainian conflict over Lwów, he was taken hostage by the Polish army and imprisoned in Przemyśl. J. Tennenblatt, Leon Reich and Michael Ringel were imprisoned with him. According to the Polish side, they were to serve as guarantees of the Jewish side's loyalty during the battles with the Ukrainians (<http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/search.aspx?query=Alexander+Hausmann>, accessed 30 October 2016).

²⁸ Nachum Sokołów (Nahum Sokolow) (1859/61–1936), writer, journalist, Zionist leader. In the years 1896–1902, he was a collaborator and editor of the assimilationist magazine *Izraelita*, but this ceased because Sokołów was inclined towards Zionism. He devoted himself to activity in the Zionist movement, and in 1907 he became a member of the office of the World Zionist Organisation. For more, see http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Sokolow_Nachum, accessed 31 October 2016; F. Sokołów, *Nahum Sokołów. Życie i legenda*, Kraków 2006; S. Kling, *Nachum Sokolow. Servant of His People*, Whitefish, MT, 2012.

²⁹ The Polish Judaic Dictionary contains a note most probably referring the son of the above-mentioned Benjamin Safrin: Horace (Hirszy) Safrina, who was a poet, translator, actor and director; he died in Łódź in 1980 ([http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Safrin_Horacy_\(Hirszy\)](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Safrin_Horacy_(Hirszy)), accessed 31 October 2016).

³⁰ Edward Schwager (dates unknown) came from Tarnów, was a Zionist activist. In 1884, as a high-school student, he corresponded with senior Zionist activists in Vienna and exchanged letters with Abraham Salz. Schwager organised a reading room in Tarnów to promote Zionist literature, and also initiated the organisation of a Jewish youth circle in his hometown. Abraham Chomet, a historian and activist of Zionism in Tarnów, called Edward Schwager “a pioneer of Zionist thought in Tarnów” (<http://www.muzeum.tarnow.pl/artykul.php?id=29&typ=>, accessed 31 October 2016).

³¹ Salomon Schiller (1861–1925), a well-known Zionist activist and Hebrew-language journalist, director of a Hebrew high-school in Jerusalem. After his death, the press wrote about him: “The deceased was one of the most beautiful figures in the Zionist movement of Eastern Lesser-Poland. Born in Białystok, he came to Lwów as a pupil of the *Beth ha-Midrash*, where he devoted himself to university studies and Zionist work. Salomon Schiller of blessed memory served as creator of the ideology of the Jewish revival movement. In collaboration with Adolf Stand of blessed memory and Dr. Korkis contributed greatly to the development of the Zionist movement. In the organ of the Zionists of Lesser Poland, *Przyszłość*, he published a series of articles entitled *The National Existence of the Jews*, which then appeared in a separate pamphlet and became the canon of faith of the youth of that time. Schiller was also a pioneer of the Hebrew movement in Lesser Poland. When the Hebrew high school in Jerusalem was opened, the deceased took over as director of that institution, moving permanently to Jerusalem” (‘Błp. Salomon Schiller,’ *Nowy Dziennik*, 6 November 1925, no. 247, p. 3).

³² Abraham Salz (1864–1941), a Zionist activist from Tarnów, he propagated Zionist ideas in Galicia, and published in the Lwów Zionist newspaper *Przyszłość* (Central Zionism Archive in Jerusalem, A2/86. For more, see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Salz, accessed 31 October 2016).

³³ Adolf Stand (1870–1919), journalist, Zionist activist, member of the Austrian State Council. For more, see <http://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/adolf-stand>, accessed 31 October 2016.

M. Uriaschsohn (Grodno, today Belarus); Józef Mohylewer³⁴ (Białystok); Dawid Malz³⁵ (Lwów); Hirsch Mordkowitz (Równe, today Ukraine); A. Neuschul (Wilno, today Vilnius in Lithuania); Samuel Poznański³⁶ (Warsaw); A. Perlis (Wilno); Saul Pinchas Rabinowicz³⁷ (Warsaw); Litman Rosenthal (Białystok).³⁸

The aforementioned delegates played a significant role in transferring the idea of political Zionism to Poland. They represented Jewish communities from the largest Polish cities: Warsaw, Cracow, Vilnius and Lwów. Their activity in the emerging modern Zionist movement in Poland shaped the attitude of the future intelligentsia and Zionist activists towards Jewish affairs, including the assimilationist tendency.

