

Jerzy Mizgalski, Akademia im. Jana Długosza,

**Magdalena Mizgalska, doktorantka Instytutu Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk
w Warszawie**

The Position of the Chief Rabbi of Częstochowa in the Defence of Jewish Religious Identity – Based on N. Asz’s Book *In Defence of Ritual Slaughter*

Living life within the dichotomy of *us* and *them* was characteristic of the “separateness” of the Jewish environment from other nationalities, as well as from other religious communities – mainly Christian. Living in a cultural ghetto strengthened it and it repelled the dynamic influences which were developing from the second half of the 19th century and which were transforming civilisation. In religious Jewish circles, preserving traditions involved a daily battle to maintain one’s “self”, by rejecting the temptation of assimilation or acculturation. It was also the motivation to preserve the faith together, following the principles of a religious life.

So, why did ritual slaughter become such an essential focus of attention to those hostile to or even enemies of Jews? Was the battle over *shechita* (kosher slaughtering) an indication of an eternal problem between *us* and *them*? These are two of the many questions which arise when studying the dispute over ritual slaughter.

During difficult periods in the history of the Jewish people, such as persecution and as “wanderers across the world”, the preservation of traditions, in particular those built upon the principles of their faith, was an important binding element of their society. *Shechita* was a *mitzvah* (a commandment). It was what God demanded of the Jews. Jews obeyed divine orders, obedience which flowed from a “sincerity of the heart”. They believed that serving God was both an act of faith and also a duty undertaken together. Living your life and solving its everyday problems brought one nearer to God. In accordance with the Torah, Jews distinguished two types of *mitzvot* (religious commandments). The first group were those directed towards God. The second group of *mitzvot*, which were to be followed, were those which were directed towards each other.

The identity of the religious Jews is formed, in the main, as a measuring cup of *mitzvot*. He must first understand their purpose and their meaning. Study of the Torah is an absolute order. Its study is a *mitvah* because, in each learning process, God manifests Himself in some manner. In accordance with tradition, of the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvot* imposed upon Jews, three hundred and sixty five are commandments of prohibition, while two hundred and forty seven are commandments which must be performed. The number of prohibitions corresponds to the number of days in a “common” year, which means that, with the aid of self-discipline, everyday actions acknowledge the authority of God. The number of actionable commandments corresponds to the number of parts of the human body, each of which must be prepared to participate in the dawning of God’s kingdom. Torah study is connected with upbringing, education and the process of shaping an individual’s identity, clearly distinguishing it from non-Jewish societies.

In defence of ritual slaughter, religious Jewry referred to the *Five Books of Moses*, the centuries-old Oral Law, a tractate from the *Chalin* Babylonian Talmud, the works of the Jewish philosopher, doctor and expert in Jewish law, Moses Maimonides, as well as to the Code of Jewish Law, the *Szulchan Aruch*¹.

The Chief Rabbi of the Częstochowa Jewish community, Nachum Asz, in his dissertation published in 1935 and entitled *In Defence of Ritual Slaughter*, quoted the words of Moses Maimonides in his *System of Jewish Law* – “*Hajd- Hachazaka*”, from the section devoted to discussing the principles of ritual slaughter:

It is a religious commandment that Jews may only eat the meat of animals, cattle and poultry, which have been ritually slaughtered in accordance with the fourth section of the chapter which states: The place on the cattle's body where the cut should be made needs to be explained, how deep the cut should be, which tool should be used, when, where and how the slaughter should be performed and how, from a religious viewpoint, the slaughter is improper and what qualifications should be held by the slaughterer. All these principles are set out in the Torah in which it is stated: in this manner will you kill your oxen, in a manner in which the Lord has commanded you, you will eat it within your gates, etc.. It is supplemented with the Oral Law as a religious commandment².

Chief Rabbi Nachum Asz

Writing about the dispute which took place in the mid-1930's within the Second Polish Republic, and which centred on ritual slaughter, one cannot omit the active contribution made to the debate by Częstochowa's Chief Rabbi, Nachum Asz. He arrived in Częstochowa in 1889 at the age of 31 and was appointed Rabbi of the city. He came from Grodzisk, near Warsaw. His father was the noted Talmud scholar, David Hersz. His maternal grandfather, Leon Landau, was a well-known religious scholar, the author of several religious books. Already in his youth, Nachum was an outstanding student at the yeshivah of Rabbi Lewental of Kole. The next stage of his religious education was at the school of Rabbi Samson Arensztajn in Kalisz. This remarkably gifted student received the title of rabbi from the hands of Rabbi Arensztajn. Asz married the Rabbi's daughter, Sara, and then obtained his first rabbinical position in Nieszawa, where he worked for several years.

The Częstochowa rabbi was raised in a Jewish family which, for generations, had cultivated Jewish traditions. From his youngest years, Nachum learned, participated and immersed himself into the recesses of Talmudic knowledge. He not only became an expert in the principles of Jewish religious life, but also an astute observer of the changes within the contemporary world of his time.

Despite his young age, at the time that he assumed the position of Rabbi of Częstochowa, he was already a known Talmudist, having a practised and consolidated rabbinical knowledge. With deliberation, he drew conclusions regarding the new demands which civilisation placed upon Polish and Jewish communities at the end of the 19th century and over the first decades of the 20th century. Pertinent comments and objective judgements enabled him to gain immense authority within the Jewish community of

Częstochowa and the surrounding region. He chaired the Jewish court, amicably resolving conflicts between Jews.

¹ N. Asz, *W obronie uboju rytualnego (In Defence of Ritual Slaughter)*, wydanie trzecie uzupełnione, March 1936 r., p. 29.

² N. Asz, *W obronie....*, p. 31.

By virtue of the position he held, he was involved in settling disputes between orthodox and progressive Jews. More and more often, the following issues arose – finding a place in the sun for the Jewish people, a language by which one could teach one's children and Jewish young people, religious ceremonies and the norms of everyday life, relationships with the Polish State and other nationalities ("goyim"), as well as the role of the Jewish Community Council within the Jewish community.

Often, he was active in helping solve problems in the life of the city which, for centuries and not only for the Polish people, was the centre of the Catholic religion. He perceived the need for mutual tolerance between believers of the two religions and for harmonious cooperation in the reconstruction of Polish statehood during the period of Polish partition. Following the regaining of Polish independence, he considered as essential the building and development of cities and states, so that, in a constantly raising level of civilisation, both peoples could live in an agreeable coexistence.

His charitable activity was unique in the way he treated the poor and aggrieved. He disliked handouts, regarding them as an affront and as demeaning to the recipient. An example of this was the manner in which he helped Jewish victims of pogroms in Russia in the first years of the 20th century. He was often motivated by the anti-Jewish tsarist pogroms in the 1880's and which, to a lesser extent, in the years 1903-1906, moved onto ethnic Polish soil. Echoes of those pogroms quickly reached Częstochowa. Rabin Nachum Asz headed a committee to aid victims of the 1904 pogrom. The committee raised funds to form a foundation which would lend money to those victims. The Rabbi suggested providing help in the form of loans and not gifts, arguing that, according to religious teachings, it was spiritually more important to aid your neighbour than to provide gifts. From the viewpoint of the recipient, it would be easier for them to accept a loan than to receive charity.

Rabbi Nachum Asz continued the Częstochowa Jewish community's tradition of participation when it came to the regaining of Polish statehood³. During World War I, after the front had moved away, Częstochowa and a section of the Russian partition came under German occupation.

In 1916, a wave of nationalism spread through Częstochowa, which also infected the Jewish population. In that year, Rabbi Asz, Rabbi Szajewicz and the famous Cantor Fiszel said prayers, in the Old Synagogue on ul.Nadrzeczna, on the occasion of the anniversary celebrations of the 3rd May Constitution. During those celebrations, two Polish military standards from the Napoleonic period, hidden in the synagogue, were displayed. In the final year prior to the regaining of independence, when Częstochowa celebrated the demolition of a statue of Tsarina Aleksandra II, as well as commemorating the 100th anniversary of the death of Tadeusz Kościuszki, the Jewish community again gathered in the Old Synagogue in order to pay tribute to the great Pole and to show solidarity with a people amongst whom they had lived for centuries⁴. Numerous facts attested to the Jews of this city feeling strongly connected with the Polish national identity. A telling example of this is the ceremonies connected with the returning to Poland, in 1924, of the body of Henryk Sienkiewicz. Among the first to express a readiness to take part in those ceremonies were the Jewish Community Council, the Ezra Women's group, as well as

³ For more about the participation of Częstochowa Jews in the fight against the Russian invader see J. Mizgalski's paper *Życie polityczne Żydów w Częstochowie w latach 1918-1939* [w:] *Wielkie i małe problemy Częstochowy w Polsce Odrodzonej 1918-1939*, edited by R. Szwed, W. Palus, WSP Częstochowa 1996 r., pp. 103-110.

⁴ J. Zbudniewek, *Jasna Góra w okresie hitlerowskiej okupacji*, „Studia Clarmontana”, 1, p. 354, (1980); S. Rożej, *Charyzmat miejsca*, „W drodze” 7, (1979), No.8, p. 59 nn.; „Goniec Częstochowski”, 7th May 1916, No.103; J. Pietrzykowski, *Jasna Góra w okresie dwóch wojen światowych*, Warszawa 1987, p. 55.

⁵ Z. Jakubowski, *Sienkiewicz w Częstochowie*, „Nad Wartą”, No.12/198, pp. 4-5.

Jewish craftsmen and industrialists⁵.

Częstochowa Jews, led by Rabbi Asz, ceremonially greeted the President of the Republic of Poland, Prof. Ignacy Mościcki. A large crowd of Jews greeted the President and his entourage on the Aleja near the Frank building. The Rabbi gave an address of welcome, in which he stressed the strong union between the Jewish people and the Polish state.

Discerning the need to maintain a national identity, Rabbi Asz was opposed to entering into conflict with the Polish state and people. After Poland regained its independence, he became Rabbi of the Częstochowa army garrison. He maintained regular contact and was on good terms with the Bishop of Częstochowa, Teodor Kubiną.

Among Rabbi Asz's many initiatives, the ones which should be recalled are those whose aim it was to renovate and modernise facilities used for religious worship. Next to the Old Synagogue and the mikvah, he put forward the idea of renovating the 100-year-old religious school, the *Beit HaMidrash* (hebr. "house of learning"). As in many similar instances, the Rabbi headed a committee to raise the resources for the project and led it to its successful conclusion. The renovated building, with its excellent lighting, spacious rooms and stairwell also contained a public lecture theatre. Day or night, it always remained accessible to religious Jews. There, they studied the holy books, immersing themselves into the secret principles of their religion. The room intended for study was also used for meetings. Study of the religious books was one of the principles and duties of religious life.

Lectures and religious debates also took place in those rooms. The Rabbi would often stay there and occupied a place of honour from which he would address those gathered. Those speeches were saturated with biblical quotations, sentences from the Talmud full of allegory linked to the problems of life in those times. They clarified complex religious laws for a world in which civilisation was more and more subject to change. In 1934, the Częstochowa Jewish Community Council, in recognition of the Rabbi's outstanding service, named their school *Ohel Nachum* (*Nachum's Tent*). At his initiative, *Hachnasat Orchim*, was erected. It was lodging house for the poor, and also contained a religious school.

Among the subjects Rabbi Asz spoke to his co-religionists about were the religion itself, living life according to its principles while still taking into account the progress of civilisation, tolerance towards other religions, living harmoniously with Poles with whom they had lived for centuries and a concern for the maintenance of a separate religious, cultural and national identity.

Seeking a road for the development of the Jewish people within the complex political and social circumstances at the turn of the 19th century, as well as during World War I, drew him closer to the Mizrachi religious-Zionist group. Soon, as one of the first great rabbis in Poland, he became a member of that party. His authority supported activities which collected funds for *Keren Hayesod* and *Keren Kayenot* – Zionist organisations preparing young Jews to leave for Palestine. He also joined in the celebrations, widely organised within the Jewish community, associated with the opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. During a conference organised to mark the occasion in 1925 in Częstochowa, he spoke in Hebrew which was then translated into Yiddish and published in a booklet.

The Częstochowa Rabbi prepared and delivered several literary treatises in both Yiddish and Hebrew. One treatise, especially acknowledged, not just within the Jewish community, was that which appeared in Poland in 1935, entitled *In Defence of Ritual Slaughter*. The book was a polemic which revolved around how Jews slaughtered animals and poultry. Three editions were published in the Rabbi's lifetime and it became a strong voice for the Jewish community in the discussion regarding *shechita*.

Nachum raised nine children – five sons and four daughters. He did not forbid his children from studying in secular institutions. He encouraged them. His son, Mojżesz, worked for the Jewish Community Council. Dawid Hersz was an industrialist, Mieczysław was a journalist, while Leon was a lawyer and city councillor. One of his daughters became a teacher.

The Rabbi's death was connected with an extraordinary series of events. On the first anniversary of the death of Marshall Józef Piłsudski, a solemn service was held in the Częstochowa synagogue. Chief Rabbi Nachum Asz took part in the ceremony. Those closest to him claim that he became so emotional that he suffered a heart attack and, a few hours later, he died at the age of 78. That the Chief Rabbi held Marshall Piłsudski in high regard is attested to by the fact that his son, the lawyer, Leon Asz, headed the committee charged with commemorating the Marshall in Częstochowa. The committee comprised forty two people, outstanding people representing "all community institutions in our city". This committee decided to join forces with the Principal Committee which decided to fund a forest in Palestine in the name of Marshall Piłsudski. Częstochowa Jews proposed that one of the avenues within that forest be named "Częstochowa Avenue". A letter of intent, issued by the committee, supported the raising of funds for this purpose and was signed by some of the most outstanding representatives of the Jewish community.

Discussion Concerning Ritual Slaughter in the Parliament of the Second Polish Republic

On 17th March 1936, a plenary sitting of the Sejm of the Polish Republic considered a bill, proposed by Poseł (Member of Parliament) Janina Prystorowa, *Regarding the Slaughter of Farm Animals in Slaughterhouses*⁶. The Sejm debate preceded a campaign prepared by the nationalist camp. A series of press articles, booklets, propaganda posters and even serious books appeared, all critical of Jewish ritual slaughter. Authors included Rev Dr Stanisław Trzeciak, Dr Stanisław Łazarowicz, and Stanisław Sokołowski⁷. On 6th March 1936, Rev Dr Stanisław Trzeciak appeared, as an expert, during an Administrative Committee debate. Public debates were to take place during sittings of city councils at which the "nationalists" would force through motions condemning *szechita*.

⁶ "AA Bill proposed by Poseł Janinę Prystorową Regarding the Slaughter of Farm Animals in Slaughterhouses. Art. 1 During slaughter in in public and private slaughterhouses, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, horses donkeys, mules and dog should be unconscious prior to bleeding to death. Art. 3 (1) In private and public slaughterhouses and in other places of slaughter, it is forbidden to divide the animal in any way other than in two longitudinal halves. This does not apply to animals intended for processing in the same slaughterhouse in which they were slaughtered (2) It is forbidden to transport (delivering or picking up), to/from the slaughterhouse meat divided differently as stipulated in Section 1. This does not apply to the transport of pork or for the purpose of domestic consumption or to gastronomic establishments. Art. 5 (1) Those who transgress the provisions of the Act or contravene Art. 4 will be face up to three months gaol or a fine of up to 3000 zł, or both. (2) The decision will be the responsibility of the administrative authorities". Sz. Rudnicki, w *Parlamente II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2004 p. 438.

