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I'm Searching for Anti-Semitism. The Attitude of Polish Socialists to the Jewish Issue in the Second Polish Republic

Under the above-mentioned title, *I'm Searching for Anti-Semitism*, Wanda Wasilewska, in a 1938 booklet, reported on her journey throughout the eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic in which she dealt with those responsible for the pogroms against Jews and Judaism and unmasked the socio-political face of anti-Semitism. She emphasized that "as clearly as never before, my trip has shown me that it is only a clever game, a despicable business, a political match, full of empty ideals. I searched for anti-Semitism, but found it nowhere in the large area of Polesie and Bug villages"². Her statements, judging the phenomenon of anti-Semitism mainly through the prism of an ideological-political fight, were characteristic of the left-wing circles of the time, among them, above all, the socialists. This was also at odds with other democratic groups in the country who most consistently spoke out against all narrow-mindedness and xenophobia. They consistently stood as the uncompromising defenders of the oppressed and of marginalised social groups, irrespective of nationality, religion and class. It is also not surprising that a lively interest was shown in the Jewish issue, one of the most difficult in Polish society in the first half of the 20th Century – an issue of ethnicity, of exceptional social significance.

Polish socialists pondered its various aspects: historical, economic, social, moral, and the like. They considered it in the context of socialist values and aspirations and the necessity for the modernization of Polish society. Their views underwent a significant evolution - from the concept of ethnic assimilation through to granting the Jewish population special legal-political status in Poland – ethnic-cultural autonomy. Accepting the specific solution of the Jewish issue resulted from the accepted assessment evaluation of the nature of the Jewish community. Some regarded it only as a community with a certain religious character, while others noticed within it a separate, fully-formed nation³. So, the first proved the necessity for total assimilation into the Polish nation, whereas the second gave it an ethnic-cultural autonomy. Although the majority of opponents of granting the Jewish population special legal-political status argued that, in the first years of independence, there was a necessity for the integration and unification of the revived Polish nation, as well as a strengthening of its national character. In realising an extra-territorial autonomy, there was a discerned danger of

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² W. Wasilewska, *Szukam antysemityzmu*, Lwów 1938, s. 3.

³ O kontrowersjach tych pisze szerzej w artykule: *Kwestia żydowska w polskiej myśli socjalistycznej*, w: *Żydzi w Małopolsce. Studia z dziejów osadnictwa i życia społecznego*. Praca zbiorowa pod red. F. Kiryka, Przemysł 1991, s. 273-288 (angielska wersja – „Polin”, 1996, vol. 9), a także w zbiorze artykułów i rozpraw: *Obcy czy swoi. Z dziejów poglądów na kwestie żydowską w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku*, Kraków 1997.

weakening state unity, strengthening separatism and nationalism (both Polish and ethnic minorities), as well as stopping the process of assimilation and isolating the Jews from Polish culture – the culture of the people who constituted the majority in the country. Hence, they fiercely fought against demands for ethnic-cultural autonomy, put forward by Jewish groups in Poland, in accordance with the so-called minorities treaty, passed at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. During a constitutional debate in the Sejm legislature, Mieczysław Niedziałkowski arguing on the motion of the Union of Jewish Members of Parliament, and justifying this type of the autonomy, stated, "We are prepared to grant all laws for the cultural and political development of individual sections of the ethnic minorities scattered across the entire country, but we must absolutely maintain the general, basic principle that the Polish state is, however, only a Polish state"⁴. It is also not surprising that earlier, and not without reason, the chairman of the Jewish parliamentary caucus, Icchak Grunbaum, noticed that the socialists did not want "to burden their political wagon with such baggage as is the Jewish issue"⁵.