In 1899, Henryk Nusbaum³⁹ expressed the opinion towards Zionism of the group who supported assimilation:

The idea of Zionism, i.e. the striving to strengthen or awaken the sense of national identity among the Jews, that is, the principle that in every state, in every nation they constitute a nation within a nation, has been spreading in recent times with seemingly frightening force. [...] Such a reaction, however, is neither tangential nor rational, and we are convinced that this is a temporary madness, which owes its existence mainly to a handful of agitators, full of enthusiasm perhaps, but deprived of a deeper understanding and idea of what Judaism is, and of the obligations of the holiest Jews towards the countries they inhabit.

In our country, in recent years, Zionism has begun to spread very greatly among the younger (unfortunately) intelligentsia in general, and especially among the youth at university. This sad symptom seems to us to be the result of the following

³⁴ Real name Samuel Mohylewer (1824–98), rabbi, protagonist of the Zionist movement in Poland, activist of the *Chibat Syjon* organisation. For more, see [http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Mohylewer_\(Mohilewer\)_Samuel_\(Szmul_Szmuel\)](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Mohylewer_(Mohilewer)_Samuel_(Szmul_Szmuel)), accessed 31 October 2016.

³⁵ Dawid Malz (1862–1936), Zionist writer and journalist in Eastern Galicia, co-founder and president of the Galician Zion association based in Lwów (1895), participated in the first two World Zionist Congresses. For more, see http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Malz_Dawid, accessed 31 October 2016.

³⁶ Samuel Abraham Poznański (1864–1921), preacher, historian, biographer, Zionist activist. For more, see http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Poznanski_Samuel_Abraham, accessed 31 October 2016.

³⁷ Saul Pinchas Rabinowicz (1845–1910), historian, writer, activist of the *Chowewej Syjon* movement, propagator of Hebrew language and writing. For more, see http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Rabinowicz_Saul_Pinchas, accessed 1 November 2016.

³⁸ *Zionisten-Congress in Basel (29, 30 und 31 August 1897)*. *Officielles Protocoll*, Vienna 1898, pp. 269–75.

³⁹ The son of Hilary Nussbaum, he lived from 1849 to 1937.

circumstance: [...] At home, apart from being religious, consisting mainly in fulfilling the rites of the order with great zeal, the young have not heard about any broader ideals, least of all about a sense of patriotism. [...] Not having Polish national ideals implanted at home, young Jews, who are also considered strangers by their Christian colleagues, also try to create some moral leverage for themselves, and having learned only that they are Jews, they gather almost feverishly under the banner of Zionism, which in their understanding has created, and for them has raised, a sublime national ideal. In a word, completely alien to the Polish national feeling, thirsting for a sublime national feeling, they create an artificial Jewish national ideal. A psychologically noble, but mistaken motive.⁴⁰

Nusbaum argued that the ideals being conveyed to Jewish youth should be exclusively Polish and strictly patriotic. In his opinion, Jews should draw other conclusions from their cultural tradition than those leading to an increased sense of Jewish national identity. The 'historical threads' connecting the Jews of old and their contemporaries should lead to the abandonment of the Jewish national identity in favour of the national duty of uniting with the inhabitants of the countries where Jews lived. The Jewish intelligentsia should radiate Polish patriotism to the Orthodox Jewish community. Nusbaum's views were clearly idealistic; this promoter of assimilation assumed that over the passage of time, the Christians would remove all legal and moral restrictions in relation to the Jews. He clearly emphasised the phenomenon of 'civilisational progress' which would eliminate anti-Semitism, chauvinism and religious intolerance, popular prejudices and cultural exclusivity. The final victory of the human rights and values – which, as he pointed out, he himself professed – was inevitable. For these reasons, among others, Zionism would be unnecessary in the long term.

