

## **NASZ GŁOS POWSZECHNY**

In 1936, several editions of this Jewish newspaper, entirely in the Polish language, were published in Częstochowa. The newspaper's editorial office and administration were located in the city centre, at I Aleja NMP 23.

The five preserved editions of this newspaper are dated: 21st June 1936 (No.1), 28th June 1936 (No. 2) This edition introduced the title **NIEZALEŻNY TYGODNIK CZĘSTOCHOWSKI**. This title is also included in subsequent editions of the newspaper, dated 5<sup>th</sup> July, 19<sup>th</sup> July and 26<sup>th</sup> July.

In the first page of the first edition, there is an article headed: *Instead of a Foreword: Disarming in an Era of Common Disarmament*. This article is an interpretation of the newspaper's program. It should be emphasised that the newspaper was published in the period preceding election to the Jewish *gminas* [community councils]. Information about this fact appears on page three of the newspaper's first edition. This was announced in accordance with a regulation issued by the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, in the "Monitor", dated 16<sup>th</sup> June 1936. Elections to the Jewish *gminas* were to be held, throughout Poland, by 30 August 1936 for smaller communities and 6<sup>th</sup> September 1936 for larger cities like Warsaw, Łódź and Kraków.

The newspaper did not have a typical pre-election propaganda character. It did not agitate for a specific grouping, political party or designated person. Although its first edition was published five days after the publication of the Minister's regulation on elections, taking into account the summer period, holidays and trips out of the city, it was one of the first important pieces of information for the organisation of life within the Jewish community.

The article *Disarming in an Era of Common Disarmament* was a response to the growing wave of antisemitism and national chauvinism which, following the example of Nazi Germany, was spreading throughout all of Europe. Chauvinist-nationalist groups competed with each other in programs, slogans and activities aimed at creating nationalist states in which the titular national group would dominate over national and racially alien minorities.

The author of the article, mentioning the participation of Jews in the fight to regain the independence of the Polish state, emphasised the emotional connection of this community with the reborn Polish state. However, he drew attention to the anti-Jewish strategy used by some political groups in Poland. By articulating, to the reader, the methods of these strategies, he called for the need to unite the Jewish community, thus creating a single front in the fight against antisemitism which was beyond divisions, group or individual interests.

He states:

*The banner should be the general good of all Jews, not certain groups and coteries. The tactic is an independent national policy, unafraid of non-Jewish factors, not adapting to their requirements and not seeking their favour.*

Both the slogans and the tactics described by the author in the article were:

- 1) a reaction to the growing dangers,
- 2) an appeal to the entire Jewish community in Poland
- 3) a method for undertaking a defensive fight,
- 4) an attempt to integrate Jews and oppose antisemitism, and
- 5) indicating a way out of powerlessness, etc.

When writing about *independent nationalist politics*, the author clearly stated that he was not against the Polish state, but only about defensive tactics and fighting antisemitism: *Let us decide on this tactic and do it well, with dignity. Let us throw away that which makes us different – we will not regret it. Let us heal the wounds and overpower all the hyenas who prey upon the Jewish issue and use it to fool the indigenous society. The state will win also.*

The politically centrist position of this newspaper's editorial office was addressed to all the Jewish citizens of the Polish state. It was also an important attempt, by Jews, to undertake a program of defensive actions in the difficult social and political conditions of the time.

The newspaper, being published in the Polish language, emphasises the pro-state nature of the editorial staff. It addresses itself to the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community, who linked their futures to their place of residence, where they have been rooted for several generations. As citizens of the Polish state, they sought to maintain the right to cultivate Their cultural distinctiveness, as guaranteed in the Polish constitution. They did not back away from fulfilling their obligations under Polish law. They felt a reservation towards emigrating beyond the borders of Polish lands, within which they were already deeply rooted.

Palestine, the "Holy Land", was indeed the homeland dream. However, moving there involved overcoming many problems and obstacles, such as emigration permits limited by the British, the high costs, the "uncertainty of tomorrow" in the new place of residence, the difficulties of adaptation and leaving the legacy of a life, sometimes several generations old.