Ultimately, however, in order to build up the anti-Sanacja forces in the country, in the late 1920's, the majority of Polish socialists entered into a proposition, developed by Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz at the beginning of the century, for the need to recognise the Jewish community as a separate ethnicity "to the extent that the Jews, themselves, will acknowledge", as well as establishing a mutual relationship based on the principle of brotherhood, a political alliance with the Jewish socialists who were calling for extra-territorial autonomy. As a result, in the new party policy adopted at the XXIVth Congress of the Polish Socialist Party in 1937, and drawing on the Bauer theory of ethnicity (of cultural bonds), that basis for the politics of ethnicity regarding the issue of the so-called scattered minorities, amongst them the Jews, constituted a principle of ethnic-cultural autonomy⁶.

But the Polish socialists always spoke out against all manifestations of anti-Semitism, intolerance and xenophobia. This is what differentiated them from other Polish groupings. To date, however, little has been written about this, mainly concentrating only on analysing and describing the Jewish issue and only on anti-Semitism in Poland⁷. Meanwhile, the Polish socialists were fully aware of the dangers associated with the growing nationalism and with ethnic and religious intolerance in Polish society during the inter-War period, particularly in the face of the successes of fascist movements in Europe and the experience of fighting against authoritarian governments in Poland.

From the very first moment of regaining independence, it was already decided to oppose anti-Jewish speech, condemning the all too frequent pogroms and anti-Semitic excesses. However, they explained and described them one-sidedly enough, mainly in a

⁴ *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego*, pos. 185 z 13 XI 1920, ł. 35.

⁵ *Ibid*, pos. 172 z 14 X 1920, ł. 55.

⁶ *Program PPS, uchwalony na XXIV Kongresie w Radomiu*, Warszawa 1937, s. 11.

⁷ Zwraca na to uwagę H. Markiewicz: *Przeciw nienawiści i pogardzie*, Kraków 2006, s. 10.

conflict dimension and as social class conflict. They accused the Polish ownership classes of provoking anti-Jewish campaigns in order to "distract the attention of the proletariat away from the democratisation of the state, from reforms and social injustice, and of directing the crowds of the hungry and embittered from the effects of the War, the unemployed and the poor against, as usual, the poorest Jewish population"⁸. They also did not spare Jewish nationalism from criticism, pointing the finger at it for fueling and strengthening anti-Semitism in society. One of the most significant reasons for the heightening of anti-Jewish moods was considered to be the too unilateral character of Jewish economic activity, concentrated mainly on trade and profiteering which, in conditions of supply troubles and social unrest, sharpened the causes of Polish-Jewish economic competition and led to the intensification of anti-Jewish excesses. In order to prevent the escalation of anti-Jewish moods and fights, at the congress of unified socialist parties from the former annexed territories held in Kraków in April 1919, the socialists even passed a resolution regarding the agitation of pogroms which called for "the working class in the cities and villages to energetically oppose anti-Semitic witch-hunts aimed at weakening the working class and directing it on the false path towards racial-religious battle"⁹. Attention was also drawn to the cultural conditioning of Polish-Jewish conflicts, manifesting itself also in the deepening of antagonism between Jewish and Polish workers. The editor of "*The Worker*" ("*Robotnika*"), Feliks Perl, warned against the further effects of the Jewish population remaining in their own specific, socio-cultural and religious ghettos, because remaining "separated from those peoples amongst whom you live, is just a remnant of a medieval caste system. You don't occupy of specific territory, being scattered throughout the world. You cannot claim the right to a language. Should the right to a language be for the Hebrew tongue or Yiddish jargon?"¹⁰ He felt that the cultural-national and religious aspiration of the Jewish people, amongst them the Jewish proletariat, should be subordinate to the idea of worker solidarity and the fight by the workers, from both communities, against the capitalist system. Also, many other socialists, amongst them Jews - supporters of the polonisation of Jews, noticed considerable risk and danger in supporting cultural and religious separateness and in seclusion from the Polish environment. For example, a Lwów socialist activist, Samuel Herschthal, noticed that Polish-Jewish antagonism in the workers' environment resulted "from some naïve, instinctive prejudice against the "foreignness" of the Jew, the tone of his speech, the way he moved, his clothes, his customs and the like."¹¹ One should aspire to the proletarianisation of

⁸ *W sprawie pogromów. Wniosek frakcji PPS w Radzie m. Łodzi*, „Robotnik”, nr 223 z 21 VI 1919, s. 3.