On the subject of Jewish nationality, Nusbaum wrote:

[...] the thought of rebuilding Zion in the name of religious ideals cannot withstand criticism; what, then, are the aspirations for this reconstruction in the name of national ideals? Are the Jews a nation today – a nation without a territory? Without a special form of political existence? Without a living tongue? Truly no! no! and no! The Jews

⁴⁰ H. Nusbaum, *Głos antysyjonisty do polskiej inteligencji żydowskiej zwrócony*, Kraków 1899, pp. 1–2.

today are not a nation in the real sense of the word, and this conviction should penetrate them to the marrow of their bones, to the deepest sinews of their spiritual sense. Two thousand years ago, the Jews ended their lives as a real nation in the most glorious and most noble way, because as spokesmen of spirit, truth and light, they succumbed to the overwhelming brutal force, error and darkness of paganism.⁴¹

For most of the assimilationists, Jews were then a cultural and religious conglomerate, not a nation. In the opinion of Nusbaum, “the domain of the Jews today is not Palestine, nor Syria, nor the shores of Lake Asphaltites [the Dead Sea] – the domain of the Jews today is the land of powerful spirituality, and this offends the notion of Judaism, which wanted to see its followers today as a nation resurrected and pressed into dwarfish forms of a real state”⁴²

Regarding the distaste or lack of recognition expressed by his Polish fellow citizens, Nusbaum recommended – despite it all – love, loyalty and respect. It seems that he was not fully aware of the state of Christian-Jewish relations either on Polish soil or in the neighbouring countries, among the Germans, Hungarians and Russians. Like the entire assimilationist movement, he displayed a theoretical, idealistic approach to Jewish issues. This was opposed by the Zionists, who perceived assimilation as a threat to Jews. National-minded Jews looked to the future, while their assimilated brothers limited themselves to ‘here and now’, without presenting any realistic concepts for solving the problems of the Jewish community.

Contrary to the representatives of the assimilationist movement, the Zionists acted dynamically, thanks to which they gained the support of crowds of youth and young Jewish intelligentsia, including in Galicia. In the 1890s, the young generations who had experienced poverty, repulsion by the Christian majority and many ills of everyday life in a modernising reality, departed from the patterns of behaviour displayed by the older generation (i.e. the assimilationists).⁴³ The press which

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 17–18.

⁴² Ibid., p. 19.

⁴³ For more, see K. Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu. Świadomość, kultura i socjalizacja polityczna młodzieży żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Kraków 2020. The author described the same or similar dilemmas of young people who were critical of the customs and behaviour of their parents in the years 1918–39. In my opinion, similar intergenerational mechanisms were operating in the last two decades preceding the outbreak of the First World War.

promoted assimilation began to lose readers, and some titles even disappeared from the market (such as *Ojczyzna*). In Lwów, the Zion Society (*Towarzystwo "Syjon"*)⁴⁴ published a leaflet entitled 'What should the Jewish youth programme be?'. The main slogan of the Society's programme was "Jews of all countries, show solidarity! Down with the convenient assimilationist masquerade! Down with the obsequious musician Jankiel⁴⁵ and his admirers!" This trend was promoted, for example, by the Zionist periodicals *Przyszłość* (Future)⁴⁶ and *Hashakhar*, based in Lwów, which were addressed to Jewish youth in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland (in Warsaw, it was sold in J. Merecki's bookstore at 49 Chmielna Street).⁴⁷

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the assimilation movement was in retreat in Galicia, as in Congress Poland, clearly losing out to Zionism. In place of newspapers promoting the model of 'the Pole of the Mosaic faith', magazines appeared promoting the separation of Jews from Poles, Jewish culture, language, religion, politics, as well as emigration to Palestine, where an independent homeland was to be established – *Eretz Yisroel*.

Many representatives of the new generation rejected the assimilationist program as offending the dignity of the Jew.

The assimilationist program included only one point, i.e. the task of Polonising the Jews. People started to feel and think in Polish, which went hand in hand with changing their unsightly-sounding names and surnames, decorating their empty heads with four-cornered caps [*konfederatki*], making patriotic speeches, etc. The Poles like incense, so they willingly accept [our] servile fawning, devoid

⁴⁴ The Syjon Society became the nucleus of the future Zionist political party; it also produced many activists who after the First World War led the Zionist Organisation of Eastern Lesser-Poland and the Zionist Organisation of Western Lesser-Poland and Silesia. For more, see J. Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia*, Cambridge University Press 2012; R. Rubin, *Voices of a People. The Story of Yiddish Folk Song*, University of Illinois Press 2000; F. Solomon, *Blicke auf das galizische Judentum. Haskala, Assimilation und Zionismus bei Nathan Samuely, Karl Emil Franzos und Saul Raphael Landau*, Vienna 2012.