The program direction, proposed by the newspaper was based upon three fundamental principles:

- 1) We are citizens of the Polish state. We wish to live in this state, while maintaining our own traditions and culture.
- 2) Not all citizens of the Polish state are antisemites.
- 3) Antisemitism grows from the social dissatisfaction upon which *it preys and fools Polish society*.

The other editions of the newspaper contained information which would be of interest to Jews living in provincial Częstochowa. Its reporters provided information on:

- 1) events around the world, emphasising those relating to Jewish life in diasporas other than Poland,

- 2) events and the life of Jews in Palestine,
- 3) events in the Jewish community around the country and abroad, including the activities of international Jewish organisations, etc., published in the section *From Jewish Life*.

Something even closer to the interests of the Jewish reader from Częstochowa and its surroundings was information which was directly related to them, e.g. the activities of the Jewish Community Council [Gmina], the activities of the "TOZ" Health Protection Society, the meeting of the committee for the construction of a Jewish middle school, the election of cantor, disputes over ritual slaughtering, anti-Jewish hooligan event and decisions of the justice system regarding the organisers and participants in antisemitic aggressive attacks on Jews.

It also informed about the preparatory work for the elections to the Jewish Community Council [Gmina] and the appointment of an Electoral Commission. It explained the tasks of the commission, which was to consider voters' complaints, omissions from the voter roll and the granting of rights to votes and monitoring the electoral groupings contesting the election, which were due to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1936.

In the *Częstochowa Chronicle* section, the reader could obtain information and important events within the city, including information about sports and cultural events.

As with every similar editorial office, needed funds were obtained through many commercial advertisements and information about undertaken or conducted business activities.

The strong connection with the city and concern for its development are evidenced for the following articles:

- about the work of the City Council, *Big City – Small-Town Streets*, in which the city authorities are accused of negligence
- about the re-opening of the Mott factory
- about the construction of the first building containing an elevator
- about the new "Sfinks" enamelware factory in Poraj, which was to employ 200 hundred workers,
- about the re-location of the District Court to its new chambers on ul. Raclawicka

and much more information and comments supporting the city's development and the improvement of the living conditions of all its inhabitants.

The reasons for the failure on the newspaper's mission are provided on page No.3 of Edition No.5, dated 26<sup>th</sup> July 1936, headed *The Religious Gmina or the National Gmina*. The centrist position, with a clear emphasis on one's national identity, encountered an insurmountable wall in the form of ideological fragmentation, differences in interests and goals of political parties and groups operating within the Jewish community in Poland.

The program concept, proposed in the newspaper, was addressed mainly to voters electing board members of religious *gminas*. Hence, the accurate observation of the author of the article Eng. H. Szpitz:

*If our national parties, aspiring to take a leading role in our lives, abandon their narrow party interests and constant fights, it will be possible to create a platform of cooperation and ideological rivalry in the gmina for the good of all of us.*

Unfortunately, the particular interests of various groups, taking part in the elections, made it impossible to create a united front to fight antisemitism.

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, the Jewish community in Częstochowa constituted 21% of the city's inhabitants. However, it is worth emphasising that the Jewish intelligentsia mainly used the Polish language while, to a greater or lesser extent, it was known and used by Jews engaged in trade and crafts. For the orthodox Jews, stuck in the "cultural ghetto", the language of everyday communication was Yiddish. However, this did not mean that the Jews, included in this group, did not know the Polish language.

In the areas of the city, which were inhabited predominantly by Jews, one could hear a characteristic form in the use of the Polish language, often referred to as "żydłaczenie". Polish words were spoken in an ungrammatical form, with a different accent, with Yiddish words interwoven into the Polish. This form of communication, used by Jews, was the subject of critical attacks by antisemites, who were allegedly defending the purity of the Polish language.

The increasingly common teaching of Jewish children in Polish schools, during the inter-war period, contributed to the increase in knowledge and correct use of the state language, both in speech and in writing. The Polish language opened the door to going beyond the "cultural ghetto" and entering the path of more active participation, both at the local and national level, in economic, social and political life. The prospect of advancement and a change in social status, among Jews, accelerated the process of spreading active knowledge of the commonly used language among the city's inhabitants.

The newspaper, published in Polish, was addressed to those Jewish circles who consciously tried to fight against the slogans, promoted by the antisemites, which created strong barriers between the Polish and Jewish communities.