On 17th March 1936, the Local Government Administration Commission was to consider a bill, proposed by, Poseł Juliusz Dudziński, which included a move against Jewish ritual slaughter. In the preliminary part of his address, the Poseł posed the question as to whether the Act regarding slaughter was intentional and whether the state and society gained anything by condoning ritual slaughter⁸.

Continuing his address, he claimed that:

By enforcing the Act on slaughter, through exact bleeding to death, we wish to improve the health quality of the hindquarters meat. By abolishing ritual slaughter, we also desire for the Jewish population to be equally entitled to eat better and healthier meat so that, to a greater degree, they will be fit for military service. Under the current conditions, however, kosher meat is only worse forequarter and, even then, not always. If the animal to be slaughtered moves or a hair gets into the wound, then the entire animal is *treyf*. It is also *treyf* if the animal has a broken leg or rib. However, it is not *treyf* if the animal has tuberculosis or anthrax. This is not in accordance with modern ideas of hygiene. Also, the killing of the animals on dirty floors covered in faeces and the examination of the animal's health by a dimwit, not having the slightest idea about veterinary science, by blowing up the lungs with saliva, having previously licked suspect places, probably also has nothing to do with hygiene⁹.

Concluding his address, in the section criticising the hygiene of kosher meat and concerning the health of consumers, Poseł Dudziński stated:

Based, in the beginning, on close observation of life, ritual slaughter, within the Palestinian climate, was a way of protecting the population of the time from the consumption of bad meat. They have become hardened in their traditions, not changing them in line with modern learning. It has gradually become a superstition which no longer fulfils its objective and only makes life harder for others. The Jewish population should avail themselves of cold stores. Meat, in order not to be *treyf*, must be consumed within 48 hours. So what is needed is for meat to be stored in cold stores. However, in all of Poland, apart from the western Provinces, slaughterhouses do not have cold stores. In this way, the whole Jewish population, as well as the Christian, is forced to eat fresh, immature meat, containing a large percentage of water and, what's more, from worse hygienic conditions than meat from a cold store¹⁰.

The second accusation put forward by the Poseł was describing ritual slaughter as inhumane:

Through unnecessary restriction, and then by slaughtering without prior stunning, unnecessary suffering is caused to the animal, not to mention the suffering it feels watching the suffering and death of other animals prior to its own death. The long-lasting nature of ritual slaughter, as well as the necessity for the needless abuse of the animal, destructively influences the psyche of those who are forced to work in that environment¹¹.

⁷ Rev. Dr St. Trzeciak, Ritual Slaughter in the Light of the Bible and the Talmud 1935.; Rev. Dr S. Trzeciak, Slaughter – Ritual or Mechanical. An Expert Opinion Rev. Dr St. Trzeciaka address to a sitting of the Administrative Committee of the Polish Sejm 5th March 1936, chaired by Poseł Kazimierz Duch., Warsaw 1936.; Dr St. Łazarowicz, Ritual Slaughter, "Municipal Government", No.20, 15th October 1935.; Dr St. Łazarowicz and St. Sokołowski, The Influence of the Manner of Slaughter on the Quality of the Meat, "Municipal Government", No. 21/1935.

⁸ Sitting Schedule of the Sejm of the Polish Republic. 17th March 1936.

⁹ Sitting timetable of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland 17th March 1936

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The third accusation refers to the opinion that:

almost all animal welfare organisations throughout the world also favour the banning of ritual slaughter in all European countries, not excluding Soviet Russia¹².

The fourth argument was a reference to world opinion which, as Poseł Dudziński claimed,

... considers us barbarians. What better evidence is there for than the cancellation of trade agreements concerning animals, requiring that live animals intended for export be treated in accordance with laws observed in those countries, because they do not trust our laws. As evidence of that, there is the trade agreement with Germany. Law Journal No. 83 of 1935.¹³

The fifth argument for the abolishment of ritual slaughtering had an anti-economic meaning. Relying on the 1931 census, which was published in 1932, the Poseł stated that, in that year:

... in the entire country, apart from western Poland where ritual slaughter amounted to an insignificant percentage of the total, 1,372,504 cattle were slaughtered. Fees to Jewish community councils varied - in some instances it was as high as 13 zł. per animal. Let us take, as an average, 8 zł for the entire country. That would amount to 10,980,032 zł. for the whole of Poland, excluding the western areas. Again, excluding the western areas, 1,910,753 calves and 461,956 sheep were slaughtered – 2,372,709 animals in total. The fee per head was, in some places up to 5 zł.. As an average, let us take 3 zł, which gives us a total of 7,118,127 zł. Altogether, that meant a total 28,333,593 zł in fees for Jewish community councils¹⁴.

The Poseł stressed, moreover, that, apart from the fees to Jewish community councils and to slaughterers, agriculture suffered losses from hides being spoiled due to being cut at the neck. This amounted to an annual loss of 10,911,684 zł. Poland was forced to import skins from abroad in large quantities. Apart from that, there were losses relating to cattle blood. “The result of *cutting across* the artery, as well as the oesophagus, was rendering it unfit for consumption because it was mixing with faeces”¹⁵.

Additional losses were the result of separating the forequarters from the rump, namely kosher or *treyf*. This required the forequarters to be transported to Jewish slaughterhouses and the rumps to Christian ones. He pointed out that, in such a case, it is not possible to sell the entire carcass to one retail butcher, and a wholesale intermediary was necessary. The Poseł devoted a lot of attention to them. Relying, this time, on an article by M. Gordon contained in the Jewish *Nasz Przegląd*, he stated that the introduction of a ban on ritual slaughter would deprive 40,000 Jewish families from a livelihood.

This means that there are 40,000 working in this industry – that means 40,000 unnecessary intermediaries as I mentioned earlier. In truth, that exceeds our expectations. Because I never supposed that there were so many intermediaries in the industry whom agriculture, outside of the western regions, must carry on its shoulders”¹⁶.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Taking a stance on the next article contained in *Nasz Przegląd*, dated 12th March 1935, Dudziński stated:

During times of crisis, when other sources of income fail, they all rush to become intermediaries, whether in the cattle or meat trades, (...) namely, which means that these 40,000 families are not needed for the distribution of goods. They are only an unnecessary imposition on the budget of the small farmer¹⁷.

The sixth accusation is directly connected to the previous one, but already has a deeper ideological and national meaning. The Poseł again quotes from M. Gordon's article in *Nasz Przegląd*:

All those who fight against ritual slaughter from the viewpoint of raising the cost of meat, have absolutely nothing against the fact that the tax amounts to 3 zł per head. *Nasz Przegląd* displays an interesting tendency. It supports the payment of a fee to a Jewish community council and is surprised that, all those who protest paying taxes to the Jewish community councils, do not also protest against paying government taxes. Is this a lack of awareness or ill-will? Perhaps it is a statement that a state can exist within a state¹⁸.

He pointed out that ritual slaughter was contrary to the Constitution. Referring to Article 113 which stated that no religious association can stand against the laws of the country, he claimed that ritual slaughter was contrary to the law protecting animals (Dz. Ust. R.P. z 1932 Nr 42, poz. 417). He also referred to a second law (Dz. U. R. P. Nr 89, poz. 698) regulating fees charged by Jewish community councils. He claimed that the charging of fees should be regulated by this law in such a manner as to not affect meat sold to the non-Jewish population. He also stressed that the Christian population carried this burden because cattle slaughtered outside the western region were 100% ritually slaughtered.

As a member of the *Sejm* parliamentary committee, he was forced to represent the position of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education described during the course of the committee's debate. Representing, at the time, the work of the committee, the Deputy Minister of Education, Rev Żongołłowicz, made a statement regarding a Bill relating to the slaughter of animals, in which he announced that:

... on the basis of a statement by representatives of the Rabbinate, a ban on the ritual slaughter of animals would make impossible the eating of meat of these animals, because the provisions of the Jewish religion forbid the eating of meat from animals killed not killed in accordance with ritual slaughter laws. Since Articles 110, 111, 113 and 115 of the Constitution ensure freedom of religion and compliance with the laws of that religion, a ban on ritual slaughter would make it impossible for Jews to eat animals killed in another manner. In order not to violate Articles 110, 111, 113 and 115, the Act should be amended in order to enable Jews to slaughter ritually for their own consumption. These same changes should also affect other faiths which have regulations relating to ritual slaughter¹⁹.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Debate in the Sejm, in 1936, repeatedly invoked the Constitution. After establishing the rights of Jews under the Constitution, there were the demands made to changes the Articles in such a way that meat from ritual slaughter could only be consumed by Jews.

Commenting on the address by Rev, Deputy Minister Żongołłowicz, J. Dudziński posed a rhetorical question. Was the Deputy Minister quoting the opinions of the Rabbinate or the opinion of the Ministry of Education also, that it was not in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution? In this instance, the Poseł appealed to experts from the Department of Legislation from the Ministry of Justice. Based on that expert opinion, he recognised the position of Rev. Żongołłowicz as a repetition of the opinion of the Rabbinate.

The defenders of ritual slaughter also invoked the Constitution, regarding it as the most important document confirming the right of Jews to *shechita* in an independent Poland. In his treatise, Rabbi Nachum Asz proved that:

The conclusion reached by the National Party in Częstochowa is contradictory to Articles 110 and 111 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 17th March 1921 and confirmed by the Constitution Act dated 23rd April 1935.²⁰

As justification, he states that:

Ritual slaughter is a religious provision with clear humanitarian tendencies, in no way contrary to public order or public norms, and therefore an application to forbid ritual slaughter as contrary to the Constitution Act cannot be considered either by the City Council or by any other body in the State (Art. 49 Constitution Act)²¹.

In the final part of his address, the Poseł quoted extensive excerpts from a letter sent to Poseł Janina Prystorowa from a Warsaw Jew, Izaak Koenigsberg. In the letter, the Jew congratulated the Poseł for placing, before the Sejm Speaker, a bill regarding the humanitarian nature of killing animals in slaughterhouses. Koenigsberg wrote:

As a Polish citizen and as a sincere supporter of the significant democratic principles of the Great Resurrector of Polish Independence, Marshall Piłsudski, of blessed memory, I have the great honour of expressing to you my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on your daring and brave action – placing a Bill before the Speaker regarding the slaughter of animals in abattoirs, aimed at replacing primitive methods with mechanical slaughter, bringing 20th century modern culture to the defence of animals. Without doubt, all cultural-progressive and democratic spheres in Poland, irrespective of religion or viewpoint, will bless you for your courageously commenced battle in the defence of basic, humanitarian principles [...]. I and all Jewish democratic circles which do not adhere to the ancient rules of the Talmud and eat non-kosher meat, welcome the Bill aimed at defending basic, humanitarian principles²².

Poseł Dudziński's address triggered a reaction, not only within the Government, but also amongst Jewish Posels. The Minister of Agriculture and Agricultural Reform, Juliusz Poniatowski, proposed, in the name of the Government, amendments rejecting the ban on ritual slaughter.

²⁰ N. Asz, *W obronie uboju rytualnego (In Defence of Ritual Slaughter)*, March 1936. (third edition), p. 34.

²¹ Ibid., p. 34.

²² Ibid.

Among others, he invoked decrees by the President of the Republic of Poland, from 1927 and 1928, issued during the rule of Józef Piłsudski, which clearly defined that one of the obligations of Jewish Community Councils was to ensure kosher meat for the Jewish population and that ritual slaughterers were legitimate functionaries of these organisations.

If we consider that ritual slaughter was a religious fundamental to not only Jews, but also to Karaimites and Muslims, then we can understand that the removal of these entitlements would not be in accordance with the existing spirit of tolerance and the spirit of the Polish Constitution.

Posel Sommerstein, a Jew, was decidedly and fiercely opposed to the Act. He stated that it was not just a matter of chance that:

... this motion appeared at a time of such a great increase in antisemitism in Poland and, especially, economic antisemitism. And it was also not a coincidence that, in view of this motion, general anti-Jewish activities had flared up. This very motion, and the atmosphere within which it was born, bore so much inflammable material and aroused such passion, all in order to denigrate our faith, our community and our people, labelling us as barbarians. This motion clearly indicates that it was not moved for humanitarian reasons. Extermination, antisemitism and denigration led to this motion being put forward at this time [...] In this Bill, we see a tendency toward economic extermination, annihilating the economic possibilities of the Jewish population²³.

Others to speak in this debate included Posel Walewski, Posel Dudziński (for a second time), Posel Duch, Posel Janina Prystorowa, Speaker of the Sejm and, on a point of order, Posel Duch (for a second time). Voting resulted in the amendments put forward by the governing party being accepted. The version of the Bill as was presented to the Administration Committee, chaired by Posel Dudziński, was rejected. The new Committee accepted the Government's draft of the Bill and it was approved by the Sejm on 20th March 1936. Protests against the Bill were put forward by Posel Sommerstein and Posel Minberg, Chairman of the Łódź Jewish Community Council.

Supporters of *shechita* called for Constitutional guarantees, regarding it as the most important document confirming the right of Jews to perform ritual slaughter in an independent Poland²⁴. Opponents to *shechita*, assuming the correctness of the Jewish argument with reference to the Constitution, demanded an amendment to the Act such that meat, which was ritually slaughtered, would be exclusively available for Jewish consumption. The Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Public Education, Rev. Żongołłowicz, submitted such a position to the Sejm in a debate in 1936.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Also, Chief Rabbi Asz proved, in his paper, that "the motion proposed by the National Party in Częstochowa, is contrary to Articles 110 and 111 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland dated 17th March 1921, and confirmed by the Constitutional Act, dated 23rd April 1935. N. Asz, *W obronie...* (*In Defence of ...*) p.34. In support of this position, he stated that stwierdził "ritual slaughter is a humanitarian religious provision, not contrary to public order or norms, and therefore an application to forbid ritual slaughter as contrary to the Constitution Act cannot be considered either by the City Council or by any other body in the State. (Art. 49 Constitution Act)" N. Asz, *W obronie uboju ...* (*In Defence of Ritual ...*) p. 34.

Goniec Częstochowski (*The Częstochowa Messenger*) systematically reported the proceedings of the Sejm, quoting arguments, put forward by interested parties, for and against. In an article in March 1936, it informed readers:

Since Articles 110, 111, 113 and 115 of the Constitution guarantee freedom of religion, a ban on ritual slaughter would prevent Jews from eating animals slaughtered in any other manner. Articles 110, 111, 113 and 115 were not contravened. The Act should be amended to Jews to ritually slaughter for their own consumption. These same amendments should be of concern to other faiths which have ritual slaughter as a provision of their religion²⁵.

In that same issue of the newspaper, another article appeared against slaughter. It was stated that meat from ritual slaughter was not kept in cold storage, since that meat would become *treyf* within 48 hours. This proved that, as such, that the Jewish and Christian population was forced to eat immature meat with a percentage of water and hygienically worse than meat kept in cold storage:

Ritual slaughter is based on observation, has become an arcane superstition and does not allow for meat to be kept in cold storage. The Jewish and Christian population is forced to consume immature meat, containing a considerable percentage of water²⁶.

Also, in Częstochowa, opponents to *shechita* had repeatedly put forward this argument.

