

## **Jews in the Local Government of Częstochowa 1919–1939**

### **Ryszard Szwed**

The parliamentary system and local self-government were the basic principles of the political order of Poland upon regaining its independence in 1918. Political parties and groups, organizations and unions, including civil initiatives, saw the local government as a chance to join the administration and pursue their programs.

Częstochowa belonged to 150 cities and towns of former Congress Poland which enjoyed the earliest democratic laws in reborn Poland, namely the decree of December 13, 1918, “On Municipal Elections”, issued by the cabinet of Prime Minister Jędrzej Moraczewski, and the decree of February 4, 1919, “On Municipalities”, issued by Ignacy Paderewski’s cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

By the above laws, municipality elections were held in Częstochowa on March 9, 1919; December 27, 1925; and October 16, 1927. The fourth municipality election was held according to the new law, passed by the Sejm (Polish Parliament) on March 23, 1933 for the entire territory of Poland (except Silesia). The last election preceded the outbreak of WWII for just a few months and were held on May 21, 1939.

The town council did the legislative work under the leadership of its chairman. With the new law of 1933, the position of the city mayor was strengthened and it was him who headed the council.

The ordinances of the town council were executed by the municipality (municipal administration), and after 1933 by the municipal board, including the mayor, his deputies, and councilors. Before 1933 all citizens over 21 had universal franchise, while the right to stand for election required being over 25. With the 1933 law on local government the age requirements were higher: the right to elect for 24-year-olds and over, and the right to be elected for at least 30-year-olds.

In the first municipal election six organizations ran for 43 seats in the town council. The two were Polish: Polish Socialist Party (PPS, no. 2 list) and National Election Committee (list no.4), while four were Jewish:

- Faraynigte (Jewish Socialist Workers Party; list no.1),
- Bund (Jewish Workers Election Committee; list no.3),
- Poale Zion (Jewish Social and Democratic Party; list no.5),
- Jewish Election Committee (list no. 6).

Jewish left-wing groups ran for the election individually, while the right formed a bloc, joint Jewish Electoral Committee, backed up by the Jewish Community (Kehillah), by the Orthodox, and by the Jewish upper middle-class.

Altogether 122 candidates were proposed, hence three to a seat. 45 of them were Jewish: 10 proposed by Faraynigte, 6 by the Bund, 11 by Poale Zion, and 18 by the Jewish Election Committee.<sup>2</sup>

The election campaign started early in February. It was marked by the worsening living conditions. Food provisions were running out, supplies of necessities often failed, people coming back to town after the war were short of accommodation and jobs. Demonstrations against the government and local authorities happened.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Dziennik Praw Państwa Polskiego, 1918, nr 20, poz. 18; 1919, nr 13, poz. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Częstochowie (further: APCz), Akta Magistratu Miasta Częstochowy (further: AmCz) syg. 8234.

<sup>3</sup> *Goniec Częstochowski*, 3.03.1919, nr. 40.

On the other hand, to quote Stanisław Nowak in his memories, “with the rebirth of independent Poland new hope filled people’s hearts, they recovered courage and faith, faith in the blessings of democracy, of parliamentary system and universal election; everybody plunged into deep waters of political campaigning, election rallies thronged with people. [...] both the speakers and the listeners were sincere, they trusted words that were spoken; newly elected City Council was to provide maximum of everything people demanded, was to give them all that the Russian rule had failed to give for the last hundred years; this farfetched trust bordered on naivety.”<sup>4</sup>

Still, those expectations were encouraged by major political parties running for election: the nationalists and socialists.

Polish national camp campaigned with much flourish, urging the voters to show solidarity and “join the action against Jews and socialists.”<sup>5</sup> *Goniec Częstochowski*, a local newspaper, endorsed the National Election Committee. Editorials or info on their activities were published there almost daily.

Socialists were less showy. Polish Socialist Party stood for election with more modest platform, arguing for democracy in local government, better working conditions, reduction of unemployment. PPS did not spare the nationalists accusing them of mismanagement the city budget and economy.

Bund joined the general campaign as the only Jewish party with the criticism of the previous *Endek* (nationalist) administration for many offenses and misdeeds. The remaining Jewish groups addressed their programs to their Jewish electorate.

The winner of the 9 March 1919 election was the National Election Committee (Endeks) with 12,561 votes (56 per cent). PPS got 2,961 ballots (13 per cent).

Jewish groups jointly obtained 28 per cent, proportionately to the percentage of the then Jewish population in Częstochowa. Jewish Election Committee took 11 per cent of votes, Faraynigte – 8,9%, Poale Zion 4,4%, and Bund 2,2%.<sup>6</sup>

43 seats in the Town Council were distributed proportionally to the number of votes, as illustrated in the following table:

---

<sup>4</sup> S. Nowak, *Z moich wspomnień*, cz. III, opr. A.J. Zakrzewski, Częstochowa 1994, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> „Goniec Częstochowski”, 12 II 1919, nr 34.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, 12 III 1919, nr 48.