⁹ *Zjednoczenie PPS. Sprawozdania z kongresów Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej b. zaboru rosyjskiego i pruskiego oraz z kongresu Polskiej Partii Socjalno-Demokratycznej Galicji i Śląska*, Kraków 1919, s. 39.

¹⁰ *SSSU*, pos. 37 z 13 V 1919, l. 49; por. także: *Konferencja pokojowa a sprawa mniejszości narodowych*, „Robotnik”, nr 235 z 3 VII 1919, s. 1; B. Mierzwiński, *Klasa robotnicza a antysemityzm*, „Łodzianin”, nr 42 z 10 VII 1920; *W sprawie polsko-żydowskiej*, Lwów 1919; T. Hołowko: *Mniejszości narodowe*, „Trybuna”, nr 44 z 5 XI 1921; *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce*, Warszawa 1922; K. Domosławski, *Autonomia kulturalna mniejszości narodowościowych*, „Przedświt”, nr 3-4 z 1919.

¹¹ *W sprawie polsko-żydowskiej*, s. 132.

the Jewish population and converting Jewish workers into the modern industrial proletariat and, as a result, lead to the elimination of their cultural and religious separateness. Because only then can nationalism disappear in both workers' groupings, thereby hastening the process of fulfilling socialist aims and overcoming capitalism.

Polish socialists pondered the problem of anti-Semitism in a simplistic manner, putting its existence and causes mainly down to socio-economic or cultural factors. Although, at the time, a more in-depth and advanced analysis of the reasons for and functions of anti-Semitism had already appeared. It was carried out by the outstanding expert on ethnic problems, Leon Wasilewski. The point of departure in his deliberations was the perception of the nature of the Jewish issue in Poland, in that, while Jews constitute "not only a separate linguistic, religious and traditional entity, they cannot adapt to the normal, social development of the country. The rise in Christian craft and trade, being a completely natural manifestation independent of the willingness and desire of anti-Semites, the development of co-operatives, the rise in the cultural level of the peasant masses – all this makes unnecessary the ever-larger number of Jewish intermediaries. They must either seek another source of income or they must emigrate. It is very difficult, one way or the other"¹². In this situation, the position of the Jewish population becomes evermore complicated and evermore difficult. Jews cannot withstand competition on the part of Poles and become a non-essential social group. This generates serious social and political problems heightening, among other things, anti-Semitism, which hampers any mutual rapprochement and only bonds the Jewish community together. All the more showing that it is not possible to solve the Jewish issue either by going down the route of Jewish assimilation or by their emigration from Poland.

Wasilewski clearly changed the evaluation of the possibility of Jewish assimilation in a reborn Poland. Prior to 1918, he placed great hope on the rebuilding of independence, thinking that it would only be possible to implement an appropriate, ethnic policy in an independent country, facilitating the integration of ethnic minorities with the Polish state and Polish culture. He maintained, therefore, that anti-Semitism should be avoided in order not to strengthen nationalism and total Jewish separation. Because, in Poland's best interests, its civil and cultural development, lies the abolition of Jewish separateness: the ghetto, the specific customs, the jargon etc., and the full assimilation of the Jews. To this end, he calls for "a fight against anti-Semitism as a manifestation which hinders this assimilation and which, however, strengthens Jewish nationalism"¹³.

After the regaining of independence, he became ever more sceptical about the possibility of Jewish assimilation. Admittedly, he still developed the concept of assimilation and, in justifying it, he referred to the six so-called laws of assimilation formulated by the

¹² M. Pszczołkowski (L. Wasilewski), *Polska dla Polaków czy Polska dla wszystkich obywateli polskich? (Sprawa mniejszości narodowych w Polsce)*, Warszawa (1924), s. 18. Poglądy jego na kwestię żydowską szerzej charakteryzuję w artykule: *Leona Wasilewskiego koncepcja asymilacji Żydów w Polsce*, „Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny WSP w Krakowie. Prace Ekonomiczno-Społeczne”, 1997, t. 8, s. 5-12.