Analysing the debate surrounding ritual slaughter, Szymon Rudnicki stated that, "The Sejm debate unambiguously demonstrated that humanitarian aims were only slogans and, in fact, it was all about driving Jews out of the meat trade".²⁷

The discussion did not have a substantive character, but a political one. It emphasized the nationalist dominance over a minority, not only within journalism, not also within the speeches by many representatives of the right-wing nationalist groupings which presented that minority as an alien element to the Polish nation and state.

The Act finally came into effect on 1st January 1937²⁸. *Ad Goniec Częstochowski* reported:

A press conference was held at the Ministry of Agriculture during which the Director of the Department of Economics, Czesław Bobrowski, told the press that, on 1st January 1937, provisions regarding the slaughter of farm animals came into force. On 1st January 1937, it came into force without any amendment to its provisions²⁹.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ „*Goniec Częstochowski*”, 7th March 1936.

²⁷ Sz. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w Parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej* (*Jews in the Second Polish Republic Parliament*, Warsaw 2004, p. 386

²⁸ For more about the Sejm debate about ritual slaughter, the passing of the Bill and its amendments, see: Sz. Rudnicki, *Ritual Slaughters as a Political Issue*,..., pp. 147-160; *Żydzi w parlamencie* (*Jews in Parliament* p. 385-388; J. Mizgalski, *Udział rabina Nachuma Asza w sporze o szechitę* (*The Participation of Rabbi Nachum Asz in the Dispute Over Shechita*, [w:] *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie*, Częstochowa 2002, pp. 105 - 125.

²⁹ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 5th January 1937., p. 2.

Neither the proposed amendments nor the protests of Jewish posels were reported. On the defence side, the most active were the rabbi of Warsaw's Great Synagogue (on ul. Tłomackiego), Warsaw University professor Mojżesz Schorr, and Agudah activist and President of the Warsaw Jewish Community Council, Jakub Jankiel Trockenheim, a member of the Polish Bar Council and Zionist, Emil Sommerstein, an Agudah member and a member of many committees of the Łódź Jewish Community Council, Jakub Lejb Minberg³⁰.

Posel Juliusz Dudziński continued his battle with *shechita*. He claimed that the Act, which came into effect, did not reflect the intention of legislators and was simply ineffective. On 1st February 1938, he submitted a new proposal. The Local Government Administration Commission accepted Dudziński's amendments. They were to come into effect on 1st September 1939³². Prior to the outbreak of World War II, there was an attempt to amend the Act, intending to forbid ritual slaughter entirely. However, the Nazi invasion of Poland prevented it from being ratified by the Senate.

Political Satire against *Shechita* in the Second Polish Republic

Satirical magazines performed, and still do perform, a significant role in the shaping of readers' views and attitudes, and they also influence the socio-political process. In pre-War Poland, they performed an instrumental function in the preparation and the conducting of political campaigns. Stereotypes were an important element in the "brain-washing" processes of contemporary societies. Satire had a more painful and effective influence than did long press articles or public appearances by politicians. They had a long-term effect. It was kept alive during social gatherings, etc.. In an evocative manner, it also formed the image of the "Jew-alien". It was included in the nationalist concept of a homogeneous state, with a dominant and privileged titular people of that state. That image, and hence the satirical image, spoke, and still speaks, most evocatively to all social groups.

³⁰ For more about the Sejm debate about ritual slaughter, the passing of the Bill and its amendments, see: Sz. Rudnicki, *Ritual Slaughters as a Political Issue*,..., pp. 147-160; *Żydzi w parlamencie (Jews in Parliament)* p. 385-388; J. Mizgalski, *Udział rabina Nachuma Asza w sporze o shechitę (The Participation of Rabbi Nachum Asz in the Dispute Over Shechita)*, [w:] *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie*, Częstochowa 2002, pp. 105 - 125..

³¹ In justifying his motion, Dudziński stated, "The meat market in Poland has a high production value of 4 billion złoty annually. To a great degree, the profitability of rural workshops relies on the success of this market, especially small workshops based on breeding. The current attempts to clean up this market were not successful with regard to ritual slaughter. In 1936, a Bill was introduced regarding the slaughter of farm animals, forbidding ritual slaughter. However, this primitive practice has been amended, which is a partial solution to the problem. The Act, dated 17th April 1937, did not achieve its aims as presented in the legislative chambers, because there is a need to amend it". Sz. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w Parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej (Jews in the Parliament of the Second Polish Republic)*, Warsaw 2004, pp. 440-441.

³² Further, Sz. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w Parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej (Jews in the Parliament of the Second Polish Republic)*, Warsaw 2004, p. 387.

The techniques for the manipulation of societies were and are an essential element. In the case of increasing conflicts against a background of a racial and national stereotype, it was an important tool in consolidating the image of “others”. The image of the Jew, presented in satire, constituted an essential element in preparing society for the introduction of antisemitic legislation and for deflecting attention away from increasing social problems.

In the 1930's, the satirical magazines *Mucha* (*The Fly*) and *Wróble na Dachy* (*Sparrows on the Roof*) appeared. They were typical examples of trying, through satire, to influence the political attitudes of Polish society. Anti-Jewish, satirical articles and drawings, similar to those which appeared throughout Europe, were intended to divert society's attention away from growing social, political and international problems.

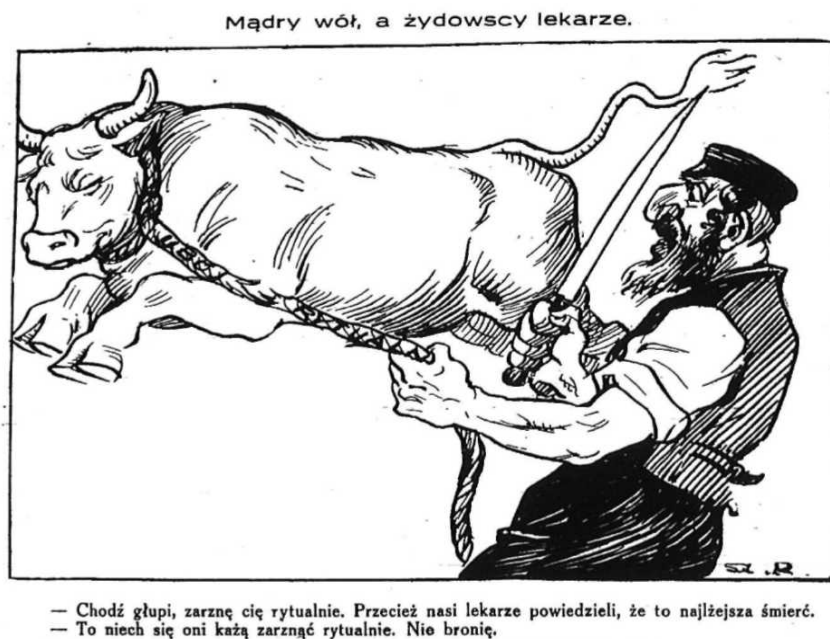
The first of them was the Warsaw satirical weekly *Mucha*, published and edited by Władysław Buchner. *Mucha*, as one of very few magazines, was published using traditional fonts and was in tabloid format. It did not include the photo-montage, which was popular at that time. In 1933, *Mucha*'s circulation was 40,000, but in 1936, it fell to 25,000. The magazine was one of the most popular. It could be seen in waiting rooms, cake shops, cafes and the like. It provoked comment and inspired social discussion. *Mucha* sympathised with right-wing and nationalist views, which did not prevent the published from supporting the Post-3rd May camp, especially in the 1930's.

ECHA USTAWY UBOJOWEJ,



Source: *Mucha* 3rd April 1936

(Banner: “ECHOES OF THE SLAUGHTER ACT”)



TOP: Banner: “The Ritual Slaughter Issue in the Sejm”

Caption: “Gewalt! The cow already knows about Mrs Prystorowa’s motion”)

Source: *Mucha*, 21st February 1936

BOTTOM: Banner: “A clever ox, but Jewish doctors”

Caption: - Come here, stupid, I’ll butcher you ritually. After all, our doctors said that this was the best death. - So let them get ritually butchered. I’m not stopping them”

Source: *Mucha*, 28th February 1936



Źródło: „Mucha” z dn. 20.03.1936



Źródło: „Mucha” z dn. 20.04.1936

TOP: Banner: “More About Slaughter”

Caption: “Toreador: Even you’re not afraid of this legislation?”)

Source: *Mucha*, 20th March 1936

BOTTOM: Banner: “Israel’s Wailing Wall”

Caption: - Oy vay! Oy vay! - What are you worried about? The wall already has two big holes. By January 1937, we’ll have time to make it into one big hole!”

Source: *Mucha*, 20th April 1936

Discussion Surrounding Ritual Slaughter in the Częstochowa City Council

In the mid-1930's, the Nationalist Party inspired, throughout the Second Polish Republic, a campaign against ritual slaughter. In various proclamations, as well as in press articles, nationalist political groupings put forward arguments which were supposed to lead to the banning of *shechita*. *Goniec Częstochowski* reported these activities and, in an article from March 1935, it stated that "The activities behind banning the ritual slaughter of cattle" were mainly being promoted by nationalist political groupings, arguing that the performance of *shechita* be done away with. The semiotics and arguments, taken from the initiators of the campaign against ritual slaughter, appeared in this article, claiming that "this barbaric anachronism raises the price of meat, which affects the pockets of Christian consumers".³³ It was also then stressed that Christians not only covered the costs of ritual slaughter, but also the upkeep of Jewish community councils:

As is well known, the income from ritual slaughter goes towards the upkeep of slaughterers and Jewish community councils and, since Christians are the main buyers of the beef, they are therefore also being ransomed into paying an exorbitant amount towards the slaughterhouses and slaughterers³⁴.

Readers were also informed of a similar system in the Zagłębie region. The prices of meat and the indirect support, through *shechita*, of Jewish community councils were strongly expressed within wider groups of Polish society. Similar arguments were also put forward by Dr Łazarowicz.³⁵

Three months later, another article appeared in *Goniec Częstochowski* headed *Regarding Ritual Slaughter – Butchers Are Not Clergy*³⁶. It set out to show that butchers were just butchers, and not butchers carrying out religious imperatives in order to acquire kosher meat. In the process, they were taking away employment from Christian butchers. Jewish butchers were accused of breaking the law by not having the correct certification, as required by Polish law, consenting to them working as a butcher.³⁷

The worsening atmosphere surrounding *shechita* influenced, to a considerable degree, both the national and local Polish press. Articles referred to the *European experience* in other countries or to decisions, taken in other Polish cities, regarding this matter. The rhetoric and arguments used in these articles were similar. Among others, the arguments used were those which could most easily get through to the middle classes of Polish society, mainly tradesmen and salesmen, for example, the alleged economic losses, disrespect for Polish law, and the like.

³³ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 10th March 1935

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "The Christian population overpays, annually, vast amounts of money so that Jews can eat cheaper meat, according to Dr. Łazarowicz. If there was no ritual slaughter, the price current of forequarter and hindquarter meat would be identical." N. Asz, *W obronie... (In Defence of ...)*, p. 36.

³⁶ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 29th June 1935.

³⁷ "Any Jew can be a butcher. What is clear is that butchers are not clergy; they are just butchers, and illegal butchers at that since none of them possesses butchering certification." *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 29th June 1935.

Different techniques of manipulation were exploited when presenting socially sensitive information like, for example, selectiveness, juxtaposition, appropriate relation of the facts, and the like. They allowed the reader to feel a sense of "objectivity" which contributed shaping the opinions, about *shechita*, of the inhabitants of cities and small towns. As a regularly, widely-read newspaper, *Goniec częstochowski* also did not abstain from these techniques. Articles with provocative and anti-Jewish content often appeared within its pages. For example, on 21st September 1928, an article appeared under the headline *Meat Shortage*. It stated that Jewish butchers had protested against the lowering of prices for meat and had stopped slaughtering, "wanting to starve the city". "According to calculations carried out by the Pricing Commission of the Magistrate's office, the price of cattle had decreased over the past few days due to a lack of fodder"³⁸.

Fluctuations in the market price of meat were attributed to Jews. "Acts of sabotage by Jewish butchers are deplorable and are met with the proper indignation of the whole community"³⁹.

The issue of ritual slaughter appeared at the Częstochowa City Council in November 1935⁴⁰. During a session of the City Council on 18th November 1935, the National Party caucus moved a motion to petition the Government, through the Magistrate's office, stating that ritual slaughter was inhumane and raised the cost of basic meat needs. Speaking on the subject, Jewish Councillor Feliks Szpiro asked the chairman to refer the issue of ritual slaughter directly to the Magistrates Court. The issue was then supposed to go before the City Council. The Mayor, Mackiewicz, readily agreed to the request. The motion was then supposed to be reviewed before returning to the City Council in session⁴¹.

One day later, during the final session devoted to the City Council budget for the year 1935/1936, Councillor Zarzecki, from the National caucus, moved a motion to ban ritual slaughter so as to, in the process, cover the expenses associated with the building of schools. The motivation behind his motion was:

Everywhere in the West, ritual slaughter has been banned as a barbaric relic. In Poland, there is a general desire to ban this kind of slaughtering. In Poland, this is being demanded by all parties, social and economic organisations, scholars and ordinary people throughout Polish society⁴².

Speaking, on the same day as the debate, Councillor Zarzecki stated that ritual slaughter was inhumane:

³⁸ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 21st June 1928

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Also, among other in Przemyśl in December 1935, Councillor and Chairman of the United Nationalists, Włodzimierz Bilan, moved a motion for the banning of ritual slaughter in that city. "Regarding the protests (over the motion) by Jewish councillors, they did not accept it even going to a vote - despite Bilan being able to collect a few hundred signatures on a petition to the City Council in support of his motion." W. Wierzbieniec, *Spółeczność żydowska Przemyśla w latach 1918-1939 (The Jewish Community of Przemyśl, 1918-1939)*, Rzeszów 1996, pp. 168-169.

⁴¹ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 20th November 1935; APCz, zesp. AmCz, sygn. 5725, pp. 87-92.

⁴² APCz, zesp. AmCz, sygn. 5725, pp. 117-129.

He then rolled through shocking descriptions of the murder of animals perpetrated by ritual slaughterers, involving lingering agony and slow death. Surely, members of the City Council, who have toured the abattoirs, would have seen, with their own eyes, the repulsive images of ritually slaughtered beasts. Every Monday and every Thursday, 100-150 animals are murdered here in this way. There are modern devices capable of providing an almost painless, quick slaughter and removing all blood, in compliance with the Talmud ⁴³.

In the concluding part of his address, he raised economic arguments.

The economic effects of tolerating ritual slaughter are painfully harmful, considerably raising the cost of the meat paid for by the whole community, while high fees are paid to the offices of the Rabbinate. These fees amount to 20-60% of the cost of the slaughter. Income to Jewish community councils, from payments of ritual slaughter fees, was 9,237,000 zł. in 1926 and 10,838,000 zł. in 1929. Economic life is burdened by such sums and they force up the cost of meat. For this reason, at the next sitting of the Council, the National caucus will move a motion in favour of the petition to Council to ban ritual slaughter. As is known, this motion was placed before the Management Committee and is to return to the Council⁴⁴.

Speeches by councillors could not happen without accurate reports and commentary within the pages of *Goniec Częstochowski*. An article, reporting a City Council debate, contained a long line of opinions on the subject of *shechita* in Poland and around the world:

The issue of banning ritual slaughter dates back to 1885 from when it gained the support of international humanitarian organisations. Special congresses in Brussels and Vienna adopted resolutions demanding the abolition of ritual slaughter in all countries where this barbarity is still being carried out. In the opinions of outstanding scholars and experts, it is a 20th century abomination, quite unjustified by the Jews' religious provisions according to the Talmud⁴⁵.