⁴⁵ This refers to the figure of Jankiel the Jew from Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*.

⁴⁶ W. Feldman, *Asymilatorzy, syjoniści i Polacy. Z powodu przelomu w stosunkach żydowskich w Galicyi*, Kraków 1893, p. 16. The author of the programme was Dr. Abraham Korkis; the pamphlet was published thanks to the support of his associates, Dr. Gerszon Zipper and Dr. David Malz. See A. Korkis, 'Jakim być powinien program młodzieży żydowskiej?', in *Almanach i leksykon żydostwa polskiego*, vol. 2, ed. R. Goldberger, Lwów 1938, pp. 9–29.

⁴⁷ Vasył Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv, *Hashakhar* 1907, reference number Ж39133.

of any ethical and real basis. However, one advantage of this [tendency among the Poles] should be mentioned – they do pay generously for these tirades.⁴⁸

The promotion of similar practices by the assimilationist movement aroused increasing opposition among Polish Jews. This rebellion against such behaviour was supported by the progress of the secular sciences, the development of humanism, nationalism, and cultural self-awareness. It is worth noting that in the first half of the nineteenth century and later, assimilation was supported by Jews who had received a traditional religious education, which made modern trends such as nationalism alien to them. It developed at a much slower pace among Jews than among other European nations; therefore the Jewish national consciousness was formed a little later than, for example, that of the Polish people. A similar delay occurred in the case of the Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian peoples.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, there were several bases on which a separate Jewish national consciousness was able to arise, namely history, religion and culture. In the case of language the matter was more problematic, because Yiddish was not recognised by the Zionists. This language was also discriminated against by the state authorities (e.g. in Austria-Hungary), which treated it as an unofficial jargon. Meanwhile, Hebrew had yet to be disseminated through schools, literature and the press. In this perspective, at the turn of the twentieth century, Zionism became a manifestation of national identity, a sign of a nationalist current that needed to be developed and deepened.

The process of Zionism displacing the assimilationist current visible at the beginning of the twentieth century was less dynamic in Galicia than in tsarist Poland. The state anti-Semitism intensifying in the Russian Empire, stoking hatred against the Jewish population, and the numerous pogroms committed there contributed to the final discredit of the assimilationist trend in the eyes of many Jews. In the Zionists' opinion, assimilation had not been able to prevent such disasters as, for example, the Chişinău pogrom (1903) and a series of successive anti-Semitic incidents in the lands ruled by the Romanov dynasty.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Feldman, *Asymilatorzy*, pp. 22–23.

⁴⁹ S.M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, Philadelphia 1920, pp. 40–67.

The already quoted Max Nordau voiced his opinions on assimilation, and these became an element of the ideology also professed by the Polish Zionists. Let us listen once again to his voice:

But they know [the assimilationists who argued that Jews must live in the diaspora and play the role of moral teachers – author] that it is impossible to disseminate [these ideas], because under these conditions superstition, hatred and contempt will always persecute the Jews, obstructing their development or forcing them to imitate foreign ethnic groups, making the Jews, the cities that should have served as prototypes – into mediocre or bad copies of foreign models. These Jews, therefore, direct their efforts according to a well-planned plan to prevent the Jewish people from becoming a normal nation once again, one which lives on its own soil and performs the economic, spiritual, ethical and political functions of a civilised nation.⁵⁰

The accusations made by the Zionist ideologues against the concept of assimilation testified to their negative attitude towards the assimilationists. The Zionists put forward similar or identical arguments against the option of assimilation for the successive decades until the outbreak of the Second World War. In the interwar period, when the assimilation camp no longer posed any threat to the Zionist movement, the Zionists' arguments were directed at those Jewish politicians who supported the cultural autonomy of the Jews in Poland and rejected emigration to Palestine.