¹³ L. Wasilewski, *Kwestia żydowska na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, Lwów 1913, s. 23.

theoretician behind socio-democratic Austria, Otto Bauer, an outstanding expert on the issue of ethnicity:

- 1) the more numerous the minority, the harder it is to be absorbed into the majority;
- 2) the lesser the number of the minority as a part of the overall population, the greater the chance for assimilation;
- 3) assimilation is achieved more easily when the minority is scattered and spread throughout the clusters of the majority;
- 4) the less the difference from the majority regarding race, culture, religion and language, the more easily is a minority assimilated;
- 5) making a minority similar to the majority can only be achieved in a range of individual classes and levels of both ethnic communities;
- 6) socio-economic, political and religious conflicts facilitate assimilation whereas, at the same time, they inhibit ethnic antagonism and fighting.

However, in the face of the groundswell of anti-Semitism and the reborn state's lack of an appropriate ethnic policy, Wasilewski ruled out the possibility of solving the Jewish issue through assimilation into Polish culture. Yet he carefully assessed the assimilative abilities of Jews, calling only for the granting of real equal rights to the Jewish population, guaranteeing their right to their own culture, ceasing harassment on the basis of religious and ethnic background, and the like. At the same time, in the face of the growing wave of anti-Semitism in free Poland, he warned against an obsession deepening within the Polish populace and the anti-Jewish phobia causing it and that, "stupified by such agitation, a person ceases to think normally and starts seeing Jews and Jewish influences everywhere and, in the end, is almost insane, obediently going where the anti-Semitic agitators lead him. That is what they wanted to achieve. Without expanding to enormous dimensions some worldwide disasters alleging a Jewish danger, they could not achieve those influences, such as they have, and could not strengthen the control of the reactions."¹⁴ He became convinced that anti-Semitic campaigning only supported the strengthening of Jewish fanaticism and ignorance and, as a consequence, the consolidation of anti-Polish attitudes and behaviour amongst the Jewish lower classes who, through the anxiety of having pushed into their thoughts, by the slogan (*Poland for the Poles*), that they are second-class citizens, align themselves with all possible enemies of the Polish national identity. In such a situation, the essence of nationalism as well as the typical goals of nationalist policies, should be exposed and countered with the socialist program of ethnic policies. Albeit that Wasilewski also expressed, in his views on the Jewish issue, a certain post-enlightenment optimism, manifesting itself in the recognition that nations not fully formed will forsake a separate

¹⁴ M. Pszczółkowski (L. Wasilewski), *Polska dla Polaków*, s. 17; por. także inne jego opracowania: *Zadania polskiej polityki narodowościowej*, „Droga”, nr 4 z VII 1923; *Sprawy narodowościowe w teorii i życiu*, Warszawa 1929; *Skład narodowościowy państw europejskich*, Warszawa 1933; a także: Z. Dreszer, *Sprawa mniejszości narodowych w Polsce a program państwowy demokracji*, Warszawa 1926.

identity for the sake of general progress, as well as a baseless conviction regarding the superiority of Polish civilisation and the great power of Polish culture to absorb ethnic minorities. As such, he did not appreciate the national and cultural aspirations of Polish Jews.