1936 was a watershed year for the issue of banning ritual slaughter in Poland. Following the moving of a Bill, in February 1936 in the Sejm, which proposed making ritual slaughter impossible for Jews and being justified by Janina Prystorowa's humanitarian considerations, discussions on this subject moved on at a faster pace.

During a sitting of the City Council on 26th February 1936, at the request of the National caucus, Item No.13 on the agenda was a discussion on the carrying out of ritual slaughter in Częstochowa.

Referring to this agenda item, the Mayor appealed to councillors to maintain great seriousness and decorum during the discussions. The first to speak at this session of the Council was Councillor Zarzecki of the National caucus. He suddenly moved a motion, on behalf of the National caucus, that ritual slaughter be banned in Częstochowa, and that the motion be voted on immediately and without debate. Speaking against the sudden motion, Councillor Dr. Bram of the Jewish caucus demanded an extensive debate. Council Chairman Mackiewicz suddenly put the motion to a vote, the result of which was: 12 National Caucus and 1 Christian Democrat in favour, 9 Jewish Caucus and 13 Polish Socialist Party against. In accordance with regulations, the 8 Economic Block abstention votes were counted as in favour of the motion. So that the final result was 21 votes in favour of the motion, with 22 votes against⁴⁶.

⁴³ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 21st November 1935.

⁴⁴ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 21st November 1935; APCz, zesp. AmCz, sygn. 5725, pp. 117-129.

⁴⁵ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 21st November 1935.

⁴⁶ See APCz, zesp. AmCz sygn. 5725, pp. 173-174.

A point of order debate then began. Among others to speak was Cr Leopold Piątkowski of the National caucus. He declared that, in response to the National caucus motion on the performing of ritual slaughter, the Jewish caucus had sent a petition to the central authorities demanding explanations. He stressed that there were no grounds or substance for this, it was tendentious and that quotes from the Talmud were sentences taken out of context.⁴⁷ He stressed that the National caucus' motion was not aimed against the Jews' freedom of worship, but against their privileges.

Ritual slaughter is not part of the dogma of the Jewish religion. There is only talk about animal sacrifice, but that is something different. An ordinary butcher could not make the sacrifice. Only priests and Levites, and only they, were permitted to eat meat from animals killed as sacrifices. After all, Jews, today almost all of you eat non-kosher meat. It is only a superstition and, let us say, a whim of rabbis⁴⁸.

From the context of Piątkowski's statement, it appears that Rabbi Nachum Asz's dissertation had reached the Town Hall. However, during the course of the ongoing political discussions, all experts' statements were quoted and interpreted in accordance with the aims and interests of the political groupings taking part in the political dispute.

During an address to a session of the Council on 26th February 1936, Jan Leopold Piątkowski then reminded them that:

The Municipal Management Committee had discussed this matter and the chairman had requested that the Jewish Community Council provide a financial statement showing fees obtained from ritual slaughter during 1927⁴⁹.

Chairman Mackiewicz announced that he had not received such a statement. Further in his speech, Piątkowski referred to the economic losses suffered by Christians as the result of *shechita*. He stated that:

... for each kilogram of meat, Christians pay 10-20 groszy extra, towards the Jewish Community Council and to the butchers, for allegedly ritual slaughter. In this case, it is hard, but the economic interests of 27,000 Jews in Częstochowa must yield to the economic interests of 100,000 Christians, and 3 million must yield to 30 million in the whole of Poland⁵⁰.

In a further part of his speech, he referred to the motion moved by Poseł Prystorowa. Reliance, in this instance, on the Poseł's authority known throughout Poland was an important argument during the Częstochowa City Council session. It added a Polish national dimension, not just a local one. It added a national significance to Councillors' statements, linking them to those of the parliament and the government. According to a *Goniec Częstochowski* report, Piątkowski quoted a press statement by Prystorowa which declared that "the issue is settled that alleged ritual slaughter must be abolished, or else no parliament will be able to prevent a collision with the whole of society"⁵¹.

By way of confirming the legitimacy of the National caucus move, Piątkowski offered the examples of the city councils of Włocławek and Grajewo, which had banned "alleged ritual slaughter".⁵² He announced to those assembled that:

In Włocławek, it occurred calmly thanks to the tact of the Jews. They left the chamber during the voting, and the councillors unanimously voted in favour of banning alleged ritual slaughter⁵³.

⁴⁷ In the sources APwCz w zesp. AmCz, no such statement can be found.

⁴⁸ APCz, zesp. AmCz sygn. 5725 p. 173. Por. *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 28th February 1936.

⁴⁹ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 28th February 1936.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

He finished his address with a sharp statement:

The Jews are mobilising. They are making various threats, such threats as should be punished by the Government. This City Council will not be afraid of that and will undoubtedly pass the National caucus motion.⁵⁴

The debate was adjourned. The issue was again considered on 2nd March 1936. The Council's dramatic debate was recorded in the Minutes. Item 5 of the Minutes reads:

In his introduction, the Mayor announced that, regarding this matter, a motion was to be proposed by the Polish Economic Block. The following councillors then spoke, in order, being Cr.Dr.A.Bram, Feliks Szpiro, who in concluding his address demanded a committee of investigation, Cr. Jakób Bendet Rozenberg, Cr. Lech Smulski who, after his speech, read the motion proposed by the Polish Economic Block, Cr. Mojżesz Mehring, Cr. Józef Kazimierzak, Roman Blachnicki and Józef Magnuski, who moved that no further names be added to the list of those who were to speak and that addresses be limited to 5 minutes. Eugeniusz Zarzecki spoke against the motion. The voting on Magnuski's motion was as follows: 17 votes in favour, 3 councillors from the Jewish grouping abstained and 17 councillors voted against. Uproar greeted the result of the voting with speeches by Councillors Jan Pluta and Władysław Stadnicki. Councillor Eugeniusz Zarzecki, before starting his address, yelled at the Chairman that he had acted dishonestly and not in accordance with Council regulations, for which he took the Chairman to task. Cr.Alojzy Dąbrowski then spoke, while Cr.Jan Gronkiewicz asked the Chairman that he bring the gallery to order since, during Cr. Dąbrowski's address, abusive language. After the five-hour debate, during which the above councillors spoke, the National caucus motion regarding referring the matter of ritual slaughter to the Polish federal government, was defeated by councillors from the Polish Economic Block, the Polish Socialist Party, the Trade Union caucus and the Jewish grouping, with the National caucus voting in favour. The City Council then adopted a motion by the Polish Economic Block, the motion being supported by the Polish Economic Block, the Polish Socialist Party, the Trade Union caucus and others in favour, with the Jewish groupings voting against. The motion reads as follows: *The Częstochowa City Council stands against ritual slaughter on humanitarian and economic grounds and has concluded that the decisive factors will be the banning of ritual slaughter in Poland through appropriate legislation.* After the Chairman announced the result of the voting, Feliks Szpiro, read the following declaration: *I consider the motion regarding ritual slaughter as an assault on the hallowed laws of the Jewish religion, as well as on freedom of conscience and faith as guaranteed in the Constitution, and is contrary to the basic elements of tolerance and civil equality. In anticipation of a sharp backlash, we now leave the chamber in protest*⁵⁵.

The long quotation from the minutes of the Częstochowa City Council debate illustrates the atmosphere which prevailed in the chamber, a battle of arguments, lively debate using tactics which exploited procedural possibilities. As a result, after 4 hours and 40 minutes of debate, the Jewish councillors walked out at 2:20am and, in the process, ended Council proceedings. From the moment the National caucus moved the motion, at the City Council, for the banning of *shechita*, it took three and half months of discussion before that final motion was accepted by Council.

Goniec Częstochowski strongly joined into that debate. It often treated the issue as a way of drawing attention to the "destructive influence of Jews" on the improvement of living condition of the city's Christian community. This newspaper, quoting a story by a relative of Rev.Dr.Trzeciak, reported on an attempt by Jews to acquire the official handwritten speech by the Sejm priest during his absence and on an attempt, by a Chassid, to bribe the priest⁵⁶. The entire article was presented with this telling commentary:

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ APCz, zesp. AmCz, sygn. 5725, pp. 179-180.

⁵⁶ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 12th March 1936.

Jews consider money as one of the most powerful weapons in the fight for their privileges. Every Jew was obliged to hand over money saved for food, during a fast ordered by the rabbis, this money to be used in the fight against banning ritual slaughter⁵⁷.

At the beginning of April 1936, the readers *Gońiec Częstochowski* discovered that:

... prior to changes in the law relating to ritual slaughter taking effect, [...] ways of direct co-operation between craftsmen and farming producers are being investigated, in relation to supplying animals to be slaughtered for the domestic market⁵⁸.

Two weeks later, a paragraph appeared on the stamping of kosher meat throughout Poland. The introduction of this obligation was intended to eliminate the sale, through abattoirs with kosher meat, of meat derived by means other than by ritual slaughter⁵⁹. In July, *Gońiec Częstochowski* ran the information that, on the following day, 6th July, legal provisions would be enacted regarding the act of slaughtering farm animals⁶⁰.

In September of that same year, *Gońiec Częstochowski* discovered that two large Jewish wholesalers, at their own initiative, had moved from ritual slaughter to mechanical. As the editorial claimed, the move by the wholesalers had the aim of protecting themselves against attempts, by Polish co-operative meat retailers, of taking over mass slaughtering. The author of the article put forward the assumption that a rivalry will occur in this field between Jewish wholesalers and Polish butchers⁶¹. This fact attested to the ingeniousness of Jewish entrepreneurs in accommodating themselves to the new legislative conditions. The article also voiced doubt as to whether the basic aims as were intended, would be achieved – that of limiting or introducing a ban on ritual slaughter.

In January 1937, the Czeŝtchowa Jewish community again stirred up debate over ritual slaughter. A boycott of the regulations took place with, among other things, Jewish butchers not applying for authorisation to slaughter. With respect to the eternal laws of the Jewish religion, the butchers regarded the Act as an absurdity, treating it as a political, transitory impost. They regarded breaking the laws of the Jewish religion, which had been followed since time immemorial, as the greater crime against God and tradition, more so than breaking a law created by man that went against the law of God. Under this new situation, they continued ritually slaughtering in defiance of the law, thereby falling into disfavour with the authorities, but fulfilling the eternal law of God. The other form of defiance, against factors disadvantageous to the preservation of their tradition and separate identity under constitutional law, was to refrain from eating *treyf* meat.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, dated 1st April 1936

⁵⁹ *The Ministry of Industry and Trade is drawing up regulations regarding the trade of kosher meat. New regulations oblige kosher meat to be stamped with special large marks which must be visible from a distance. The effect will be to facilitate control over the trading of meat derived from the ritual system of slaughter because, in accordance with the new regulations, abattoirs selling meat from ritual slaughter will not be entitled to sell meat derived from different means of slaughtering.* Ibid, dated 14th June 1936.

⁶⁰ *The regulations anticipate that ritual slaughter will only take place in bigger cities. Kosher butchers will have to obtain kosher meat from cities in which ritual slaughterhouses, intended for ritual slaughter, will operate. Beyond that, the regulations will require a special fee for kosher meat, collected by controllers who will supervise the kosher meat trade. Rabbinical circles are considering a plan of issuing an appeal to the Jewish population to cease eating meat. According to the rabbis, this threat will influence a tempering of the regulations to be enacted.* Ibid., dated 5th July 1936.

⁶¹ Ibid, dated 9th September 1936.

Debate fired up anew. This time it concerned the size of meat quotas derived from ritual slaughter. As a result, political disputes again flared up on the issue of banning *shechita*. This also took place in Częstochowa. On 6th January 1937, *Goniec Częstochowski* reported:

The quota of meat, derived from ritual slaughter in Częstochowa, has been set at 115,000 kg per month of live weight, which constitutes 40% of all current slaughter⁶².

Further on, the article states:

Poultry may also be killed ritually only after obtaining the appropriate concession from the Provincial Office, via the District Office and on the basis of the opinion of both the District Office and Chamber of Crafts. Following this, the Magistrate will divide the 115,000 kg quota amongst those who have obtained a concession. However, Jews, it would appear, have decided to offer so-called passive resistance by refraining from applying for concessions in the hope that, through their actions, they will influence the Government to stop bringing the Act into effect. However, the situation has been determined and therefore the Provincial Government has instructed ritual slaughter to cease until concessions have been obtained by interested parties. It can be supposed that Jews will, for the time being, eat poultry, but only those killed in private homes. In connection with this, it has been possible to observe a great demand for poultry in Częstochowa and a sudden increase in its prices.

In order to carry out humanitarian slaughter, the Częstochowa municipal abattoir has imported a special set of devices. Cattle are killed by a shot from the *Radykal* apparatus, while pigs are electrically shocked using a *Weinberg* system. For ritual slaughter, an abattoir brings in mattresses upon which cattle are thrown, tied up and then slaughtered. In an endeavour to improve the quality of leather raw material, the Municipal Veterinary Surgeon has ordered that, after being knocked out, horned cattle must be pricked. This will improve the quality of the raw material, thereby protecting the wealth of the state⁶³.

That same article contained a description of the humanitarian way of slaughtering animals:

To date, this state of affairs has not changed and cattle in the Częstochowa Abattoir are only killed using the *Radykal* apparatus. The preparation procedure for mechanical slaughter is very simple. There is now no ghastly tying down of the animal until it falls to the ground. There is also no need for the blood-curdling process of shaving the front of the neck, before the bearded slaughterer cuts its life in two. The new humanitarian method eliminates this ante-mortem torment. The cattle wait for death without expecting it at all. They are killed by an innocent-looking system, the *Radykal* bolt device. It is a steel cylinder, containing a very strong spring. When a trigger is pulled, it releases a long, steel firing pin with gigantic power. The device operates quickly and reliably. After injecting the shiny, steel cylinder into the skull, one after the other, cattle fall to the ground, totally paralysed. There is no sign of the slightest reflex which would betray any indication of life. Piercing the heart completes the slaughter following the *Radykal* shot. Immobilised, the cattle bleed out quite normally. It should be emphasised that the application of this humane, mechanical method of slaughter has, in no way, reduced the amount of cattle slaughtered at the Abattoir⁶⁴.

⁶² *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 6th January 1937.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, dated 6th January 1937.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, dated 6th January 1937.

After the Act regarding the slaughter of animals came into force, it was still repeatedly raised within *Gońiec Częstochowski*. On 10th January 1937, in one article, the newspaper stated:

As we have already reported, ritual slaughter has entirely ceased at the Częstochowa Municipal Abattoir. This is a result of the fact that Jewish butchers have not tried to obtain concessions under the new slaughter regulations. [...] Today, rumours are circulating that five Jewish butchers have already obtained concessions for ritual slaughter. And so this barbaric slaughter will continue within the coming days, however, within limited proportions. However, this raises a fundamental observation. As everyone knows, Częstochowa's quota for ritual slaughter was set at 115,000 kg live weight per month, which constitutes 40% of the total slaughter. However, we know that the Jewish population in Częstochowa constitutes 27% of the total residents. So, why was this quota for ritual slaughter set at 40%? Is this a privilege afforded to Jews? Particularly, if we take into account that in many towns and in the whole of Poland ritual slaughter was set at 15%. So, how was this monthly quota for ritual slaughter in Częstochowa, which so exceeds the demand from the Jewish population, calculated and by whom - all the more so because not all Jews eat so-called kosher meat and are not averse to eating *treyf*? [...] Częstochowa, also, should have its quota for ritual slaughter limited to meet the actual need⁶⁵.