Table 1  
Results of the March 9, 1919 Municipal Election

	Name of the party	Votes obtained		Seats obtained
		N umber	Percentage	
1	Faraynigte, Jewish Socialist Workers Party	1,994	8.9	4
2	Polish Socialist Party	2961	13.2	6
3	Bund, Jewish Workers Election Committee	496	2.2	1
4	National Election Committee	12,561	56.	25
5	Poale Zion, Jewish Social-Democratic Party	1,987	4.4	2
6	Jewish Election Committee	2,467	11.	5
	Invalid votes	967	4.3	
<b>Total</b>		22,430	100 %	43

Source: M. Switala, *Pierwsze wybory samorządowe do Rady Miejskiej w Częstochowie w niepodległej Polsce*, [in:] R.Szwed, J. Mizgalski, W.Palus (eds), *Częstochowa w pierwszych latach Polski Odrodzonej*, Częstochowa 1994, p. 40.

In sum, Jewish population was represented in the Town Council by twelve councillors; five of them were candidates of the Jewish National Committee, which got the biggest number of ballots, and they were:

- Edward Kohn, a physician,
- Samuel Goldsztajn, entrepreneur,
- Szlama Berek (or Stanislaw Bernard) Helman, entrepreneur,
- Mojzesz Zandsztajn, merchant,
- Zysman (or Zygmunt) Stiller, entrepreneur.

The Faraynigte list candidates in the new Council were:

- Rafal Federman, salesman,
- Icek Szyja Nierenberg, dealer,
- Jozef Finkielsztajn, merchant,
- Herszlik Gottajner, journalist.

The seats obtained by the Poale Zion candidates were taken by:

- Aleksander Bem, dealer,
- Szymon Waldfogel, tailor.

The Bund enlisted only one councilor, and it was Jozef Aronowicz, a teacher.<sup>7</sup>

According to the law, replacements of councilors had to be nominated in order to assume automatically the duties of a councilor, who ceased to be a member of the

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem; APCz, AmCz, syg. 8234.

Council. Consequently the following replacements were elected from Jewish lists nos. 1, 5, 6:

From the Faraynigte list no.1:

- Michal Alter, textile technician,
- Mojsze Weksler, locksmith;

From the Poale Zion list no.5:

- Idel Dancyger, confectioner;

From the Jewish Committe list no.6:

- Joachim Weksler, tenement house owner,
- Nachman Assorodobraj, engineer.

During the term all replacements took seats in the Town Council:

Michal Alter replaced Józef Finkielsztajn (in 1919), Mojsze Weksler replaced Herszlik Gottajner (in 1922), Idel Dancyger for Szymon Waldfogel (in 1920), Joachim Weksler for Szlama Berek Helman (in 1921), Nachman Assorodobraj for Mojżesz Zandsztajn (in 1929).

In 1919 town councilors were elected for three years, but in 1922 the Seym prolonged their term with three additional years, or until a new uniform law for the entire country would be passed.<sup>8</sup>

In the years to follow the number of councilors decreased for various reasons. Even filling the seats with replacements did not always guarantee full strength of the Council. The protest of socialist councilors who altogether withdrew from the local government in 1925 had it completely disorganized. The administration of the state was forced to dissolve the Council and fix the date of new election on December 27, 1925.

Public advantages of having a say in the local government became more evident for Częstochowa political and social leaders, who started to campaign for the seats earlier and more vigorously. They put up almost twice as many lists (eleven in 1925 as compared to six in 1919) with over twice as many candidates (306 in 1925 as compared to 122 in 1919). The following Jewish lists were proposed:

No.4 – The General Jewish Workers Union “Bund” with 11 candidates;

No.5 – Poale Zion and Tseyre Zion in Częstochowa with 7 candidates;

No.6 – Jewish Workers Election Committee of Poale Zion, 11 candidates;

No.12 – Jewish Craftsmen Association, 21 candidates;

No.16 – United Jewish Election Committee with 19 candidates.<sup>9</sup>

There were some re-arrangements on the political scene. The Faraynigte Jewish Socialist Workers Party discontinued its activity. Its leaders joined the Bund and ran for election with other Bundists. New groups entered the game: Poale Zion and Tseyre Zion-Right and the Jewish Craftsmen Association. The changes concerned Polish political groups as well, as the mere number of electoral lists indicated (six in 1925 to two in 1919).

*Goniec Częstochowski* again assumed its role of the mouthpiece for Polish nationalist parties. Doubts as to the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, just after Christmas holidays, being the best date for holding election, proved unfounded and the voter turnout was high – almost 77 per cent of the entire electorate (out of 48,283 eligible voters as many as 37,013 actually cast their ballot). The results are presented in the following table:

---

<sup>8</sup> Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, nr 28 poz.225. Law of March 30, 1922 concerning prolongation of the term of office for local government bodies in the territory formerly under Russian rule..

<sup>9</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5223.