Nordau accurately characterised the assimilated Jews' attitude towards Zionism (although he was speaking of Western European Jews, this model also obtained in Poland):

Many Jews have already completely broken with Jewry in their soul; they will probably do so soon and formally, and if not, their children or grandchildren will. They want to merge completely with their fellow Christians; so it bothers them very much that the other Jews, right next to them, are openly proclaiming

⁵⁰ *Syonizm d-ra Maksa Nordau'a*, transl. into Polish with notes from the author by M. Jahrblum, Łódź 1903, pp. 8–9.

their national identity. They fear that in their home country of which they are free citizens, they will henceforth be considered strangers. They fear that this situation will become even worse if a significant part of the Jews openly demand the rights of an independent nation for themselves, especially when a political and cultural centre for Jews is actually created somewhere in the world, in which millions of nationally united Jews will be centred.⁵¹

It was the sense of fear in the assimilationist environment that deepened the conflict with Zionism. For many years, the assimilated Jews had built up their position in Polish society, made careers, and worked in liberal parties;⁵² they tried to speak with the same voice as the Poles. Young Zionism, on the other hand, posed a threat, undermined the authority of assimilation, and involved it in a natural conflict of interest in the struggle for the soul of the average Jew. Moreover, those who had become assimilated feared reprisals from the Polish side, which might regard Zionism as favouring the partitioning powers and betraying Polish national interests.

An unidentified Pole – or, which seems more likely, an assimilated Jew – wrote the following about the situation in Lwów:

How this idea spreads (Zionism) is proved by the *East* itself [*Wschód*, a Zionist periodical], which is now celebrating six years of existence, coming from very small beginnings to become a serious weekly today. Its content is information, from the first to the last page, about the complete separateness of the Jewish society, about the need to return to the ghetto in the modern sense, and to mark this separateness in everything, about breaking the bond of communication existing with Polish society in any form, to such an extent that it even calls for to establish a separate Jewish ‘Sokół’ [youth sports and gymnastic organisation],

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

⁵² Assimilated Jews functioned in circles whose ideological face derived from Varsovian positivism, European liberalism and the tradition of French radicalism. Liberal formations were particularly active in the Kingdom of Poland. Until 1914, the Progressive Democratic Union (established in 1905) and the Polish Progressive Party (established in 1906) operated in the Russian partition. Of all the Polish political groups, the liberals were the least numerous. See: K. Mateuszek, ‘Polskie formacje liberalne (1905–1989)’, *Historia i Polityka* 2019, no. 27 (34), pp. 10–11.

to support Jewish trade and industry, and to establish a Jewish university. And the fruit and result of this work: in politics, the struggle to recognise the Jewish nationality and separate electoral constituencies, to try and create in schools a denominational high-school [*gymnazjum*] with German as the language of instruction, and with Hebrew and Hebrew antiquity as separate subjects.⁵³

The author of this statement was inclined to anti-Zionism, sketching a frightening picture for the reader. In his opinion, Zionism was aiming to force the assimilated Jewish youth out of the womb of their Polish schools, which would immediately result in a conflict between Poles and Jewish nationalists. Zionists were also attributed a series of negative traits, especially selfishness and national chauvinism, the victims of which would above all be those Jews associated with Polishness. For example, Zionist youth allegedly avoided having their high school graduation photos taken together with their Polish colleagues: instead of the school emblem or the white eagle, they were photographed separately with the Star of David, and did not participate in Polish patriotic ceremonies. Zionist students made special demands of their schools: they demanded, for example, the introduction of two additional hours for learning the Hebrew language.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the Zionist magazine *Moriah*, addressed to Jewish students, wrote that “assimilation is a completely outdated direction, and its representatives are outcasts and traitors of the Jewish nation, doomed to disgrace by their own, and only tolerated by the Poles.”⁵⁵

The analysis of the available printed materials shows that mature Zionist activists had a more moderate approach towards assimilation. However, the material published by students for young people was definitely more radical in content, and was intransigent, sometimes even offensive, towards assimilationists. This was due to the radicalism of views and great enthusiasm typical of young people, which compensated for the gaps in their political knowledge and life experience. Many young Zionists assumed that radicalism, tenacity and dynamism in action

⁵³ ST. K. [S. Kossowski], *Kwestya syońska w murach szkoły (uwagi na czasie)*, Lwów 1906, pp. 8–9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

would soon implement the great idea of an independent Jewish state. The realities, however, quickly cooled their hot heads.