However, those Polish socialists' warnings and doubts regarding the future of the Jewish community in Poland rapidly lost meaning in the face of the offensives and successes of fascist movements in Europe in the 1930's. All the more so because, as a result of the Great Depression, a radicalisation of the broad social classes also took place in Poland, of whom a considerable section sought to blame the causes for their difficult situation on external factors or on the alleged, deliberate, anti-Polish activity of ethnic minorities, especially the Jews. Ethnic animosities, especially Polish-Jewish, became exacerbated. Representatives of almost all Polish classes levelled various grudges and accusations at the Jewish population, ably fueled by Polish nationalist groups and by the policies of the *Sanacja* authorities. In this situation, the socialists opposed the growing wave of nationalism and anti-Semitism. They reasoned that these were not natural, biological phenomena, since man is not born with a hatred towards other people. Anti-Semitism stemmed from a sense of public harm and was the result of a constant and planned ideological influence of class which, in the development of nationalism and anti-Semitism, they regarded as a barrier against the development of the socialist ideal. The victory of socialism and progress in every field of public life would enable the ethnic issue to be solved – including the Jewish issue. They accepted that the phenomenon of anti-Semitism had appeared along with the fall of the Jewish state and the development of the Diaspora. It was, they reasoned, "centuries-old and it was coming to an end. Alive in the period of ignorance and limited financial means of the Middle Ages, it lost its power with the blossoming of the capitalist system and an increase in prosperity - all the more so in countries benefitting from knowledge and technology (America, England). The structural crisis of capitalism momentarily lifted anti-Semitism from its deathbed. Socialism, freeing the power of contemporary technology for the common good from bonds imposed upon it by a privileged class of capitalists, and creating universal prosperity, would soon lay anti-Semitism in its grave, along with its medieval attributes and shameful stories about *blood matzoh*, with barbaric pogroms, the darkness of the ghetto, and the scholasticism of the Talmud"¹⁵.

Certain socialists did not share this conviction - for example, Zygmunt Zaremba, who predicted that the Jewish matter would long remain an issue in the new social system, since "it would not be easy to arrange following the shock of adapting to a new economy, and a new life for millions of citizens, often also with the echoes sounding of old-time superstitions, capitalist barbarity and nationalist ignorance. However, it is about whether

¹⁵ J. Gawęda, *Geneza i drogi rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej*, „Światło”, nr 2 z 1938, s. 21.

socialism points to the road upon which these problems can be overcome and, in this respect, we can say, with complete conviction, that it indeed is the way”¹⁶.

In the meantime, the Polish socialists attempted to set up permanent cooperation with the Jewish socialists on the basis of a common socio-political and ethnic program. This was adopted at a conference with the Jewish, German and Ukrainian socialists and with trade unions on 3rd May 1936. In a direct appeal to the entire leftist community in Poland, a declaration stated that, ”This conference calls upon the entire working class, irrespective of nationality, to display solidarity and to vigorously oppose nationalism and anti-Semitism and to join the common, fraternal fight against those who would exploit peoples. Only a common fight by the working people of all nationalities, against all the manifestations of inequality and against ethnic and social oppression, can achieve the great objective of totally freeing people”¹⁷. They also undertook to consider the issue of the causes and nature of anti-Semitism. In general, they searched for the causes within the social and psychological effects of the Great Depression, which were exploited by classes battling the workers' movement and compromising the socialist ideal, as a Jewish product, along the lines of the old stereotypes: the Jew-Socialist, the Jew-Communist, the Jew-Bolshevik, the Jew-Mason, and the like. It was treated as a sign of deliberate activity by the ring-wing community to maintain its dominance of society by diverting attention away from urgent, social problems. For example, in the opinion of Kazimierz Czapiński, the aim of anti-Semitism ”is an attempt at turning the attention of the working class away from capitalism as the source of poverty and exploitation and as a bankrupt system, and to transfer the accumulated bitterness and hatred onto the Jews” and, as a consequence, to compromise the socialist movement as ”nationalist Jewish”¹⁸. Also, another socialist, the well-known historian Adam Próchnik, in analysing the social conditioning of anti-Semitism, became convinced that its social basis was, above all, the petit bourgeois classes and young people who were unusually susceptible to political

¹⁶ Z. Zaremba, *Różnice czy błędy (Z powodu broszury J. M. Borskiego pt. Sprawa żydowska a socjalizm)*, tamże, nr 4-5 z 1937, s. 22.