Table 2  
Results of the Municipal Election held in Czestochowa on Dec. 27, 1925

L	Name of the Party	Votes obtained		Seats obtained
		Number	Percent age	
2	Polish Socialist Party	6,691	18.7	9
4	General Jewish Workers Union Bund	1,239	3.5	1
5	Poale Zion with Tseyre Zion	842	2.3	1
6	Poale Zion Jewish Workers Election Committee	420	1.2	-
7	National Workers Party with Polish Vocational Association	2,834	7.9	3
8	Class Trade Unions – Left	2,161	6.0	3
1	Polish Freedom Organization	715	2.0	-
1	Independent Socialist Labor Party	1,351	3.75	1
1	Jewish Craftsmen Association	1,341	3.75	1
1	United Christian Election Committee	13,371	37.3	18
1	Jewish United Election Committee	4,881	13.16	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>35,846</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>43</b>

Source: APCz, AmCz, syg. 5223

The following Jewish candidates won the seats in the Town Council:

List no.4 (Bund):

- Rafal Federman, salesman;

List no. 5 (Poale Zion with Tseyre Zion):

- Luzer Plockier, office worker;

List no.12 (Jewish Craftsmen Ass.):

- Hipolit Geisler, physician;

List no. 16 (Jewish United Election Committee):

- Zysman Stiller, entrepreneur,
- Arnold Bram, physician,
- Joachim Weksler, merchant,
- Szymon Pohorille, lawyer,
- Ludwik Batawia, physician,
- Szmul Goldsztajn, entrepreneur.

In the 43 people strong Town Council Jewish population was represented by 9 Jews (in 1919 there were 12 Jewish councilors). Three were re-elected: R. Federman, Z. Stiller,

Sz. Goldsztajn. The right to nominate replacements applied then only to list no.16 and those were:

- Izaak Kaplan, entrepreneur,
- Dawid Filipowicz, merchant,
- Jozef Starka, merchant,
- Chil Gerichter, shop assistant<sup>10</sup>.

The next municipal election in Częstochowa was held on October 16, 1927. That early date resulted from the new political situation in Poland after Pilsudski's coupe d'etat of May 1926. New regime called the local government election as a trial of strength, to sound the public opinion before the parliamentary election.

Thirteen groups ran for 42 seats in Częstochowa Town Council: seven were Polish and six Jewish parties. Ten delegates of the latter sat in the new Council:

Two of list no.4 (Bund):

- Rafal Federman, salesman,
- Moszek Lederman, shoemaker;

Two of list no. 12 (Jewish Craftsmen Ass.):

- Hipolit Geisler, physician,
- Jozef Goldberg, hairdresser;

Six of list no. 16 (Jewish United Election Committee):

- Maurycy Neufeld, merchant,
- Arnold Bram, physician,
- Joachim Weksler, merchant,
- Dawid Filipowicz, merchant,
- Icek Majer Krell, real property owner,
- Szmul Goldsztajn, entrepreneur.

Their replacements were:

Aron Peretz, physician, (list no.4),

Marek Grun, physician, (list no.12), and three of list 16:

Joachim Wajnsztok, merchant,

Mendl Izrael Zylberg, merchant,

Jozef Hersz Sielcer, merchant<sup>11</sup>.

The Town Council was dissolved by the central government on November 5, 1930. The power in town was taken over by mayors, who were appointed by the central government. Next election was as late as in 1934, on April 16, pursuant to the new law on local government passed by the Sejm on March 1923, 1933.

Nine registered electoral lists included as many as five Jewish ones, but it were only eight Jewish candidates from two Center-Right lists that sat in the new Town Council along with 40 Christian councilors. The successful delegates of the United Jewish Economy Election Bloc were:

- Samuel Goldsztajn, entrepreneur,
- Feliks Szpiro, merchant,
- Arnold Bram, physician,
- Joachim Weksler, merchant,
- Maurycy Neufeld, merchant,

And their replacements were: Zelig Ratbrand, Maurycy Faust, Jozef Hersz Sielcer, Jozek Icek Warmund, Mojzesz Mehring.

The councilors of the Jewish General Election Committee were:

- Jakub Bendet-Rozenberg, accountant,

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem., syg. 5305.

- Józef Goldberg, hairdresser,
- Abram Orłinski, engineer,

And their replacements: Majer Icek Krell, Stefan Kohn, Daniel Markiewicz.<sup>12</sup>

The last local government election in the Second Polish Commonwealth took place on May 21, 1939, a few months before WWII. Seven electoral lists were proposed, including two Jewish ones. Again, it were ten Jewish candidates, who sat in the Town Council of 48.

The Bund with Poale Zion councilors were:

- Izrael Jaronowicz, meat dresser,
- Abram Icek Brum, baker.

Their replacement was Moszek Berkensztat.

The councilors of the United Jewish Election Bloc were:

- Joachim Markowicz, lawyer,
- Lejb Asz, lawyer,
- Arnold Bram, physician,
- Dawid Borzykowski, merchant,
- Joachim Weksler, merchant,
- Mojżesz Mehring, teacher,
- Józef Goldberg, hairdresser,
- Tauchan Lewkowicz, physician,

And their replacements were: Izaak Rzasinski, Stanislaw Ajzner, Feliks Szpiro, Chil Gerichter, Szaja Granek, Benedykt Jakub Rozenberg, Dawid Koniecpoler, Mojżesz Zandsztajn.<sup>13</sup>

The following table illustrates the results of all municipality elections in interwar Poland:

Table 3

Elected Members of Częstochowa Town Council 1919–1939

<b>Year of Election</b>	<b>Total number of councilors</b>	<b>Polish Councilors</b>	<b>Jewish Councilors</b>	<b>Percentage of Jewish councilors</b>
1919	43	31	12	28%
1925	43	34	9	21%
1927	42	32	10	24%
1934	48	40	8	16.5%
1939	48	38	10	21%

Source: APCz AmCz, syg. 5022, 5223, 5305, 5571, 8435.