This newspaper informed its readers of crimes which were committed in contravention of the new Act regarding ritual slaughter. After an inspection, by controllers, of the Municipal Abattoir on ul Narutowicza, four people were found with 132 kgs of meat derived from illegal slaughter. The article was accompanied by the following editorial comment: "This is all too telling for just one street"⁶⁶. Tackling the issue of the quota for ritually slaughtered meat, *Gońiec Częstochowski* quoted instances of disputes in other cities, for example, in Lublin:

One thing is certain – Jews have been granted too large a quota. It is difficult to suppose that the excess ritual meat would be thrown away or destroyed. Jewish traders try to sell it to the Christian population. The entire mass of Jewish abattoirs, with non-ritually slaughtered meat, does not respect orders forbidding them to sell this meat. The Sanitary Commission has already detected hindquarters meat from ritual slaughter at one non-ritual abattoir. In this instance, the quota for ritually slaughtered meat should be lowered to match the needs of the Jewish population⁶⁷.

A debate, centering on the percentage of ritual meat allocated to the city, quickly followed. It became a pretext for the formulation of a series of antisemitic speeches. Councillors from Częstochowa's National caucus, within a month of the Act on ritual slaughter coming into force, were already critical of it. During a session of the City Council on 18th February 1937, the National caucus moved a motion demanding that, "in this matter, statutory restrictions are applied to ritual slaughter".

In it, they expressed their negative attitude to the ultimate contents of the Act and they articulated their anxieties regarding its full implementation⁶⁸. The rhetoric expressed had all the features of a populist speech:

⁶⁵ Ibid., dated 10th January 1937.

⁶⁶ Ibid., dated 10th January 1937.

⁶⁷ Ibid., dated 20th January 1937.

⁶⁸ The implementation of Acts designating the conditions of ritual slaughter, and the conditions of the meat trade emanating from ritual slaughter, requires permanent vigilance by the authorities and by the community. This is due to the half-measures which legislators used to solve the difficult issue of barbaric ritual slaughter and which has been defended by such destructive elements as are the Jews. APCz, AmCz Ref. 5725

The National Caucus maintains constant contact with the masses being exploited by Jewish consumerism in the areas of farming, craft and trade. This group is alarmed by and grumble about the alleged brilliant Act regarding ritual slaughter. The Jewish monopoly still prevails over the meat market to the detriment of Polish producers and consumers⁶⁹.

The *Nationalists* considered themselves as spokesmen for the whole of society, as defenders of all Christian groups exploited by the "Jewish monopoly". They were certain of the correctness of their arguments and were determined in the battle to bring them into force in order to solve all the contemporary social problems, thereby fully realising all their aims. And so they directed an appeal to the Municipal Management Committee, informing it in detail on the matter of enforcing the Act on ritual slaughter within Częstochowa⁷⁰. The authors of the appeal assumed that the information, which they had prepared, would cause everyone's interest to rise in, not only the "authoritative factors responsible for implementing the Act" but also, above all, in opposing all attempts at passive resistance by the Jews in their attempts to get around and act against the intentions of the legislators. The following was included in the Minutes of the Council session:

Action at implementing a statutory limitation on ritual slaughter has been tested up to 1st April 1937. At present, the temporary orders of the central authorities are aimed at examining, in detail, all economic changes arising from this Act. As of 1st April 1937, uniform and permanent regulations are to be introduced, after which they will be announced to the City Council⁷¹.

The report on this session of the City Council in *Goniec Częstochowski* also had an antisemitic accent to it. It stated that, in response to a question, at that session, on the matter of ritual meat for the Jewish population of Częstochowa, Magistrate's clerk Szaja Nierenberg:

... demonstrated that Jews in Częstochowa ate as much as 14,250 kg of ritual meat which represented 40% of slaughtered cattle. According to experts, this calculation does not match the actual state of affairs and showed the characteristics of a biased study. In that case, the questioners asked whether the Mayor is familiar with this data and in what manner will the Mayor hold the clerk to account for abusing his power for aims contrary to the interests of the Polish nation?⁷²

A month later, on 18th March 1937, the issue again returned to a session of the City Council. Consistently continuing the political agenda, National caucus councillors moved a motion to establish who was responsible for setting the ritual quota too high⁷³. They also directed a question to the Municipal Management Committee asking what steps had the Provincial Office taken, as well as what explanations had been given to the Częstochowa Regional Court, on the limitation of the ritual slaughter ratio⁷⁴.

⁶⁹ APCz, AmCz Ref. 5725

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 381.

⁷² *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 21st February 1937.

⁷³ *Regarding a question to the authorities by the National caucus on abuses by the head of the Department of Administration, H. Jackowski*. See APCz, zesp. AmCz. Ref. 5725 pp. 383-384.

⁷⁴ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 20th March 1937. Por. APCz, zesp. AmCz, Ref. 5725 pp. 367- 385.

On 9th June 1938, in discussions on meat slaughtering law, Councillor Stadnicki moved a motion to delete agenda items relating to ritual slaughter⁷⁵. He justified this by stating that "the City Council had already decided to ban ritual slaughter"⁷⁶. The amendment passed on the votes of the National caucus, the Economic Block and a section of the Polish Socialist Party. On behalf of the Jewish caucus, Councillor Dr Bram reacted angrily stating that banning ritual slaughter was contrary to the regulations "⁷⁷".

Debate surrounding the issue of *shechita* during a session of the City Council evidenced an ever-increasing atmosphere of antisemitism. Opposed to the Sanacja, the national groupings endeavoured to unite, around themselves, the widest possible groups of people discontent with the government's policies, enforced by the Polish state. Daily, a Częstochowa resident would encounter a patriotic-religious atmosphere. Celebrations on Jasna Góra were a strong spiritual experience, but also exerted a significant influence on political postures. It is possible to put forward the theory that, together with the growing threat of war breaking out, the community consolidated around the defence of the state losing its independence. The increase in patriotic sentiments in some social and political circles manifested itself in an increase in hostile attitudes towards national minorities.

Signs of antisemitism did not take drastic forms in Częstochowa. Antisemitic excesses were met with a sharp reaction from the Bishop of Częstochowa, Teodor Kubina, as well as from the vast majority of the city's residents. Strongly influencing the city's working class districts, the Polish Socialist Party determinedly condemned and opposed signs of antisemitism. The chanting of slogans, harsh language, press articles and, sometimes, rocks, smashed windows and vandalised market stalls characterised the social and national landscape of more than one city and small town in the Second Polish Republic.

The heating up of the anti-Jewish atmosphere in the months leading up to the outbreak of

⁷⁵ Points regarding ritual slaughter: "2) Ritual slaughter may only be conducted on: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays between noon and 4:00pm and § VI the following: „1. Individuals selling ritually slaughtered meat may submit animals for ritual slaughter without the animals being previously deprived of consciousness, on the condition that, prior to slaughter, a ritual slaughtering permit, issued by the Częstochowa Management Committee, has been provided to the manager of the abattoir, and that the weight of the slaughtered animal corresponds with the quota stipulated in the permit. 2. Ritually slaughtering an animal should be carried out by at least four appropriately qualified and strong persons, with the aid of triple-clubs bring the property of the abattoir. 3. The ritual bleeding of the animal may be performed by a butcher authorised by the manager of the abattoir. 4. The ritual inspection should be carried out on a clean table. Animal lungs inflated by human breath or touched by human saliva must be immediately confiscated and destroyed. 5. The slaughterer must wear clean, and easily washable, protective clothing while slaughtering animals and during their inspection. 6. Dividing the halves of a ritually slaughtered animal into quarters is not permitted without previously stamping the halves with a "ritually slaughtered" seal. 7. Only persons authorised by the manager of the abattoir may be present in the room while ritual slaughtering takes place." APCz, zesp. AmCz, Ref. 5728, pp. 222-224.

⁷⁶ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 11th June 1938.

⁷⁷ APCz, zesp. AmCz, Ref. 5728, pp. 222-224

⁷⁸ "A certain woman has informed us that Mrs Aleksandra Biernacka of Kielce, a lieutenant's widow, gave her concession for the sale of alcohol to a Jewish shop owned by Dora Rotmil in Częstochowa. The concession holder's unfathomable philosemitic sympathies merit our attention all the more so because Mrs. Biernacka did not try to sell her concession to a Christian, but granted her Polish Spirits Monopoly to Jews. Some inveterate *Jew lovers*, with the silent support of the abovementioned firm, will maybe also stop shopping at Jewish stores which benefit from their *haul* from the hands of the Polish concession, all the more so that Christian food shops, praise God, are not lacking in Częstochowa. We appeal to the higher feelings of national dignity, and reluctance to bring shame, of all honest Poles ", *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 7th June 1939. "She Chose a Jew Instead of a Christian".

war provided material for an article in *Goniec Częstochowski* on 7th June 1939, It was headlined with *She Chose a Jew Instead of a Christian*⁷⁸.

In that same vein of propaganda, eleven days before the outbreak of war, *Goniec Częstochowski* published an article entitled *We are not Surprised by the Jews, But are You Poles not Ashamed?*, stating that “auditors of the Municipal abattoir had recently again caught several *loyal citizens* from whom secretly slaughtered meat had been confiscated”.

Dawid Salomonowicz had 14kgs of veal, Maria Koszieowa 53 kgs of veal, Szmul Srebrnik had 175 kgs of beef, Tadeusz Jaskólski had 160kgs, Szaja Walrach had 10 kgs of veal, Rajza Bid had 5 kgs of veal, Abram Wolf Bid had 20 kgs of veal and Abram Figlarz 42 kgs. These two Poles must have felt good being in the company of representatives of the chosen people! We are not surprised by the Yids, because that is their normal practice. But are you Poles not ashamed?!⁷⁹

Today, it is difficult to state whether the rhetoric featured in these articles was a “fashion”, which had permeated Poland’s western borders. Was it an ideological challenge to the consolidation of the Polish nation according to the slogan, *each to his own*, promoted it in the second half of the 1930’s? Or did it have an economic basis? We consider that, in the campaign against ritual slaughter, its influence was a mixture of both these determinants. It is not possible to disregard the negative mood of the city’s residents caused by the effects of the economic crisis and the marketplace rivalries between Christian and Jewish craftsmen and traders within the city and Częstochowa’s surrounding regions.

Chief Rabbi Nachum Asz’s Polemics with Shechita’s Opponents

Due the actions of the National Democrat councillors in the Częstochowa City Council, and at the request of a group of Jewish councillors, Chief Rabbi Nachum Asz, in 1935, published his work on *shechita*. His dissertation was received with great interest. By March 1936, a third edition had already been published. We will refer to this third edition of the Rabbi’s work entitled *In Defence of Ritual Slaughter* acknowledging that the edition, published in March 1936, contained additional text and a new chapter headed *On the Margins of Debate in the Sejm Administrative Committee*.

The Jewish minority in the Second Polish Republic constituted a significant percentage of the Polish citizenry. Two censuses were conducted in inter-War Poland – in 1921 and in 1931. Both the method of conducting them and the method of calculating the result raised much controversy. The 1931 census is more relevant to our topic here. The accepted results of that census indicate that, according to ethnicity, the Jewish population stood at 3.1 million, 9.8% of the total number of residents in Poland. Ezra Mendelssohn states that it was *the largest Jewish community in non-communist Europe (...). Only the percentage of Jews in British Palestine was higher*⁸⁰. In Częstochowa, where Chief Rabbi Nachum Asz lived and worked, the Jewish community constituted one-third of all the city’s residents.

⁷⁹ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 20th August 1939.

⁸⁰ E. Mendelssohn, *Żydzi Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w okresie międzywojennym (Central-Eastern European Jews in the Inter-War Period)*, Warsaw 1992, p. 47.

At the time, the issue of *shechita* was not a marginal one in the multicultural, social reality of the inter-War Polish state. Discussion surrounding ritual slaughter in the mid-1930's was inspired, mainly, by Polish nationalist political groupings. Within those discussions, they used divisive arguments to stir up Polish society, both Christians and Jews. Political campaigns built on ideology, heated slogans aimed at achieving predetermined goals, all evoked strong emotions. Those emotions overshadowed any matter-of-fact approach, based on the principles of tolerance, towards this issue. At the time, the key arguments of the opponents to *shechita* were: 1) economic losses incurred by the Polish state, 2) costs with which the Christian community would be burdened, 3) the inhumane methods by which animals were killed, 4) justification behind ritual slaughter being incompatible with the Jewish religion.

The aim of Rabbi Asz's work was not only to join into the debate as a religious Jew and as a Polish citizen, but also to counter all the charges levelled against the traditional method, based upon religious principles, of killing animals. He endeavoured to convince readers that, based upon objective analyses and rational arguments drawn from fundamental religious writings, the ban on ritual slaughter would bring no one economic or social benefits. In the process, he raised the questionable nature of the debate surrounding *shechita*⁸¹. In the final part of his work, he stated:

From the moment that the arsenal of arguments starts to run out for the opponents of slaughter, only one remains. Quite frankly – we don't want it!⁸².

When arguments put forward by opponents were refuted, the Rabbi posed an open question to the initiators of the introduction of a ban on ritual slaughter, "This one stimulus, this one wake-up call – is it supposed to be a hatred drawn out of ethnic and religious differences?"⁸³ In their speeches, opponents of ritual slaughter often exploited the current stereotype of the rich Jew and of the poor Christian being exploited by Jews. In the face of the economic and social problems that young independent Polish state had to contend with, politicians readily invoked that stereotype as being detrimental to society. In the course of the debate on *shechita*, this stereotype was often used as an argument indicating that the Christian bore the costs of ritual slaughter and the upkeep of Jewish community council. Adapting himself to that style and level of debate, Rabbi Asz turned to Rev. Trzeciak with the following:

I turn to the Reverend priest. I propose uniting Jews with the section of Christians whom he represents. I take upon myself half of the task. I will deliver to him poor Jews. In this spirit, let the priest reconcile them with those rich Christians closest to him⁸⁴.

⁸¹ N.Asz, directly addressing himself to the opponents of ritual slaughter, stated, "In the beginning, opponents armed themselves with arguments of a humanitarian and economic nature. Whereas, in the end, without any fuss, they themselves categorised their humanitarian and economic arguments as a plain ruse. We Jews, however, knew that from the start of the debate. Because, how it is possible to win, against Jews, on the point of compassion for animals, when it is precisely that compassion which is one of the unshakeable dogmas of the Jewish religion?" N. Asz, *W obronie (In Defence)*...p.67-68.

⁸² Ibid., p. 70-71.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 71.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 71.

The Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Częstochowa, Nachum Asz, standing in defence of retaining one of the most significant religious commandments and traditions of observant Jews, and an element of their religious identity, stressed, in the foreword of his work, that he cited the results of the work of Dr. J. A. Demby, a member of the board of the St. Petersburg Humanitarian Society and an expert in the field. He informed his readers of the seriousness and scale of the issue. He suggested that everyone, speaking on the subject of *shechita*, acquaint themselves with his arguments.⁸⁵

In the first section of his work, entitled *The Fight Against Ritual Slaughter in Various Countries*, he put forward arguments denying the widespread claim that this dispute had been going on since the Middle Ages. He conceded that, in the Middle Ages, the ban on slaughter had admittedly been raised, mainly under the influence of antisemitism. Mass actions to ban *shechita* only appeared from midway through the 19th century. The Częstochowa Chief Rabbi explained that the first country which wanted to introduce a ban on ritual slaughter was Switzerland. The moves met with varied success in the individual Cantons. In 1888, the Department of Justice and Police of the Swiss government turned to foreign members of parliament and consuls, inquiring of them as to what system of slaughter applied in their countries. One of the most interesting letters came from a Swiss member of parliament in New York:

In recent times, the provisions of the Jewish religion regarding slaughter were extensively applied in Christian abattoirs, where that system of slaughter is the quickest, and is in full harmony with the objectives of animal welfare organisations whose aim is to protect animals against cruelty⁸⁶.