Students in higher education largely contributed to the mass spread of Zionism in Galicia. The first official national-Jewish student rally was held on 25 July 1899 in Lwów, and its organisers were as follows: the Academic Reading Room of the Syon Society from Lwów, the Bar Kochba Association of Galician Academics from Vienna, the Academic Club of the Ezra Izrael Society from Stanisławów, the Academic Club of the Beth Israel Society from Kolomiya, the Academic Union of the Bnej Zion Society from Jarosław, and the Hashachar Academic Society from Cracow. One hundred students participated in the event. The following spoke during the assembly: Kruhl, president of the Bar Kochba Association of Galician Academics in Vienna; Schissler from Stanisławów, Schalit and Schiffer from Cracow, Löwenherz from Lwów, Berner from Jarosław and Zillenbaum from Stanisławów. At the rally, a resolution was passed calling on all Jewish students to unite in one organisation. The authorities of the universities in Cracow and Lwów were also requested to recognise Jewish nationality in such a way that it would be reflected in the university documentation.⁵⁶

The strength of the student Zionist organisations in Galicia grew every year. The Zionists showed their potential on 27 July 1905 in Cracow, on the occasion of the first anniversary of Theodor Herzl's death; they organised a march that gathered over a thousand people supporting the ideas of Zionism.⁵⁷

Even a few years before the outbreak of the First World War, it became clear that Zionism had won the struggle against assimilation for 'Jewish souls'. The elections to the Vienna Parliament in 1907 made Jews clearly aware of which political direction the 'Jewish tomorrow' would follow. One may be tempted to say that it was from this moment that the complete collapse of the assimilationist parties in Poland began – not only in Galicia, but also in Congress Poland,

⁵⁶ Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (National Archives in Kraków), Starostwo Grodzkie Krakowskie (Kraków County Office), 250, pp. 13–26.

⁵⁷ K. Rędziński, I. Wrona-Meryk, 'Żydowskie stowarzyszenia studenckie we Lwowie (1890–1918)', *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie* 2013, vol. 22, pp. 551–52. Valuable recollections from this period were published in a special gazette (*Nasz Tydzień. Jednodniówka "Pierwszego Tygodnia Akademika Żydowskiego w Małopolsce Wschodniej"*), 9 February 1929). For more on the subject of Zionist sports organisations, see *Z dziejów kultury fizycznej mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w XX wieku*, ed. T. Jurek, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2007.

where Zionism pushed the assimilationists to the margins of Jewish political life.⁵⁸ It should be added here that despite the rapid development of the Zionist movement, traditionalists and Orthodox Jews still predominated among Polish Jews, especially in the Russian partition (taking their influence among the masses into account).

In Galicia, the assimilationists (under the banner of 'the Polish Jewish organisation'; after the elections they planned to join the Polish Circle [*Koło Polskie*]), the Zionist party, the independent candidate Dr. Adolf Gross in Cracow and the Social Democrats (the Jewish wing of the Austrian Social Democratic party) all stood for election. In total, the Zionists put forward 19 candidates in 21 districts, the Socialists nominated 12 candidates in 12 districts, and the 'Polish Jewish organisation' 10 candidates in 9 constituencies. Together with the independent Adolf Gross, the Jewish parties put forward candidates in 28 constituencies (19 urban and 9 rural), nominating 42 candidates for deputies.⁵⁹

The election result was unsuccessful for the assimilationists. The Zionists were supported by the Jewish masses, and in some districts even Ukrainians who did not want to vote for Poles cast their ballots for them. The Zionists received the greatest support in towns and cities, and it was only weaker in the rural districts. In total, 62,609 votes were cast for all the Jewish candidates: 24,274 for the Zionists, 18,885 for the assimilationists, and 17,581 for the independent candidates.