Every election was always preceded by an electoral campaign to let the participant political organizations come forward with their programs or, as was most often the case, criticize their political rivals. The usual target of attacks were those in power during the ending term. In 1919-1925 Polish political groups included the Endeks and their allies, Christian democrats, who assailed socialists. Starting with the 1927 election a new force entered the political scene – the so-called *Sanacja*.

<sup>12</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5571.

<sup>13</sup> APCz AmCz, syg. 5571.

Anti-Jewish slogans were always a major point in the nationalists' (Endeks) campaigns. On the Jewish side, it were only the left-wing groups that joined the general campaign addressed to all inhabitants of Częstochowa, with the Bund, sometimes backed up by Poale Zion, refuting the Endek charges. The Center-Right, united in the Jewish Election Committee, or allegedly non-political Election Committee of Jewish Craftsmen association, focused exclusively on the Jewish electorate.

In 1919 the Bund accused the Endek-based administration of Częstochowa in local press and at electoral rallies of numerous transgressions in their management of the town. In 1927 Bundists issued its platform, denouncing the Sanacja regime and declaring their determination to protect the interests of the working masses in general, and Jewish workers in particular. The Bund's platform included many detailed demands such as eight-hour work-day, secular public schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction and free meals for children, promoting literacy, eliminating anti-Semitism out of the town economy, and granting Jewish population with equal rights parallel to equal duties towards the municipality. Bundists' program addressed also all-town issues, like paving the streets, setting up street lamps or sewer system<sup>14</sup>.

Bitter anti-Jewish campaigns of the Endeks did not, in fact, affect the results of the Jewish parties in the election. The general practice was that Jews voted Jews, and Poles – for Poles. Polish right-wing groups did not put up their candidates in prevailingly Jewish districts. Analogically, Jewish parties did not put up theirs in some areas. Table 3 shows that Jews were represented in the Town Council more or less proportionally to their number in Częstochowa. The same was true of other towns in Poland.<sup>15</sup>

Election campaigns demonstrated vividly all the political, social and ideological divisions within the Jewish community. Their most obvious illustration was the abundance of electoral lists, which disoriented Jewish electorate. In 1919 there were 4 Jewish lists: three representing workers and one of center-right orientation (to 2 Polish lists), in 1925 5 Jewish lists (three of workers, two of center-right) to 4 Polish lists, in 1927 6 (three workers' and three center-right) to 7 Polish lists, in 1934 there were 5 Jewish (three workers' and two center-right) to four Polish lists, and as late as in 1939 only 2 Jewish lists as compared to 4 Polish ones. Left-wing organizations continued to put up separate lists for almost two decades, due to an antagonism between the Bund and Poale Zion. It needed a new leadership of the Bund to settle the conflict and agree on a joint list of the two parties. The Right, similarly, consolidated their forces and put up a joint list as well. Owing to the coalitions Jewish groups achieved better election results than in 1934.

In all, throughout two interwar decades, forty Jewish councilors sat in the Town Council of Częstochowa. They included some chief party leaders (as J. Aronowicz from the Bund and R. Federman of Faraynigte, later of the Bund), and other political and social leaders and trade unionists. The representatives of left-wing groups were often young, under 30. The center-right parties put up more mature candidates for councilors, sometimes even men of 65-70.

Jewish councilors were for the most part high school or university graduates and pursued professional careers as physicians, lawyers, teachers, or engineers. Merchants,

---

<sup>14</sup> APCz AmCz, syg. 5305; R. Szwed, *Samorządowe kampanie wyborcze w Częstochowie w latach 1919–1939*, [in:] *Życie codzienne w Częstochowie w XIX i XX wieku*, Częstochowa 1999, p. 13, 22.

<sup>15</sup> R. Szwed, *Udział Żydów w samorządzie miast Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1919-1939)*, w: *Prace Naukowe WSP w Częstochowie. Zeszyty Historyczne*, t. V, Częstochowa 1998, s. 197-212.



dealers, and entrepreneurs were also a major group; they usually won elections as center-right candidates. Jewish left was represented by craftsmen, merchants, and employees.<sup>16</sup>

The right-wing Jewish parties used to put up candidates, who were distinguished and well-liked in Częstochowa. Three of them sat in four councils:

- Arnold Bram, physician, well known for his social and self-governmental work; first elected in 1925, re-elected in 1927, 1934, 1939;
- Samuel Goldsztajn, entrepreneur and social leader; he was the president of the Jewish community; elected to the Town Council in 1919, re-elected in 1925, 1927, 1934;
- Joachim Weksler, merchant, real property owner, president of the Jewish community, social worker at the Health Fund; in 1919 elected a replacement, became a councilor in 1921, re-elected in 1925, 1927, 1934, 1939; thus he held a seat in the Town Council for all terms.

The 1919 councilors included Edward Kohn, a physician and popular social worker, known for his work in local government bodies even before Poland regained its independence.<sup>17</sup>

Other figures in the council renowned for their political, social, and professional activities were Jozef Aronowicz, Rafal Federman, Zysman Stiller.