Another interesting response was sent from western Europe. The Swiss Consul in St. Petersburg quoted the opinion of a special committee, set up by the St. Petersburg Central Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, to examine this issue: *Almost all members (of the committee) recognised that ritual slaughter is a system which causes animals the least suffering*⁸⁷. Defenders of ritual slaughter had been successful at all higher levels of government in Switzerland. In January 1892, a new law was exploited. This law gave a group of 50,000 citizens the right to initiate legislation. A bill was then announced to abolish ritual slaughter. Trade unions pushed for a referendum which took place on 20th August 1893. Rabbi Asz assessed these events, as well as the result of the referendum, in this manner:

When the opponents to ritual slaughter could not convince the country's educated and the authorities, they managed to succeed with the support of the masses who could not have known much about ritual slaughter. The opponents of ritual slaughter spread wild propaganda against ritual slaughter amongst the non-Jewish population, often with a touch of antisemitism. To bring about their aims in the French part of Switzerland, as has now been revealed, they used falsified documents which were supposed to confirm that the Catholic clergy in France were against ritual slaughter⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ *In this battle, in view of the topicality of the subject, I consider that public opinion in other cities in Poland should be especially considered.* N. Asz, *W obronie.... (In Defence ...)*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸⁸ N. Asz, *W obronie.. (In Defence..)*, p. 10.

In evaluating the events in Switzerland, Rabbi Asz used an additional argument in which he quoted from a publication, dated 21st June 1894, by the French antisemite Edward Daumont (editor of the *La Libre Parole* publishing company), which cited the opinion of Decurtius (one of the leaders of the move against ritual slaughter in Switzerland). Rabbi Asz stated that:

The Swiss law on ritual slaughter has only one goal – to repress the Jews. This ban has nothing to do with the proper tasks of animal welfare organisations, and only constitutes a defence against Jews who have come to Switzerland in great numbers⁸⁹.

Rabbi Asz referred to the scale of the problem in other European countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria. He also disclaimed Councillor Zarzecki's argument, put forward at a sitting of the City Council on 19th November 1935 that *ritual slaughter has been abolished everywhere in the West (...)*⁹⁰. In order to authenticate his opinion about slaughter in Belgium and in the Netherlands, Rabbi Asz went to great lengths and wrote to rabbis, in these countries, to clarify the issue of shechita. In his dissertation, he cited Polish translations of excerpts of the replies he received. All categorically denied that ritual slaughter had been banned in their country. As evidence, for example, Rabbi Josef Gelernter, of the *Adat-Israel* Orthodox Jewish Council, offers the possibility of the Belgian government writing an official letter confirming the situation. The Viennese Rabbinical Council criticised the growing lies which it regarded as intolerable⁹¹. In support of an analysis of the attitude to ritual slaughter in various countries, not just European, and citing the opinions of various authorities and specialists in this area, he stated that:

At this time, ritual slaughter has been banned only in Switzerland and in Germany, and in all other countries, in almost the entire world, it is permitted. The claim put forward, in support of the banning of ritual slaughter, by a faction of the National Democrats in the Częstochowa City Council, that it has also been banned in the Netherlands and in Belgium, is simply not true⁹².

These representations by the Chief Rabbi forced opponents of ritual slaughter to seek new arguments to justify their move against *shechita*. Rabbi Asz described the dispute in Poland as:

⁸⁹ N. Asz, *W obronie...* (*In Defence ...*), pp. 10-11.

⁹⁰ APCz, zesp. AmCz, Ref. 5725, pp 117-129.

⁹¹ "In relation to the statement by the petitioner, that ritual slaughter has been banned in the Netherlands and in Belgium, and their quoting from international conferences of animal welfare organisations in Brussels and in Vienna, I refer to the following correspondence from rabbis in Amsterdam, Brussels and Vienna. I. *The Chief Rabbinate of Amsterdam*, ul. Rapenburga 173, Amsterdam, dated 2nd December 1935. Dear Rabin Nachum Asz of Częstochowa. We advise that ritual slaughter has never been banned in our country and that our government has not even thought about banning it. Yours sincerely, Chief Rabbinate of Amsterdam. Chairman Rabin Eliezer Sarluis ben Naftali, Secretary Rabin Uri Koppenhagen ben Izaak. II J. Gelernter, Rabbi of Adat-Israel Orthodox Jewish Council in Brussels, 297 Ch. De Mons, Brussels, dated 1st December 1935. To the Rabbi of Częstochowa, Rabbi N. Asz, In reply to your letter dated 24th November 1935, regarding the matter of banning ritual slaughter, based on the argument that it has also been banned in Belgium, we hasten to reply that this is a lie. In Belgium, the government legally permits ritual slaughter which was announced in the "Belgian Monitor" on 29th March 1929. If you wish, I can forward official confirmation of this. Respectfully, (-) Josef Gelernter, Rabbi M.P. III Vienna Jewish Community Rabbinate, Vienna, 2nd December 1935. To Rabbi N. Asz of Częstochowa. We respectfully advise that, in Vienna, ritual slaughter is not, and has never been, forbidden. On the contrary, attempts by some animal welfare organisations to influence the matter ritual slaughter have been categorically resisted by the Government. Jewish religious provisions are regarded as absolutely authoritative. Any denial of this situation is unacceptable. On behalf of the Rabbinate, Chief Rabbi, Dr. Dawid Feuchtwang, MP." „Przypis I", [w:] N. Asz, *W obronie ...* (*In Defence ...*) March 1936, (3rd edition), p.14.

⁹² N. Asz, *W obronie...* (*In Defence ...*), p. 14. N.

... being dictated, in the first instance, not by humanitarian considerations, but by political ones. The situation in Poland has been initiated by the National Democrats for whom it is, above all, a fight against Jews⁹³.

He cited representatives of three groups which had taken an objective and authoritative position in this matter, and each of them had refuted the main charge against *shechita* – that it was inhumane. The first citation emanated from the Babylonian Talmud, one of the fundamental sources in the shaping of Jewish religious attitudes. *Whoever does not show compassion towards animals will themselves suffer*. (Babylonian Talmud, Book of Baba Mezla, Part 85a)⁹⁴.

For the second, he quoted the words of the Polish bard Adam Mickiewicz:

The Law of Moses, the most humane of all laws which prevailed in ancient times, demands the care of cattle, plants and the earth, and even sets times of rest. The Law of Moses is far deeper philosophically than all forms of German philosophy. (Adam Mickiewicz, *Literatura słowiańska (Slavic Literature)*, year III, lesson XIX)⁹⁵.

His third citation came from a representative of the prestigious Paris Pasteur Institutem from its Director, Pierre Emil Roux, who stated, “I would wish to die lightly, like animals killed by the Jewish ritual method”⁹⁶.

He pointed out that “the argument that there was no religious basis for ritual slaughter had already appeared at the end of the last century [XIX w - przyp. M.& J. Mizgalski]”⁹⁷. Opponents to this method of slaughter claimed that ritual slaughter was not a religious provision, but a whim of the rabbis. In the process, they endeavoured to stress the fragility of the religious principles applied by Jews, and also to undermine the authority of the rabbis.

Invalidating the claim of the religious character of *shechita* was a tactical manoeuvre which appeared in the 19th century. The processes, causing the democratisation of European political and social life, led to the democratisation of state systems. As a result of these processes, freedom of religion, equality and tolerance became the foundations of civil society. All breaches of these principles were treated as an assault on the civil liberties which were written into constitutions. Referring to those democratic conditions, the Rabbi aptly stressed that opponents to *shechita* were therefore forced to question the religious character of ritual slaughter. He revealed the tactics used by opponents:

Since Jews have defended ritual slaughter as an absolute religious provision and as a duty, and have cited constitutional provisions of the Constitution granting them freedom of religion and in the performance of religious activities, opponents to ritual slaughter felt forced to question the religious character of this slaughter⁹⁸.

Recognising ritual slaughter as a principle of religious life set all debate around this issue apart from the law regarding freedom of conscience and worship. In the case of the Second Polish Republic, banning ritual slaughter was contrary to the Constitution. Hence, all arguments put forward by opponents to *shechita* were aimed at invalidating the claim that it was a religious provision. All attempts to prove that it was merely a whim of rabbis were

⁹³ Asz, *W obronie...* (*In Defence ...*), p. 14.

⁹⁴ N. Asz, *W obronie ..* (*In Defence ...*).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

⁹⁸ N. Asz, *Obrona uboju...*, (*In Defence ...*) p. 29.

written into an entire political campaign. Amongst those to actively join into the debate was Rev.Dr. St.Trzeciak. In his work entitled *Ritual Slaughter in the Light of the Bible and the Talmud*, he stated that the Talmud does not at all determine the manner by which animals should be slaughtered and that it had become a whim of rabbis who randomly commented on the Talmud. In the process, he endeavoured to undermine the authority of the Talmud as the source for Jewish religious law and raised doubts on how Jewish scholars could rely on it in the matter of ritual slaughter. Taking issue with this, Rabbi Asz sharply and determinedly voiced:

Rev. Dr.Trzeciak's reasoning defeats the entire purpose. It is not the place of representatives of other faiths to question the value of the Talmud as the source for Jewish religious law and as an interpretation of the Law of Moses⁹⁹.

Regarding Rev.Dr.St. Trzeciaki's next polemic, the Rabbi stated that, since ancient times, Jewish scholars regarded the requirement of *shechita* as an expression of the humane treatment of animals, drawing man's attention to the fact that animals should not be harmed or be subjected to unnecessary suffering. He referred to the views of Rabah, a Talmudist and head of the Jewish college in Surah (Babylon):

God's commandments were created in order to ennoble people. It is up to God whether an animal will be slaughtered on the side of the neck or the nape. The result is that divine commandments were established in order to ennoble people¹⁰⁰.

The Rabbi considered that the indisputable principles, for the religious Jew, concerning the eating of kosher food, including meat, were based on the Five Books of Moses, the Chulin treatise of the Babylonian Talmud, and were part of the *Hajad Machazaka* system of Jewish law, Maimonides, as well the *Szulchan Aruch* collection of codes. Asz quoted facts which attested to what it meant to Jews to eat kosher meat:

Jews have, always and everywhere as a community, strictly adhered to the principles of ritual slaughter and, in the face of actions carried out in various countries against ritual slaughter, have indomitably defended the religious character of this institution¹⁰¹.

Critically, he referred to attempts, by some sections of the Jewish community, to walk away from *shechita*¹⁰².

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁰⁰ Book of *Midrash Rabba*, XLIV, 1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 29-30; Among others, in a quote by Rabbi Asz, a statement by the Swiss Jewish Community Council, in 1887, stating, "Ritual slaughter is a religious imperative, dictated by the Torah. In 42 places, the Torah speaks of ritual slaughter. Also, the provisions of the Talmud, regarding ritual slaughter, referred to in the memorandum, states that religion is its source and justice dictates it". N. Asz, *O uboju.. (On Slaughter ...)*, p. 30.

¹⁰² "They found themselves in Germany, in the depths of reformism, deserving more the description of free-thinkers, amongst Jewish communities of a few former so-called rabbis and preachers who, in their works published in the 1880's, demanded a thorough reform of the Jewish religion. And, among other things, that ritual slaughter was not supported by the Law of Moses and the application of the Talmud to the Five Books of Moses was wrong regarding the slaughter of animals. One of the "rabbis", Dr. Stern converted to Christianity in 1883. Another, Dr.Wiener was so far a free-thinker that, after his death, he had instructed that his body be cremated, which is severely forbidden by the Jewish religion. The third, Dr Leopold Stein of Frankfurt am Main, was removed from his position as rabbi to a reform community due to the extent of his free-thinking." N.Asz, *W obronie... (In Defence ...)*, p. 29.

Refuting arguments trying to disprove *shechita* as a religious principle, the Częstochowa rabbi clearly emphasised that, not only was it a religious commandment directed towards orthodox Jews, it was also based on humanitarian tendencies and was not contradictory to public and social order. From a legal viewpoint, laws against *shechita* were contrary to the Constitution. He referred to a Regulation by the President of the Republic, dated 14th October 1927, confirming the legal status of Jewish community organisations:

Jewish Community Councils should provide their members with all the possibilities of satisfying their religious needs. The task of the councils is: [...] to ensure the delivery of kosher meat to the Jewish population¹⁰³.

Responding to accusations of Jews' inhumane attitudes to animals, an example of which was supposed to be ritual slaughter, the Rabbi spoke extensively about the Jewish religion's imperatives regarding the care of animals. He directed readers' attention to the fact that, in 1924, it was a Jew, Dr Lewis Gompertz, who was the founder of the world's first animal welfare organisation in London. Establishing such a society was just not a matter of chance as caring for animals carried with it much meaning. Asz stressed that:

Protecting animals' lives, caring for them and sparing them from pain and suffering permeates throughout Jewish religious literature, beginning from the Five Books of Moses,, namely the Torah, the first and most holy of Jewish books, and ending with the practices of the religion today¹⁰⁴.

He quoted a passage from the Babylonian Talmud which refers to two very important instructions directed at Jews, constituting a religious commandment regarding the care of animals. The first read as follows: *Caring for animals is a religious instruction, sanctioned by the Torah*.¹⁰⁵ The next stated: *Whoever does not feel compassion for animals will be caused to suffer*.¹⁰⁶ He went on to mention six excerpts referring to the feeding of animals which applied to observant Jews:

1. *It is forbidden to buy cattle or poultry without first preparing food for them*¹⁰⁷.
2. *Man is forbidden to eat without first feeding his animals, because it is said, "I will give you grass in the field with which to feed to your cattle", and later "then you will eat and eat you fill"*¹⁰⁸.
3. Referring to a passage from the Bible, *Noah, a righteous husband, was outstanding for his age; Noah went with God*¹⁰⁹ Rabbi Asz stressed that the ancient sages claimed that *Noah was a righteous man, feeding in his ark all God's creatures*¹¹⁰.
4. *The rooster should be fed not with food you have discarded; the same applies to the domestic cat*¹¹¹.

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 34-35.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ In this instance, Rabbi Asz referred to: the Babylonian Talmud, section Sabat, verse 128 b; the Babylonian Talmud, section Baba Mezin, verse 36 b.

¹⁰⁶ In this instance, Rabbi Asz referred to: the Babylonian Talmud, section Baba Mezin, verse 85a.

¹⁰⁷ R In this instance, Rabbi Asz referred to: the Jerusalem Talmud, section Jebamot, part XV; the Jerusalem Talmud, section Ktubot, part IV

¹⁰⁸ the Babylonian Talmud, section Gitan, verse 62a. Rabbi Asz stated that this section of the Bible: *I will give you grass in the field with which to feed your cattle, and then you will eat and eat you fill*, emanates from the Five Books of Moses, and which was interpreted by the ancient Jewish sages as meaning that it reflected well on man when his cattle are well fed.