¹⁷ *Program ludu pracującego. Postulaty polityczne i gospodarcze*, Warszawa 1936, s. 6-7; por. także: A. Czarski (Z. Zaremba), *Uzgodnienia poglądów i taktyki*, „Światło”, nr 5 z 1936, s. 7-11; *Program dobrobytu. Ruch robotniczy Polski wobec zagadnień gospodarczych*, Warszawa 1937.

¹⁸ K. Czapiński, *U źródeł akcji antysemitki. Przyczyny i cele*, „Robotnik”, nr 189 z 12 VI 1936, s. 3; zob. także inne artykuły z lat trzydziestych: J. M. Borski, *Hece antyżydowskie*, tamże, nr 391 z 11 XI 1931, s. 2; M. Niedziałkowski, *Dywersonja antysemitki*, tamże, nr 410 z 1 XII 1932, s. 3; J. M. Borski, *Propaganda antysemitki*, tamże, nr 102 z 13 III 1934, s. 1; K. Czapiński, *Zdziczenie. Przeciw fali antysemityzmu*, tamże, nr 407 z 22 XII 1935, s. 3; M. Niedziałkowski, *Sprawa antysemityzmu*, tamże, nr 89 z 19 III 1936, s. 1; *Drugi front*, tamże, nr 24 z 22 I 1936, s. 1; A. Próchnik, *Antysemityzm*, w: *Polacy o Żydach. Zbiór artykułów z przedruku*, Warszawa 1937, s. 19-20, a także zamieszczone tam wypowiedzi innych autorów: L. Kruczkowskiego, T. Kotarbińskiego, J. Markowskiej, J. Strzeleckiej, Z. Szymanowskiego; E. Szerer, *Wywiad tow. Niedziałkowskiego*, „Myśl Socjalistyczna”, nr 1 z 12 I 1937, s. 1; *O Żydach i antysemityzmie*, Warszawa 1936; *Prawda o antysemityzmie*, Warszawa 1936; J. M. Borski, *Antyżydowski bzik*, „Robotnik”, nr 151 z 1 VI 1938, s. 3; *Nieustraszeni antysemitami*, tamże, nr 232 z 21 VIII 1939, s. 3; M. Niedziałkowski, *Problem antysemityzmu*, tamże, nr 89 z 9 III 1939, s. 1.

manipulation and all demagoguery¹⁹. They very easily succumbed to nationalist propaganda, developed by the National Democrats and supported by part of the ruling *Sanacja*. They contributed to hit-squads, a terrorist character, conducting various campaigns directed against Jews under the slogans: "beat the Jew", "The principal enemy are the Jews", "Away with the Jews – Expel the Jews from Poland", and do not shy away from using violence and brute force. Extremely aggressive, anti-Semitic propaganda, rolled out by all sorts of political groups, with the National Democrats at the forefront, had led to the creation in society of an anti-Semitic psychosis which poisons the atmosphere of political life, the result of which was, as the socialist, columnist Mieczysław Baumgart observed, that "for certain classes, all our greater and lesser maladies diminished or disappeared. It seems that the psychosis has fallen totally and irrevocably onto the spheres of trade, craft and the liberal professions, where for ages there was a fierce competition fuelled by Polish and Jewish opposition. The opinion of the (upper) spheres of Polish society, moulded by the press and setting the tone of Polish life in its current suppressed form, is willing to believe that it is not a mass mania of these spheres that will pass in one way or another, but that it is an established attitude of the entire Polish society, entering a new period of crystallization"²⁰.