Jewish representatives sat in major bodies and agencies of local government. Seven members of the Main Electoral Committee included Samuel Goldsztajn, and then Tobiasz Fogelbaum.

The legislative work of the Town Council was until 1923 supervised by the executive committee including the chairman, his deputies, and secretaries. From 1925 one of the secretaries was Rafal Federman.<sup>18</sup>

Executive powers were with the Municipality (municipal administration or board) consisting of the mayor, his deputies and executive councilors (board members).

In 1919 the Jewish Left (the Bund, Faraynigte, and Poale Zion) did not run for the office of the mayor nor executive councilors. They did not want to partake responsibility for the local government dominated by the National Democrats, who held 25 out of 43 seats in the Council. Neither did the Jewish left-wingers cast their votes for the candidate of the Jewish Election Committee, thus Jews had no representative in the municipal administration.<sup>19</sup> The situation changed after 1925 and from then on there was a Jewish executive councilor at the municipal administration of Częstochowa. In 1925 he was Tobias Fogelbaum, while for the next two terms (1927-1930 and 1934-1939) – Feliks Szpiro.

The workings of the local government included plenary sessions of the Town Council and meetings of various committees. None of the latter were set up without a Jewish member or members. Some of Jewish councilors sat in more than one committee. The attendance varied, so councilors, including Jewish ones, were sometimes disciplined by penalties provided in the bylaws.

Jewish councilors participated in the work of the following committees and councils set up by the local government of Częstochowa:

- Urban Development Committee (J.Weksler, Z. Stiller, R. Federman, J. Goldberg);
- Civic Advisory Committee Against the Inflated Prices (Sz.Pohorille);

---

<sup>16</sup> R. Szwed, *Radni miasta Częstochowy w latach międzywojennych 1919-1939*, in: *Spoleczeństwo Częstochowy w latach 1918-1939*, Częstochowa 1997, pp. 197-212.

<sup>17</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5026, 5305, 5316, 8232.

<sup>18</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5249.

<sup>19</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5022.

- Municipal School Committee (L. Batawia, R. Federman);
- Powiat (County) School Committee (A. Bram, J. Krell)<sup>20</sup>.

Jewish councilors were also delegated to represent their town at the congresses of the Polish Municipalities' Union, which had been co-founded by Częstochowa. In 1921 the delegates included Z. Stiller, R. Federman, and E. Kohn; in 1922 – Z. Stiller, and in 1929 – H. Geisler.<sup>21</sup>

Jewish councilors used to be a factor to consider for those seeking power in the Town Council, except for the 1919 term, when the Endeks won an absolute majority and did not need to form any coalition to rule. There was, however, no rerun of that situation. From 1925 on, in order to have their own man in the mayor's office or the majority in the municipal board, any group or party had to enter in some kind of coalition or agreement. Thus, the support of Jewish councilors was sooner or later sought. That was the case in 1925, when some nationalist, socialist, and Jewish councilors formed quite a bizarre coalition in order to elect Jozef Marczewski, an Endek candidate, to the mayor's office. The three groups could have hardly reached an agreement in any other matter. Yet, in the local government it proved possible, although not quite feasible nor solid in the long run. In 1927 Jewish councilors helped Romuald Jarmulowicz, leader of the Polish Socialist Party, to get the nomination. In the 1934 municipal election votes were distributed almost evenly. Two years had to pass before the Sanacja group, represented by the Non-Party Bloc of Cooperation with the Government (BBWR), reached an agreement with the PPS and with the support of Jewish councilors elected the mayor. This time it was Jan Szczodrowski of the Sanacja camp.<sup>22</sup>

For Jewish councilors local government provided an opportunity to attempt to put their political agendas into practice and to realize the demands of their electorate. With each new term, delegates of various groupings first proclaimed or announced their position and mission. In case of Jewish councilors a very characteristic address was made by A. Bram, who declared, e.g., that: "As citizens of this state we will eagerly join all the efforts and participate in all arrangements pursued for the good of the State in general and Częstochowa in particular; we are ready to cooperate with any grouping in the Town Council which is earnestly striving to raise up the standard of living and meet cultural and social needs of the entire Częstochowa population, regardless of class or religion, and is willing to improve hygiene and esthetics of our town. We will be second to no one in carrying out our responsibilities towards the State and Town, yet we will also demand that the population we represent is granted rights absolutely equal to those of citizens of other denominations in all spheres of life and activity."<sup>23</sup>

Jewish councilors often battled over the equal rights with the Endeks. The argument got fierce over the trade traffic in town, ritual slaughter, or anti-Jewish excesses in the 1930s.

Despite being a minority, Jewish councilors were in many cases able to persuade the Town Council to approve their suggestions, such as:

- raising the daily quota per patient at the Jewish hospital and orphanage;
- doubling the subsidy for the I.L.Perec Jewish school and for the Jewish Charity Society;
- launching the project to build a school for Jewish children at Warszawska street;

---

<sup>20</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5722.

<sup>21</sup> R. Szwed, *Częstochowa w Związku Miast Polskich w latach 1917–1939*, [w:] *Wielkie i małe problemy Częstochowy w Polsce Odrodzonej 1918–1939*, Częstochowa 1996, s. 71–84.