Observers noticed that the Jewish community's interest in the elections was greater than ever, and their political mobilisation exceeded all expectations. One commentator wrote:

The former belief that the Jewish population, who owed so much to the Polish nation, was – either because of their allegedly growing attachment to us and their understanding of our situation, or because of their economic dependence on the Polish population – a mostly loyal and benevolent element in the field

⁵⁸ At the turn of May 1903, Zionism as a political trend was banned in the Russian Empire, because the highest authorities considered it to be subversive, with the potential to destroy the social order (Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie [State Archives in Lublin], Hrubieszowski Zarząd Powiatowy [Hrubieszów Poviata Board], 32).

⁵⁹ E. Dubanowicz, *Stanowisko ludności żydowskiej w Galicyi wobec wyborów do Parlamentu Wiedeńskiego w r. 1907*, Lwów 1907, pp. 9–12.

of national politics, can no longer be maintained. The idea of Jewish political separateness, imported from the outside and which has found more and more fertile ground in the Jewish masses; represented mainly but not exclusively by the Zionist party; an idea which pushed the Jewish masses, so far indifferent to practical domestic politics, to actively participate in the electoral struggle.⁶⁰

In Poland, assimilation suffered a devastating defeat because of its helplessness in the face of the problems faced by Jews in everyday life. Assimilated and liberal Jewish activists predicted that modernisation – political equality and the development of education that was intended to discredit anachronistic prejudices such as anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism – would lead to the Jews merging with the Polish population. The supporters of assimilation were convinced that in this way, Jews would gradually become Poles. However, the assimilation programme lacked a recipe for resolving the social problems that the Jewish liberals could not cope with. Only the wealthiest strata of the Jewish community enjoyed political and economic freedom, and the poor masses and the proletariat continued to be the object of hostility from the Christian majority.⁶¹ In such a situation, Zionism was able to provide an extremely attractive socio-political offer.

The question of the relationship between Zionism and assimilation requires further research. The subject of the rivalry of various political currents among the Polish Jews should similarly be considered, for example between socialists and Zionists, or between socialists and supporters of assimilation.

Conclusions

The relationship between the Zionists and the assimilationists in Poland showed that the nineteenth-century idea of assimilation turned out to be an anachronism. It had only been effective in narrow social circles, and for most it proved worthless. Thus, the modern political current triumphed, which – in keeping with the spirit of the times – took on a mass character. Contrary to assimilation, Zionism strongly opposed anti-Semitism and the restriction of the rights of the Jewish population. Theodor Herzl and those inspired by his idea gained considerable support among

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 37–39.

⁶¹ M.H. Horwitz, *W kwestyi żydowskiej*, Kraków 1907, pp. 6–7.

Polish Jews who, as stated above, were regaining their dignity. This support was especially clear among the young, who owed their prospects for a better tomorrow to Zionism.

Zionists often spoke in hostile terms about supporters of assimilation, not only to the Polish, but also to the Russian and German cultures. Gradually, the polemics turned into press attacks, sometimes quite violent. The supporters of Zionism turned out to be the most realistic about the socio-political situation of Jews in Europe. Contrary to the supporters of assimilation, they succeeded in meeting Jewish expectations and hopes.

It can be said that historically the assimilation movement was doomed to collapse. The realities of the twentieth century turned out to be different than the previous century. Anti-democratic and anti-liberal political movements emerged in Europe, themselves taking on a mass character and intensifying their activities in the public space. The rivalry often took place in an atmosphere of open conflict and open hostility between individual political groups.

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SUMMARY

The article deals with the poorly studied problem of the conflict between the Zionists and supporters of Jewish assimilation at the turn of the twentieth century. It attempts to describe the clash between two completely different views on the situation of Jews in Europe and two completely different visions for the future of this nation. These theoretical political and social disputes set the tone for Jewish life before the outbreak of the First World War. In this way, the author indicates the issues that developed and took new forms in the years 1918–39.

This sketch summarises the changes taking place on the Jewish political scene, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. These changes were characterised by the growing strength and popularity of Zionism – an idea outlined by Theodor Herzl at the end of the nineteenth century – together with the simultaneous weakening and subsequent marginalisation of the hitherto predominant concept of the assimilation of the Jews.

KEYWORDS

Zionism • assimilation • Zionist Congress • Theodor Herzl •
Max Nordau • Polish lands • Jewish policy • Switzerland • Russia •
Galicia • national thought