¹⁰⁹ First Book of Moses VI, 9.

¹¹⁰ He referred to *Midrash Tanchuma*, the section about Noah.

¹¹¹ The book *Chayei Adam*.

5. Rabbi Asz states that, in accordance with religious law, in Palestine, farming work stopped every seventh year, known as a year of rest. In that year, crops were not sewn, and crops, intended for a large proportion of the poor population and for animals, grew spontaneously. He quoted from the Five Books of Moses: *For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie fallow and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.*¹¹² *Whatever the land yields during the seventh year will be food for you - for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.*¹¹³

In quoting from the Psalms of David, *He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry*¹¹⁴, he pointed out that, according to Jewish beliefs, God cared about feeding the beast and the fowl.

Asz also pointed to the six principles relating to work and a day of rest for animals:

1. *You shall not plough with an ox and donkey harnessed together*¹¹⁵. In this instance, he referred to the philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who stated that this commandment referred to the care of animals, taking into account that the ox was more powerful than the donkey and, that working with an ox would be extremely tiring for the donkey.
2. *Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.*¹¹⁶
3. *Domestic animals should be free from work so that they may reproduce*¹¹⁷.
4. *If horses draw a cart along an onerous road or up a steep mountain, and they cannot cope with the weight, irrespective of whether the horse belongs to a Jew or non-Jew, it is your duty to take pity on the animals. The driver shall not force the animals to work beyond their powers, using a whip.*¹¹⁸
5. *But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns*¹¹⁹.
6. *Six days you will do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves*¹²⁰.

The Rabbi also articulated commandments forbidding the tormenting of animals and the duty to help animals:

¹¹² Exodus 23:10-11.

¹¹³ Leviticus 25:6-7.

¹¹⁴ Psalm 147:9.

¹¹⁵ Deuteronomy 22:10.

¹¹⁶ Deuteronomy 25:4.

¹¹⁷ Sefer Chassidim" 667

¹¹⁸ Rabbi Zalman of Lida's collection of Jewish laws *Shulchan Aruch*, the section *On the Care of Animals*.

¹¹⁹ Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14.

¹²⁰ Exodus 23:12.

1. *You are not permitted to slaughter, unless the meat from that slaughter is not intended for consumption and it is known that it will deteriorate*¹²¹.
2. *If an ox gores a person to death, the ox shall be killed in accordance with the Bible.*¹²² According to the Talmud, the ox may only be killed under the sanction of 23 judges, similar to a judgement passed on a person tried for a crime¹²³.
3. Rabbi Asz pointed out that "It is a widespread custom amongst Jews to congratulate someone who is wearing new clothes and to express a wish that they 'wear them in good health', However, when someone wears new shoes or overcoat made of leather, it is unacceptable to issue that same wish, since cattle would need to have been killed in order to obtain the leather for such clothing. It is contrary to the principle expressed in the Psalms"(*Shulchan Aruch* Orach Chaim, articles. 223 & 226)¹²⁴.
4. *Whoever works as a shochet (ritual slaughterer), does not begin with the 'shehechyanu' blessing, because the carrying out of his profession is connected with the killing of one of God's creatures*¹²⁵.
5. *Neither cows with their young nor sheep with their young shall be killed on the same day*¹²⁶. Interpreting this commandment, Asz relies on the teachings of Maimonides (*More Nebuchim*, Book III, Section 48) who stated, "This regulation is intended to save the cow from suffering at the sight of seeing her foetus slaughtered, because animals feel a connection to their offspring, similar to people"¹²⁷.
6. *If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.*¹²⁸ Interpreting this commandment, relies on the teaching of Maimonides and states that, "This regulation has the aim of sparing the bird the distress it would experience seeing its chicks taken away by people"¹²⁹.
7. *God shows mercy, not only towards, but also towards animals, because it is said that Neither cows with their young nor sheep with their young shall be killed on the same day.*¹³⁰ Elaborating on this thought, Rabbi Asz stated, "similarly to beasts, your God is merciful toward birds when it is told (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) *If you come across a bird's nest beside the road*, etc. (*Midrash Rabba*, Deuteronomium VI)"¹³¹.

¹²¹ Księga „Sefer Chassidim" & 687.

¹²² Exodus 31:28.

¹²³ Babylonian Talmud, section Baba Kama, k. 39a.

¹²⁴ N. Asz, *W obronie... (In Defence ...)*, p. 19.

¹²⁵ *Shulchan Aruch* Jore Dea art. 28 & 2, Remo commentary.

¹²⁶ Leviticus 13:28.

¹²⁷ N. Asz, *W obronie... (In Defence ...)* p.19.

¹²⁸ Deuteronomy 22: 6-7.

¹²⁹ N. Asz, *W obronie...* s. 19-20.

¹³⁰ Leviticus 13:28.

¹³¹ N. Asz, *W obronie... (In Defence ...)*. p. 20.

8. *God commanded Moses to say the following words to Pharaoh, "Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every person and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die. (Exodus 9:19). The relevant section of the Midrash supplies the following remark, "See how merciful is the Lord your God that, even in a moment of anger, He still feels sorry for sinners and their cattle, since the hail is intended to only destroy crops in the soil and, therefore the Lord your God warned the Egyptians about the coming danger so that they may save themselves and their livestock" (Midrash Rabba, Exodus XII)"¹³².*
9. *It is forbidden to idly cause animals distress, or to beat them when they cannot walk or to tease a cat in order to make it scream. Jewish sages say that God will punish the riders who beat the horses upon which they ride¹³³.*
10. *Cattle must not be beaten, provided that they remain on the road, since something is obviously bothering them and it is a sin to over-strain them.¹³⁴.*
11. *It is forbidden to tie the legs of livestock or birds in a manner causing pain.¹³⁵.*
12. *It is forbidden to sit a bird on the eggs of a bird of another species as it will cause the bird pain.¹³⁶.*
13. *One should cut off the tail of livestock as it deprives the animal from driving away flies and will cause the animal distress.¹³⁷.*
14. *If you notice that a donkey is suffering under his load, even though you do not wish to do so, would you not help the animal? Indeed, you are to rescue it¹³⁸. Rabbi Asz states that "this commentary is a commandment from the Talmud: Care for animals is a religious commandment, sanctioned by the Torah, and therefore one should remove the load without any expectation of remuneration¹³⁹.*
15. *When a beast falls down and it temporarily cannot get up, one should provide it with food and a soft bed, showing compassion to the animal¹⁴⁰.*

The basic issue in dispute was the method of ritual slaughter and the professionalism of the slaughterer. Rabbi Asz, writing about the principles of *shechita*, stated:

Since killing animals is an essential necessity for feeding people, the least unpleasant killing method should be applied, with respect to the animals. Bearing that in mind, ritual slaughter is based on these principles¹⁴¹.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ *Sefer Chassidim* & 44

¹³⁴ *Sefer Chassidim* & 668.

¹³⁵ *Shulchan Aruch* & 19.

¹³⁶ *Shulchan Aruch*.

¹³⁷ *Sefer Chassidim* & 589.

¹³⁸ Exodus 13:5.

¹³⁹ Babylonian Talmud, Baba Mezia, k. 32b.

¹⁴⁰ Babylonian Talmud, traktat Sabat, k. 128 b.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 22.

In his deliberations, he referred to an opinion expressed on this subject by Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides¹⁴². The philosopher's imperative was that it was clearly unacceptable for Jews to eat meat other than that which had been slaughtered ritually. Jewish religious law forbade hunting which is considered "extremely unpleasant and painful for the animal"¹⁴³ or "(...) organising games which involved the killing or suffering of animals, like bullfights, etc."¹⁴⁴.

In its issue dated 29th June 1935, *Goniec Częstochowski*, in an article headed *Regarding Ritual Slaughters – Butchers are not Clergy*¹⁴⁵, it stated that they are butchers, and not slaughterers performing duties according to religious imperatives which require kosher meat. In the process, it was stressed that, as butchers, they were taking the jobs of Christian butchers. Jewish butchers were accused of breaking the law, since they did not possess butchering certification giving them the consent of Polish law to work as butchers:

Any Jew can become a butcher because they are clearly not clergy – they are butchers, in illegal butcher shops, since none of them possess butchering certification¹⁴⁶.

Rabbi Asz clarified the matter, referring to the *Shulchan Aruch* section on *shechita*, informing the reader that anyone, in accordance with Jewish religious law, can be a ritual slaughterer, who fulfils the following conditions: 1) He must be *religious and spotlessly clean* 2) He must be acquainted with the provisions of Jewish ritual law 3) He must pass a theoretical and practical examination before a rabbi 4) As part of the theoretical examination, he must demonstrate *the scope of his Jewish ritual knowledge, with specific consideration to issues connected with slaughtering*¹⁴⁷ 5) The practical examination encompasses slaughtering several cattle and poultry, examining their intestines, the ability to sharpen knives used in the slaughtering process and checking their sharpness 6) A person cannot become a slaughterer if he is not *steady of hand*¹⁴⁸.

The right to perform ritual slaughter, the *kabula*, is received after passing the examination before a rabbi. Having a *kabula* does not release, at least a novice butcher, from performing his duties under the supervision of a local rabbi.

A slaughterer's essential tool was a knife (*halaf*). According to the principles which must be observed, every slaughterer must have three types of knives: big for cattle, medium for calves and small for poultry. The shape of the knife and materials from which it is made are also covered by specific regulations. Rabbi Asz, referring to the quality of these tools, stressed their significant influence in sparing livestock "pain and suffering". He drew attention to the material from which the knife is made:

¹⁴² As N. Asz quotes in his work *W obronie...*, p.22: Moses Maimonides, in his work 'More Nebuchim - (A Guide for the Mistaken) (Part III, section 48), writes, 'The commandment to ritually slaughter livestock is obligatory, since plants and animal meat are man's natural food, and we (Jews) are permitted to eat only meat such as this, which is fit for human consumption and over which no doctor has any concerns; and since the need to eat meat forces people to kill living beings, the Torah commands the gentlest form of slaughter and forbids the use of any system which causes agony to animals.'

¹⁴³ Not also: N. Asz, *W obronie...* (In Defence ...), p. 22; Babylonian, Aboda Zara, karta 18b; *Szulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim, art. 318.

¹⁴⁴ N. Asz, *W obronie...* (In Defence ...), p. 22.

¹⁴⁵ *Goniec Częstochowski*, dated 29th June 1935

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ N. Asz, *W obronie...* (In Defence ...), p. 23.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

The steel, from which the knives are made must be of a consistency between soft and hard, since too soft means it is easily subject to flaws and chipping, and too hard is too difficult to sharpen. The knives' dimensions, length, width and thickness, are normalised by religious regulations, with the end of the blade being rounded. The side of the knife should be as smooth as a mirror and cannot contain any engraving or ornamentation¹⁴⁹.

Prior to slaughter, the butcher is obliged to check the quality of his tool to be used. He must sharpen it so that *a hair placed across its blade would be cut into two*¹⁵⁰. The quality of the knife affected the *kashrut* of the meat:

If the slaughterer is to kill several livestock, he must constantly check the edge of the blade, since meat prepared with a chipped knife will be regarded as *treyf* and forbidden for Jews to eat¹⁵¹.

In preparing an animal for slaughter, the butcher must first examine the livestock and poultry to be killed. He also has a duty, according to religious sanitary regulations, to examine some of the internal organs of the killed livestock and poultry. Only animals free of all pathological conditions will be fit for consumption. Another series of regulations also determined the *kashrut* of the meat. Among others, the slaughtering procedure was described by Rabbi Asz:

Prior to slaughter, all hair or feathers must be removed from the animal's neck, so that the knife does not encounter any obstacles and the neck is tightened. In performing the slaughter, the knife must be drawn across both parts of the animal's neck, in a single stroke, without even the slightest hesitation or break. Cuts must permeate the skin of the neck, the subcutaneous fatty tissue, the muscles, the carotid artery, the jugular vein, the neck nervous system, the trachea and gullet – all the way through to the spine¹⁵².

These deep knife cuts were intended to cause breath and heartbeat to cease and to cut off blood to the brain. A loss of blood causes unconsciousness. At that moment, as Rabbi Asz claimed:

It is unthinkable that cattle feel any pain. Only lay people consider the jiggling and shock, which take place after cutting the neck, as evidence of suffering. They are only the result of a substantial loss of blood from the brain [...]. Even wheezing from the voice box following slaughter, which may leave an unpleasant impression, is an animal's involuntary reaction¹⁵³.

In the magazine *Local Government*¹⁵⁴, Dr St. Łazarowicz, writing about ritual slaughter, emphasised that a basic principle of ritual slaughter is the separation of animals so that they do not see other animals being slaughtered. The Rabbi refuted the accusation against ritual slaughter stating that, from the point of view of the Jewish religion, the issue had been resolved. Again, he cited Jewish holy books. He conceded, however, that if, in practice, there were some inaccuracies, then they are due to people not acting in accordance with the principles of the Jewish religion.

¹⁴⁹ N. Asz, *W obronie...* (*In Defence ...*) p. 23.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ N. Asz, *W obronie...* (*In Defence ...*) p. 24.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p 25.

¹⁵⁴ Dr St. Łazarowicz, *Ubój rytualny (Ritual Slaughter)*, "Local Government" No.20, dated 15 October 1935

Dr Łazarowicz and Mr Sokołowski, in their articles, attempted to convince readers, that the ban on eating meat from cattle's hindquarters was justified because, during slaughter, there were no known techniques lifting up the cattle and blood could not completely drain away. Using current devices in abattoirs allows for the removal of blood from the entire body of the killed animal. The Rabbi again referred to Jewish religious law: irrespective of the ban on eating blood, it is also forbidden to eat bovine suet [...] *You shall not eat fat from an ox, neither a sheep, nor goat* (Leviticus 7:24)¹⁵⁵.

Much attention and discussion were devoted to the possibility of Jews eating meat from the hindquarters of livestock after deboning. Giving his opinion on this matter, Chief Rabbi Asz stressed that:

The ritual regulations regarding *deboning* relate exclusively to meat resulting from ritual slaughter which can be eaten only after cleansing it of veins and fat¹⁵⁶.

He explained that the rear parts are not eaten by Jews because most of the fat is found there and is banned according to Leviticus. He pointed out that removal of the veins and fat in a ritual manner would be of little benefit to Jews. Only 30% of such purified meat would be *kosher*¹⁵⁷.

On the often-raised charges, by opponents to *shechita*, regarding the storage of kosher meat, Rabbi Asz replied:

Jewish ritual absolutely does not forbid the preservation of meat, but demands only that the stored meat be moistened with water every three days, so that it will be easier to remove the remains of blood through salting. When adhering to this condition, meat can be stored without limitation. Regarding concerns about the preservation of non-ritually slaughtered meat, not intended for the Jewish population, the Jewish religion places no requirements on it and non-ritually slaughtered meat can be stored at will¹⁵⁸.

The Rabbi also refuted the charge that ritually slaughtered meat was unhygienic and did not remain fresh as long:

The meat quality and hygiene, to meet people's needs, provoke the most scoffing. Generally speaking, meat coming from ritual slaughter lasts longer and does not decay as fast (see the paper by Dr J. A. Demby entitled *Das Schächten im Vergleich mit anderen Schlachtmethoden (Ritual Slaughter Compared to Other Systems of Slaughter)*). Moreover, according to the Rabbi, ritually slaughtered meat contains less blood and blood components¹⁵⁹.