In the socialists' estimation, anti-Semitic campaigns, initiated around the issues of an economic boycott of the Jewish population, the making it impossible for them to have access to education, ritual slaughter etc., had a transitional character since, in the long term, it was not possible to divert society's attention away from the fundamental socio-economic problems of the country and internationally, and to direct social action along the paths of religious-racial hatred. Soon a change in public sentiment must come about, resulting in anti-Semitism losing its meaning. All the more so, as it was not a new phenomenon, even though the current Nazi movement gave it a specific tone and exerted a great influence on activating it in Poland. After all, anti-Semitism had an historical character. It appeared with the Jewish Diaspora. However, it had no future. It would disappear following the victory of socialism because, as the socialist columnist of the weekly "The Light", Jan Gawęda, stated, "it is centuries old and is reaching its end. Active in the period of ignorance and of limited financial means in the Middle Ages, it had lost its power with the blossoming of the capitalist system and an increase in prosperity - all the more so in countries benefitting from knowledge and technology (America, England). The structural crisis of capitalism momentarily lifted anti-Semitism from its deathbed. Socialism, freeing the power of contemporary technology for the common good from bonds imposed upon it by a privileged class of capitalists, and creating the universal prosperity, would soon lay anti-Semitism in its

¹⁹ A. Próchnik, *Antysemityzm*, w: *Polacy o Żydach*, s. 19-20; por. także: Z. Zaremba, *Polityczna gra w Żyda*, „Dziennik Ludowy”, nr 123 z 21 V 1937, s. 3.

²⁰ St. Fryk (M. Baumgart), *Psychoza antysemicka a sprawa żydowska*, „Światło”, nr 4 z 1936, s. 8; zob. także: Z. Szymanowski, *Antysemityzm młodzieży akademickiej*, „Epoka”, nr 40 z 5 X 1936, s. 7-9.

grave, along with its medieval attributes and shameful stories about *blood matzoh*, with barbaric pogroms, the darkness of the ghetto, and the scholasticism of the Talmud”²¹.

The socialists concluded that, before the new social system could overcome all the complaints and evils of people’s lives, however, there should be definite and consistent opposition against all signs of anti-Semitism for the sake of human dignity, human values and for the future of Poland. The groundswell (of barbarities and viciousnesses) must be stopped and all initiating of anti-Jewish disturbances must be prevented because, as socialist left columnist and writer, Wanda Wasilewska reported, ”day in and day out, it taught that murder was okay. Day in and day out, it taught that it was okay to despise someone who has a differently-sounding name. Day in and day out, it provoked the worst instincts (...). They had only one response - that the Jew is entirely to blame for everything. They had only one option for everything – beat up the Jew”²².

Hence, the socialists did not limit themselves to merely fighting anti-Semitic propaganda, to revealing its premises and social, cultural and ideological functions, particularly amongst youth and the workers, but they actively opposed various excesses, pogroms, economic boycotts, ”ghetto benches” in educational institutions, and the like, which intensified during 1935-37. Together with Jewish socialists, the even organised branched of Worker Self-Defence in order to protect Jewish people against the actions of nationalist-radical hit squads²³. The heightening of anti-Semitic tendencies within Polish society then aroused anew, amongst socialists, an interest in solving the Jewish issue. Admittedly, the XXIVth PPS Congress accepted the already-mentioned concept of national-cultural autonomy for the Jewish population as the basis for socialist ethnic politics but, soon after, well-known columnist for ”The Worker”, Jan M. Borski, put forward different proposals. The direct reason for his statement was the position taken by the General Jewish Workers' Union Bund ideologue, Wiktor Walter, already expressed within the Polish-Jewish booklet entitled ”*Jews and Anti-Semitism*” which, in justifying the program of national-cultural autonomy, proved that the demand for the emigration of Jews to Palestine was reactionary and anti-Semitic. ”The Worker” columnist did not agree with this assessment. He maintained that, on the contrary, a flow of emigration, responsibly organised, from excessively overpopulated countries to countries where there were still large settlement possibilities, had a big future. After all, even the victory of socialism in Poland would not automatically solve the Jewish problem which would continue to exist irrespective of anti-Semitic agitation. The fact is that Jews constitute a numerous and separate nation which, not being able to fully modernise, will

²¹ J. Gawęda, *Geneza i drogi rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej*, tamże, nr 2 z 1938, s. 21; por. także: M. Niedziałkowski, *Przytyk*, „Robotnik”, nr 207 z 1 VII 1936, s. 1; *Prawda o antysemityzmie*, Warszawa 1936; *Jutro młodzieży*, Biblioteczka instrukcyjna Centralnego Wydziału Młodzieży PPS, nr 2, Warszawa 1937.