<sup>22</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5249, 5571.

<sup>23</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5342.

- contributing funds to the Jewish kindergarten, to the additional training classes by the vocational crafts school, to the house for the elderly<sup>24</sup>.

Jewish councilors proposed motions concerning the town as a whole and all of its inhabitants, as well. Many propositions were approved by the Town Council. It was on the Jewish councilors' initiative that the local government set up medical Emergency Service in 1920, approved the proposal to the Polish Railroads to build three footbridges over grade crossings (1926), passed the law on the eight-hour working day in trade and industry (1928), allotted cash advance to the Jednosc cooperative for the purchase of flour on the condition that the price of bread would not go up (1928).<sup>25</sup>

In many communal matters councilors reached agreement, regardless of their nationalities, and decided jointly for the sake of the town inhabitants. Issues that gave rise to many controversies, confrontations, or even accusations were usually of social, political, or religious nature. In social debates division ran between left-wingers and the right or center, while the ethnic origin did not seem important. Political divisions were more complicated. Councilors took the most definite stand on religious issues, but sometimes political points eventuated even in manifestations, as was the case when Jewish councilors left the conference room in protest against commemorating the memory of Roman Dmowski, the Endecja leader.

“Did the Poles and Jews share their house?” – is the question Professor Marcin Kula, a distinguished scholar specializing in the Polish-Jewish relations, asks in his recent book. Our answer to this question can be valid only as regards a small fragment of that house discussed in the present study, that is local government in interwar period. The following facts seem to substantiate the answer in the affirmative:

- regulations concerning local government which were in force before 1933, as well as the law on the local government passed on March 23, 1933, did not differentiate in any way between Polish citizens of various ethnic origins, be it Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Byelorussians, and other nationalities;
- in any municipal election in Częstochowa, as well as in other Polish towns, Jews won a number of seats proportionate to the number of Jewish inhabitants;
- proportionately to the number of their seats in a Town Council Jews could delegate their representatives to the municipal boards and administration;
- Jewish councilors were members of municipal committees and other municipal institutions, with the right to submit motions or propose legislation on any matter; all proposals were accepted or rejected in the course of statutory procedure;
- controversies and disputes did not usually overstep the limits of “political game and manners” and were verified by vote.

In view of the above it seems feasible to assert that in the years 1918–1939 territorial self-government provided grounds and favorable conditions for Poles and Jews to share their house, which was open to all citizens regardless of political, religious, nor national differences. To corroborate this assumption I would like to quote the declaration submitted by Jewish councilors at the January 12, 1939 session of the Town Council, eight months before the outbreak of WWII: “Faced by the occurrences in the near neighborhood of our State, Jewish population is ready for any sacrifice of life or property

---

<sup>24</sup> j.w., syg. 5590, 5728; J. Mizgalski, *Częstochowska społeczność żydowska w pierwszych latach Polski Odrodzonej*, w: *Częstochowa w pierwszych latach Polski Odrodzonej*, Częstochowa 1994, s. 103.

<sup>25</sup> AP-Cz., Am Cz syg. 5073, 5140, 5342, 5402.

for the sake of the Supreme Polish Commonwealth, in particular to fortify its defenses, regulate and sustain its power.

We are aware that the Polish State is able to oppose any hostile invaders by the force of a joint effort of all citizens regardless of their national origin nor religion.”<sup>26</sup>

## **Supplement**

### **Jewish councilors in the local government of Częstochowa 1919–1939 : Profiles**

#### **Alter Michal**

Textile technician; in 1919 a candidate in the municipal election from the Faraynigte list; elected a replacement, but as soon as on June 12, 1919 he replaced Jozef Finkelsztajn as a councilor.

#### **Aronowicz Jozef**

Teacher; the major activist and leader of the Bund in Częstochowa; in 1918 he was a member of the Executive Committee of Częstochowa Workers' Council; in 1919 elected to the Town Council of Częstochowa as a Bund candidate; in 1920 arrested on a charge of illegal contacts with the Communist Workers Party of Poland; the arrest resulted in the expiry of his councilor's mandate; while in office Aronowicz worked in the municipal committees of finances and schools.

#### **Assorodobraj Nachman**

Engineer; with the 1919 election a Jewish Election Committee replacement; in 1923 replaced Mojzesz Zandsztajn as a councilor.

#### **Asz Lejb**

Lawyer; social worker; elected a councilor in 1939 as a United Jewish Election Bloc candidate.

#### **Asz Nachum**

Born 1858 in Wyszogrod; Chief Rabbi of Częstochowa; deputy chairman of the Jewish Welfare Society; elected councilor in 1919 as the Jewish Election Committee

Candidate; he relinquished his mandate after the election, because his name was included in the list of candidates for tactical reasons to solicit support for the Jewish Election Committee.

#### **Batawia Ludwik**

Physician; in 1925 as a candidate of the Jewish Election Committee elected a councilor; worked in the Hospital Committee of the Town Council and sat in the Municipal School Council.

#### **Bem Aleksander**

Dealer; in 1919 elected a councilor as a Poale Zion candidate.

#### **Bendet-Rozenberg Jakub**

Accountant; in 1934 elected a councilor as a candidate of the General Jewish Election Committee.