The realistic description, provided by the Częstochowa Rabbi, of the course of ritual slaughter was based upon religious regulations and constituted a contra-argument in the debate with opponents to *shechita*. The rituals, involved in preparing the slaughterer to pursue his profession, as well as to prepare his tools of his trade, were shaped through centuries-old religious tradition and the experience of generations of slaughtermen. The principles of ritual slaughtering were clear and explicit. However, it is difficult to state how they were put into practice within individual Jewish communities during the inter-War period. Ritual slaughter was more often conducted under conditions far distant from present methods of breeding of animals, storage of meat and consumption of meat products preserved against decay.

¹⁵⁵ N. Asz, W obronie... (In Defence ...) , p. 42.

¹⁵⁶ N. Asz, W obronie... (In Defence ...) , p. 50.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 42.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 62.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 25-26.

Dr Łazarowicz claimed that the removal of ritual slaughter would have the effect of evening out the prices of meat from the forequarters and hindquarters of the animal. In the process, it would lower the price of “kosher” forequarter meat. To that argument, the Rabbi gave a perverse reply:

If the hindquarters of ritually slaughtered cattle is expensive, how would the Christian population benefit from ritual slaughter and why don't Christian butchers use their own system of slaughtering?¹⁶⁰.

For purely economic reasons, the Christian community preferred to buy better, cheaper and more muscular hindquarter meat from Jewish abattoirs. As a result, Christian butchers were often driven out of business. Giving his opinion on this, the Częstochowa Rabbi stated:

In almost all Jewish areas, forequarter kosher meat is more expensive than that of non-kosher hindquarter meat, despite the fact that hindquarter meat is considered to be of a higher quality (according to data by Dr. Łazarowicz, 25 % of forequarter meat is Grade I and 75% is Grade II, While 80% of hindquarter meat is Grade I and 20 % Grade II). This is precisely due to Jewish butchers selling kosher meat to the Jewish population at higher prices than average and being able to sell hindquarter meat to the Christian population at cheaper prices. It is harder for Christian butchers to match those prices. They are often located in places inhabited by large numbers of Jews and in worse shop locations than the Jewish butchers¹⁶¹.

For this reason, in his view, there were many Christian butchers amongst the opponents of *shechita*, who would lose business through competition. To strengthen his arguments, Asz provides the prices of ordinary beef as set by the Municipal Board of Częstochowa from June 1926 to February 1936. From the results, it was shown that the price per kg of ritually slaughtered meat ranged from 8 gr to 50 gr more expensive than non-ritually slaughtered meat. In Asz's view, the result of ritual slaughter was disadvantageous to individual Christian butchers, but advantageous to the population as a whole as consumers¹⁶². The author also draws attention to a trade practice, amongst butchers in Częstochowa and other cities, whereby non-ritually slaughtered meat is replaced by ritually slaughtered beef. Of particular significance:

If a Christian butcher exchanges the non-ritually slaughtered forequarter meat with ritually slaughtered hindquarters from a Jewish butcher, generally, he can gain, by weight, an extra 8-15 zł. Moreover, if he exchanges non-ritual for ritual mince and edges, he will gain an additional 5-8 zł¹⁶³.

On this issue, Dr Łazarowicz put forward another argument further attesting to the non-beneficial market conditions for Christian butchers as against Jewish butchers. He pointed out that, in the meat trade, since Jewish butchers sell to the Jewish population forequarter meat at higher than average prices, they can then sell the kosher meat, denied to them, at cheaper prices in competition to Christian butchers.

¹⁶⁰ N. Asz, *W obronie... (In Defence ...)*, p. 36.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 37-38.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 39.

In response to this argument, the Rabbi produced a data table indicating the price of beef as set by the Częstochowa Municipal Board for the years 1926-36¹⁶⁴.

**Table I. Plain beef prices set by the
Częstochowa Municipal Board**

Date of prices	Price per kg - non-ritual meat	Price per kg - ritual meat
1926 – 11th June	2 zł	2.20 zł
1926 – 25th June	1.90 zł	2.10 zł
1926 – 12th July	1.70 zł	1.90 zł
1926 – 23rd December	2 zł	2.20 zł
1928 – 17th February	2 zł	2.50 zł
1928 – 12th September	1.80 zł	2 zł
1929 – 30th January	2.10 zł	2.50 zł
1930 – 5th December	1.70 zł	2 zł
1930 – 11th December	1.90 zł	2 zł
1931 – 13th January	1.60 zł	1.80 zł
1931 – 9th February	1.45 zł	1.65 zł
1931 – 21st August	1.30 zł	1.60 zł
1931 – 22nd October	1.10 zł	1.20 zł
1931 – 12th November	1 zł	1.10 zł
1932 – 3rd February	0.94 zł	1.02 zł
1932 – 19th May	1.10 zł	1.30 zł
1932 – 14th July	0.94 zł	1.10 zł
1932 – 3rd October	0.90 zł	1.10 zł
1933 – 4th January	0.80 zł	1.10 zł
1933 – 6th May 1st Oct.	0.90 zł	1.10 zł
1935 – 21st December	0.90 zł	1.10 zł
1935 – 21st Dec. (boneless)	1.20 zł	1.50 zł
1936 – 15th February	0.80 zł	1 zł
1936 15th Feb. lutego (boneless)	1.10 zł	1.40 zł

Source: N. Asz, *In Defence of Ritual Slaughter, March 1936. (Third edition)*, pp. 37-38

¹⁶⁴ Rabbi Asz, in preparing his table, noted that for the period 1st October to 21st December 1936, prices were not set by the Municipal Board. For comparison, he informed that “In many places, the Municipal Board did not set the price of ritually slaughtered meat, not making it difficult for the butchers in this regard. According to the Board’s minutes, in order to set the maximum price for beef and veal sold in the Kielce municipal area on 22nd January 1936, a new price list was set, for the first time, taking kosher meat into account. The following prices were set: non-ritual beef 80 gr/kg., ritual 1 zł/kg, non-ritual veal 1 zł/kg., ritual 1 zł. 10 gr/kg.

Asz also put together a table showing prices for veal and mutton as set by the Municipal Board in the years 1935-1936.

Table II. **Veal prices set by the
Częstochowa Municipal Board**

Date of prices	Price per kg - non-ritual meat	Price per kg - non-ritual meat
1935 – 21st December	1.10 zł	1.20 zł
1936 – 15th February	0.80 zł	1 zł

Source: N. Asz, *In Defence of Ritual Slaughter, March 1936. (Third edition)*, p. 38

Table III. **Mutton prices set by the
Częstochowa Municipal Board**

Date of prices	Price per kg - non-ritual meat	Price per kg - non-ritual meat
1935 – 21st December	1.10 zł	1.20 zł
1936 – 15th February	0.80 zł	1 zł

Source: N. Asz, *In Defence of Ritual Slaughter, March 1936. (Third edition)*, p. 38

From these tables it is possible to see the considerable price difference between kosher and non-kosher meat. The figures, as cited, enabled Asz to state that

*... the cost of ritual slaughter does not impose a burden upon non-ritually slaughtered meat and the covering of the costs of shechita is borne exclusively by Jews*¹⁶⁵.

Ludność chrześcijańska zgodnie z zaprezentowanymi w tabelach różnicami w cenach korzystała z niższych cen. Mięso kosherne było zdecydowanie droższe.

The Rabbi also responded to the charge, put forward by Senator Rdułowski, that the budgets of Jewish community councils depended, in large measure, on ritual slaughter. Asz explained that these councils' budgets were approved by state supervisory authorities. A considerable part of their income came from the ritual slaughter of poultry and only a part came from the slaughter of cattle. In both cases, however, the cost was borne by the Jewish population¹⁶⁶.

Due to the effects on people of the economic crisis of the first half of the 1930's, in general, the consumption of meat fell. In the process, the demand for cattle to be slaughtered also fell which had significant repercussion on the economy. It caused the destabilisation of the internal agricultural market, meaning a reduction in the prices for farm animals. The result was a growing agricultural crisis and social unrest, both in rural areas and in cities.

Rev. Dr St. Trzeciak pointed out other economic benefits from the banning of ritual slaughter:

*... the reckless wastage of livestock and poultry blood, despite the fact that it is an important industrial-trade product, albumen is taken from blood, an extremely precious commodity in the production of plywood and being very important to the food-processing industry*¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁶⁷ N. Asz, *W obronie... (In Defence ...)*, p. 42.

Regarding Trzeciak's polemics, Asz stated that, it was precisely because of the more effective manner of collecting blood, that 30% more blood was obtained from ritual slaughter than from other systems of slaughter. So that shechita was more supportive of the production of albumen than any other system of slaughter¹⁶⁸.

Rabin also directed a biting remark towards Christians in relation to the wasting of blood:

If you are really so concerned about the wastage of animal blood, you should not direct your accusations at Jews, but only and exclusively at hunters, generally Christians (the Jewish religion forbids hunting), who kill game during a hunt and undoubtedly do not preserve the blood¹⁶⁹.

Rev. Dr. St. Trzeciak's second argument concerned the wastage of animal hides from ritual slaughter, which resulted in the need to import raw hides from abroad. The Częstochowa Rabbi explained that domestic hides had defects, not due to the manner of slaughter, but due to the faulty way in which they were removed from the animals. It had nothing to do with *sechita*¹⁷⁰.

Dr. Łazerowicz, conscious of Rabbi Asz's earlier counter-arguments, turned his attention to the social aspects of the issue. This time, he appeared in defence of the Jewish poor. He stated that, even if meat from ritual slaughter was eaten exclusively by Jews, it should still be banned, since the tax consequences that went along with it hit the poorest Jews economically¹⁷¹.

In reply, the Rabbi stated that concern for the Jewish population, in this case, was unjustified:

The Jewish population, the poorest and more religious, more so than the affluent classes, will generally stop eating meat altogether. And even if that section of the Jewish population decides to eat non-kosher meat, as it stands today, it would be cheaper than kosher meat¹⁷².

He pointed to the economic consequences of banning ritual slaughter. The demand for meat would still fall even further because the Jewish population would be forced to import kosher meat products from other countries. Consumption of meat would also fall within the Christian population due to a rise in prices.

Opponents to ritual slaughter proposed another solution. This involved the enforcing of administrative regulations which would permit ritual slaughter, but only at a reduced level, sufficient just for the Jewish population. Rabbi Asz stated that calculating the percentage of meat required for individual cities would be a difficult task. The number of cattle would need to double in relation to Jewish population numbers, as kosher meat would only amount to 50% of that slaughter. Moreover, that part of cattle intended for slaughter which, during the post-slaughter examination were found to be non-kosher, also needed to be taken into account.

The Christian population, apart from eating cattle, also ate pigs, hares and other animals which Jews, due to religious regulations, did not eat - and so that deficiency of meat should be compensated for, by an increase in the number of cattle intended for slaughter. The whole business of administrative calculations would have to allow for at least triple, in relation to the Jewish population number in any given city.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 43

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 39

¹⁷² Ibid.

Rabbi Asz's entire paper is factual and well-argued, with the fundamental principles of the Jewish religion responding directly, not only to the opponents of *shechita*, but also to antisemites.

A question arises when referring to the present: Are we thoroughly convinced that contemporary ritual slaughter is conducted according to humanitarian principles? Of course, we can understand those community groups who claim that killing animals and eating the meat is, generally, inhumane. In praising the high qualities of a traditional kitchen, we do not necessarily consider, in the local and national dishes, the norms and provisions derived from traditions often based upon religious principles.

In our time, as well as in the 1930's, the following question still remains: Generally speaking, does a humanitarian method of killing animals actually exist? It is hard to find the answer within the advertising by contemporary interests associated with butchers and with the production of meat products. It is also hard to find humanity in many large-scale breeding farms established mainly to profit from animal production.

Rabbi Asz gathered all the arguments put forward by the opponents to *shechita* regarding the costs associated with it incurred by the Christian community. He considered them all and put forward his own counter-arguments.

Conclusion

Examining the discussion which took place over seventy years ago does not have, as its only aim, the examination of the subject matter of the dispute itself. Within it, are hidden a number of essential threads.

Today, when we worry so much about our own health, physical fitness and diets, it is worth looking at food norms and principles formed over hundreds of years. Like then just as now, the principle concern was the health of the individual. Animal diseases, which are dangerous to human health and to human life, are still evident despite the fact that the technology utilised in food production has reached a very high level. However, along the way, nature still manages to surprise us, forcing us to defend ourselves with even more superior, modern technologies. Nature can humiliate the proud, self-confident, often short-sighted, mercenary human.

Upon reflection, should we not humbly refer to both the experience and wisdom of ancient thinkers and scholars? From our own religious sentiments, should we not read again those events and norms of everyday life and, for our own benefit, relate them to the present?

The next issue is the care of animals and the humane treatment of living things. Now, just as seventy years ago, methods of animal slaughter raise controversy. Animal welfare organisations severely criticise the inhumane transportation, the pre-slaughter conditions and method of killing animals even in ultra-modern abattoirs. Progress in technology aimed at the most humane methods of killing animals, among these, stunning the animal prior to slaughter, even today, still raise a great deal of doubt. Non-observance, in practice, of established norms or simply a desire for quick profits, means that prior to slaughter, animals are treated as though they are already dead or deprived of any senses.

In explaining the entire debate, an explanation of the background to it is essential. The dispute was borne on a wave of antisemitism which brimmed over, to a greater or lesser extent, in individual European countries and which also reached Poland. The Great Depression took its toll on the standard of living at all levels of society. It was especially felt by the weakest economic groups – peasants, small craftsmen, tradesmen and workers.

A feeling of helplessness in the face of growing social tensions and economic problems gave rise to various ideas of overcoming poverty. In searching for a way out of the crisis, the simplest, most dangerous way was to direct disaffected society against those who were different, who observed a different religion and who had a different culture.

There was an anxiety that it would lead to possible grassroots, radical, movements and a “bolshevisation” of the embittered, social masses. There were those who sought solutions to social problems through “national mobilisation” taking as an example fascist Italy. Echoes of the appearance of antisemitic Nazism in Germany and the slogan of an “international conspiracy by the Jews against the Aryan race”, also reached Poland. The influence of these and other international determinants awoke anxieties and inspired Polish political groups to seek the most favourable solutions for their own electorate which would, at the same time, overcome the crisis.

For the “nationalists”, the simplest solution was to direct the dissatisfaction of small businessmen, craftsmen and tradesmen towards the Jews. The fight against ritual slaughter would fire up antisemitic sentiments in the rural areas also and so would extend the “nationalists” influence into small towns and villages. An anxiety over the political and social solutions of Poland’s eastern neighbour, and the success of the ideologically anti-Jewish program of its western neighbour, without any international repercussions, further encouraged the Polish “nationalists” in their antisemitic activities.

In Poland, these measures did not fully have the results which were desired by their organisers. The vast majority of society looked upon these antisemitic “pranks” with a reserve. Even if they were sympathetic to the “nationalists”, they still shopped at the “Jew”, because it was cheaper to buy goods or to receive a service there. The temptation to buy cheaper and better goods was more intense than ideological opinion or considerations. The Polish government also distanced itself from these antisemitic activities. The *Sanacja* political grouping, which was in power at that time, was more concentrated on the building of a strong, civic Poland than in igniting ethnic arguments. Its fundamental *raison d’etat* was the building of a strong Polish state in which people of all ethnicities could live as citizens within its territory.