²² W. Wasilewska, *Mordercy*, „Robotnik”, nr 359 z 15 XII 1936, s. 3; por. inne publikacje autorki: *Ciemna fala*, w: *Prawda o antysemityzmie*, w: *Prawda o antysemityzmie*, Warszawa 1936, s. 9 – 12; *Szukam antysemityzmu*, Lwów 1938.

²³ Por. szerzej: E. Koko, *W nadziei na zgodę. Polski ruch socjalistyczny wobec kwestii narodowościowej w Polsce (1918-1939)*, Gdańsk 1995, s. 128 i in.

create a separate ethnic group in Poland, isolated from Polish life with respect to racial, religious, linguistic, social considerations, etc.. For this reason, a considerable section part of the Jewish population should emigrate to the Palestine or to other places of colonization. All the more so because an emigration program would benefit the majority of Jewish and Polish groups, whereas staying with the concept of extra-territorial autonomy only heightens anti-Semitic tendencies in society. In this situation, Polish socialists should accept the demand for emigration of Jews from Poland²⁴.

Another politician, Zygmunt Zaremba, a PPS columnist, immediately responded to him asking if some thought should be given to whether Jews must emigrate and if this would be an appropriate solution to the Jewish issue in Poland. Reasons for emigration are neither ethnic nor cultural factors, because emigration develops mainly against a socio-economic background. But, as a result of the Great Depression, it is also not a source for the solving of economic problems. All the more so because the attitudes of a considerable part of the Jewish population towards Poland and Polish national identity does not clearly diverge from the attitudes of the non-Jewish population. After all, he claimed, "an attachment to Polish soil is not crystallised into a conscious Polish patriotism within the masses of the Jewish poor. They remain within the realm of small town patriotism (...). But is a similar level of patriotism also not found within the souls of the non-Jewish population? An attachment to a small hometown, to surroundings in which one grew up, can be and is, within the poor, even stronger than the patriotic emotions of the wealthy classes who do not need to search for bread in exile"²⁵.

Polish socialists do not have the right to demand the relocation of the Jewish people from Poland. They have, however, a moral responsibility to ensure adequate conditions, for every ethnic group, for the development of their own culture, tradition and customs. And indeed, Polish socialism, permeated with humanistic values and traditions of freedom, speaks of full respect for the differences of the Jewish population and would wish to make of them a constructive and useful group for society and for the state. As a result of the realisation of a system of social justice, a new economic system will be implemented enabling the removal of the phenomenon of isolation of the Jews and the economic sources of anti-Semitism. Because, along with the change in the economic situation of the Jewish population, their cultural level will rise and the conflicts and animosities against an ethnic background will disappear, although it is possible that all signs of nationalism and anti-Semitism will never be removed.

The basis of this dispute is still stuck in the old 19th-century differing interpretations of the nature of a nation, of the development of a nation and of the development of a national consciousness. But Polish socialists, more than all other Polish groups, endeavoured to satisfy the expectations and needs of the Jewish population in accordance with their professed,

²⁴ J. M. Borski, *Sprawa żydowska a socjalizm*, Warszawa 1937.

²⁵ Z. Zaremba, *Różnice czy błędy (Z powodu broszury J. M. Borskiego pt. Sprawa żydowska a socjalizm)*, „Światło”, nr 4-5 z 1937, s. 19.

humanistic and democratic values and within the Polish *raison d'état*. Undoubtedly, they have often analysed and described anti-Semitic tendencies and behaviours one-sidedly enough, but they have most actively fought all signs of nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism within the Polish people, as well as having exposed the premises of the sources of both injustice to and humiliation of the Jews. In this way, they have prevented ethnic and religious battles, strengthening the values of tolerance and democracy in the consciousness of