#### **Borzykowski Dawid**

Merchant; in 1939 elected a councilor as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Bloc.

#### **Bram Arnold**

Born in 1887; graduate of Kiev University; physician (in the army); the first citizen of Częstochowa to own an X-Ray machine; social worker, active member of numerous

---

<sup>26</sup> APCz, AmCz, syg. 5728.

associations and organizations, including: Jewish Population Health Society, Tuberculosis Society, Military and Sports Training Association; elected a councilor:

In 1925 and 1927 as a United Jewish Election Committee candidate;

In 1934 as a United Jewish Economy Bloc candidate;

In 1939 as a United Jewish Bloc candidate;

Worked in the following bodies of the Town Council: Economy and Audit Committee (1919–1925) and Water Supply and Sewer System Committee (1927–1930); sat at the School and Poviát Council.

#### **Brum Abram Icek**

Worker at a bakery; elected a councilor in 1939 as a candidate of the Bund and Poale Zion.

#### **Dancyger Idel**

Confectioner; elected a replacement in 1919 as a Poale Zion candidate; in 1920 he replaced Szymon Woldfogel as a councilor.

#### **Faust Maurycy**

Merchant; owner of a wholesale discount and chain of stores of manufactured goods; executive member of the Manufacturers and Merchants Association in Częstochowa; in 1934 elected a replacement as a candidate of the United Jewish Economy Bloc; replaced Zelig Rotbard as a councilor.

#### **Federman Rafal**

Salesman; a Faraynigte and Bund (from 1922) leader; in November 1918 a member of the Częstochowa Workers' Council; in 1919 he stood for parliamentary election; a founder of the Samopomoc (Self-Help) Cooperative, trade unionist; in 1919 elected a councilor as a Faraynigte candidate and in 1925 as a Bund candidate; in 1927–1930 he held the post of a secretary of the Town Council; in 1919-1925 Federman worked in the Statutory, as well as Sanitary and Welfare committees; in 1925-1927 in the Savings Committee, and in Statutory and Education in 1927–1930; he was also a member of the Urban Development and of the Municipal School Council; in 1921 represented Częstochowa at the congress of the Polish Municipalities' Union.

#### **Filipowicz Dawid**

Merchant; co-founded the Strzecha Workers Cooperative in Częstochowa; elected councilor in 1927 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee.

#### **Finkielstajn Jozef**

Dealer; an executive member at the board of the Zjednoczeni Workers Cooperative in Częstochowa; member of the Częstochowa Workers Council; elected a councilor in 1919 as a Faraynigte candidate; worked in the Public Works; after several months he relinquished his seat at the Town Council.

#### **Fogelbaum Tobiasz**

Accountant; social and professional leader; chairman of the Trade and Industry Workers trade union; chairman of the Częstochowa Tenants' Association; his engagement in the local government dated back to the times of foreign rule; in the 1925–1927 term he was elected an executive councilor of the Municipality as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee; in 1925 he sat at the Central Electoral Commission in Częstochowa which supervised the municipal election.

#### **Geisler Hipolit**

Born in 1886; graduate of the medical school at Kiev University; army physician, then at the Poviát Health Fund; chairman of the Jewish Craftsmen Association, chairman of the Jewish Gymnastics and Sports Society; elected a councilor twice (in 1925 and 1927) as a candidate of the Jewish Craftsmen Association; worked in the municipal committees: Audit, of Municipal Investments, and Education during his first term (1925-

1927) and in the Culture and Education Committee in 1927-1930; in 1929 represented Częstochowa at the congress of the Polish Municipalities' Union.

**Goldberg Jozef**

Born 1886; hairdresser; alderman of the Hairdressers and Wig-Makers Union secretary of the Jewish Craftsmen Union; held a seat at the Town Council three times: in 1925 he was elected as a candidate of the Jewish Craftsmen Association, in 1927 as a candidate of the General Jewish Election Committee, and in 1939 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Bloc; member of the Urban Development Committee.

**Goldsztajn Samuel (Goldstein)**

Born 1883; entrepreneur; director general of Metalurgia factory; social leader. active in local government; a founder of the Mizrachi Cooperative; member of the Auxilium Academicum Judaicum relief society for Jewish students, member of the board of the Jewish Charity Society, chairman of the Jewish Community in Częstochowa; Goldsztajn ran for parliamentary election in 1928 and was elected a councilor four times: in 1919 as a candidate of the Jewish Election Committee, in 1925-1927 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee, and in 1934 as a candidate of the United Jewish Economy Bloc; worked in the municipal Welfare and Savings Committees (1925-1927) and in the Welfare and Audit Committees (1927-1930); in 1919 he sat at the Central Electoral Commission in Częstochowa which supervised the municipal election.

**Gottajner Herszlik**

Press correspondent; chairman of the Faraynighte Workers Club; board member of the Zjednoczeni Workers Cooperative; in 1919 elected a councilor as a candidate of Faraynigte; worked in the Tax Committee; in 1922 relinquished his mandate.

**Helman Szlama Berek (vel Stanislaw Bernard)**

Entrepreneur; elected in 1919 as a candidate of the Jewish Election Committee; in 1921 relinquished his mandate.

**Jaronowicz Izrael**

Meat dresser; elected a councilor in 1939 as a candidate of the Bund and Poale Zion.

**Kohn Edward**

Born 1848 at Wielun, died 1927; physician; graduate of Warsaw University; author of the book on hygiene and health conditions among Częstochowa workers; board member of the Polish Physicians Association; board member of numerous associations and societies in Częstochowa; active in the local government; in 1909–1919 he sat at the Town Council; in 1917–1919 Kohn was an executive councilor; in 1919 elected a councilor as a candidate of Jewish Workers Committee; in 1921 represented Częstochowa at the congress of the Polish Municipalities' Union.

**Krell Icek**

Real property owner; board member of the Jewish Relief Society for the Sick and Destitute; in 1927 elected a councilor as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee; worked at Savings Committee; he also sat at the Poviats School Council.

**Lederman Moszek, Hersz**

Shoemaker; active member of the Bund; in 1919 he ran for parliamentary election; elected a councilor in 1927 as a candidate of the Bund; in 1929 due to the pressure of his party commitments he relinquished his councilor's mandate and was replaced by Aron Peretz; while still in office Lederman worked in Culture and Arts Committee.

**Lewkowicz Tauchan**

Born 1892 in Częstochowa; ophthalmologist; elected a councilor in 1939 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Bloc.

**Markowicz Joachim**

Lawyer; elected in 1939 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Bloc.

**Mehring Mojzesz**

Junior high school teacher; co-organizer of the Lira Music and Song Lovers' Society (1931); in 1934 elected a replacement as a candidate of the United Jewish Economy Bloc; he sat in the Town Council in 1935 replacing Maurycy Neufeld; in 1939 Mehring was elected a councilor as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Bloc.

**Neufeld Maurycy**

Merchant; elected a councilor in 1927 and in 1934 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee; during the 1927–1930 term worked in the Budget and Electric Power Plant Committees.

**Nierenberg Icek, Szyja**

Dealer; Faraynigte activist; member of the Workers Council in Częstochowa; elected a councilor in 1919 as a candidate of Faraynigte; worked in the Food Supplies, Electricity, Welfare, and Police Enumeration committees.

**Orlinski Abram**

Born 1903; engineer; elected a councilor in 1934 as a candidate of the General Jewish Election Committee.

**Peretz Aron**

Physician; in 1927 elected a replacement as a candidate of the Bund; in 1929 he replaced H. Lederman at the Town Council.

**Plockier Luzer**

Office worker; elected a councilor in 1925 as a candidate of the Poale Zion.

**Pohorille Szymon**

Born 1885 at Brzeziny; lawyer; active member of the Częstochowa Tuberculosis Society; elected a councilor in 1925 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee; sat in the Civic Advisory Committee Against the Inflated Prices.

**Rotbard Zelig**

Elected a replacement in 1934 as a candidate of the United Jewish Economy Bloc; replaced a councilor during the term, but relinquished his mandate.

**Stiller Zysman (Zygmunt)**

Entrepreneur; co-owner of the Toy and Office Supplies Factory; chairman of the Częstochowa Merchants and Manufacturers Association, deputy chairman of the Poviats Health Fund; elected a councilor in 1925 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee; worked in the following municipal committees: Audit, Electricity, Water Supply and Sewage Systems; member of the Urban Development Committee; in 1921 and 1922 represented Częstochowa at the congress of the Polish Municipalities' Union.

**Spiro Feliks**

Born 1889; merchant, director general of the Hat Factory in Częstochowa; deputy chairman of Częstochowa branch of the Zionist Organization in Poland; deputy chairman of the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, founder of the Salesmen Cooperative in Częstochowa; elected an executive councilor in 1927 (though not a member of the Town Council) as a nonaligned delegate of Jewish minority; in 1934 elected a councilor as a candidate of the United Jewish Economy Bloc; an executive councilor in the 1934-1939 term.

**Waldfogel Szymon**

Tailor; elected a councilor in 1919 as a candidate of the Poale Zion; worked in the Lodgings Committee; in 1920 he relinquished his mandate.

**Weksler Joachim**

Born 1884 at Plawno; merchant and real property owner; active member of many organizations and associations; board member of the Mizrachi, delegate to the Poviats

Health Fund, co-founder of the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, chairman of the board of the Jewish Community; councilor for all the terms of the Town Council; in 1919 elected a replacement councilor as a candidate of the Jewish Election Committee; Weksler sat at the Council in 1921 upon councilor Helman's relinquishment; in 1925 and 1927 elected a councilor as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Committee, in 1934 as a candidate of the United Jewish Economy Bloc, in 1939 as a candidate of the United Jewish Election Bloc; worked in the committees: Financial and Budgetary (1925–1927) and Municipal Investments (1927–1930); member of the Urban Development Committee.

**Weksler Mojsze**

Locksmith; elected in 1919 a replacement councilor as a candidate of the Faraynigte; in 1922 he replaced H. Gottajner as a councilor.

**Zandsztajn Mojżesz**

Entrepreneur; ran for parliamentary election in 1919; elected a councilor in 1919 as a candidate of the Jewish Election Committee to replace Rabbi Nachum Asz; in 1923 Zandsztajn relinquished his mandate.